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VIETNAM

06-2019

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Rookie to Rocky

Vietnam's economy races ahead and there are no signs of stopping

VIETNAM MAY NOT BE THE last virgin territory in Southeast Asia. We can all agree that accolade probably belongs to Myanmar. So what is really going on in Vietnam and why is there such an attraction for business and the boom in the economy?

The zany pace of Vietnam can be seen by anyone walking around the streets. The buzz of scooters flashing by and the bustle of the crowds with heads down rushing to get to their place of work are also reflected in the pace that new businesses are entering Vietnam.

In just three decades, Vietnam has successfully gone from one of the poorest countries in the world to one of the fastest growing economies. With a population of around 95 million and rising by about one million every year, more and more people are finding themselves with disposable income and entering into the middle class.

Evidence of this can be seen by considering the large amount of new domestic and corporate accounts that were opened in March to trade on the VN Index—21,265 in total. Vietnam is also fortunate to currently have a very healthy GDP rate and foreign investment is stable.

Deregulation and the lowering of business costs in Vietnam have helped this boom with new trade agreements being arranged with many countries. It doesn't hurt that the ongoing trade war between Trump and China is forcing Chinese companies to look towards their neighboring country to set up satellite businesses in order to avoid tariffs that are being imposed by the US.

In fact, Vietnam currently rivals China in terms of economic growth and it is suggested that Vietnam will become the 20th strongest economy in the world

by 2050. Truly making it a rising star in emerging markets and on the global stage.

The gender pay gap between men and woman has gradually changed in Vietnam. Unfortunately, it is still not equal for men and women but at a 10 percent difference it is comparatively almost the same as the UK, which is currently at just under a 10 percent disparity. It is slightly behind the US, which is running at 6 percent, but better than Australia, which is around 15 percent.

The workforce, as a whole, are slowly generating more and more disposable income and are finding themselves increasingly able to consider the idea of investing. But invest in what? For the local Vietnamese population, the options for investments are limited when compared perhaps to that of the expat community. The common choices in Vietnam are real estate, which is easily understood by any investor. Everyone relates well to a tangible item such as “bricks and mortar”. Other options would include term deposits within the banking sector or trading on the Vietnam Index. But the increase in new accounts opened to trade this year suggests that investors are chasing the markets when they have already peaked. This race to get into the Vietnam markets was repeated exactly one year ago when a record amount of accounts were opened in March 2018 and the market plummeted the following month. The exact same has happened again in the same period this year only perhaps not so severely.

For expats, the situation is much more advantageous. As a general rule of thumb, if an expat has spent more than 183 days outside of their country

of domicile, they have tax advantages that can work in their favor. Certain countries do not allow for these tax breaks such as the US, and South Africa will also be following suit on worldwide taxation from March 2020. South African citizens will then have to pay tax on their worldwide income. However, there are solutions available that South African citizens should consider and seek advice on, including financial emigration, which can be reversed if a South African expat returns home again.

Lifestyle habits in Vietnam are also slowly changing to accommodate more expensive tastes: More cars can be seen on the already bustling roads and a stratospheric change in the Vietnam skyline with new condo-style apartment buildings. It can be seen in the dizzying amount of young entrepreneurs enjoying a cocktail or two in one of the many fashionable rooftop sky bars.

Old ways are gradually being replaced by a vibrant new mindset that will only continue to grow and manifest itself in so many different ways, while continuing to maintain its traditional values.

Having engrossed myself in all that Vietnam has to offer, I will continue to enjoy witnessing this monumental “Rookie to Rocky” rise in growth and stability. Vietnam has definitely put on its boxing gloves and came out swinging. We may still only be in the early rounds, but the global audience has sat up and started paying attention.

One thing is for certain. This Lotus Land offers way more now than just tourist photo opportunities and stories that students regale to each other in the common room after returning to university from a gap year. ■

TROI OI!

The country in numbers



USD7,400

RETURNED TO TOURIST BY LOCAL MAID.

Hien, a 26-year-old employee at Dat Phuong Nam Apartment Complex, was cleaning a flat after a temporary tenant left when he came across USD7,400 in cash. He then notified the manager to establish contact with the rightful owner and was eventually able to return the cash to a Ukrainian guest named Artern, who had just ended his six-month lease of the unit. Hien received a “*Nguoi Tot Viec Tot*” (Good People Doing Good Things) award from the building’s management board, along with praise from the complex’s residents and Artern. Artern was not shy in admitting his shock that the money was returned. Hien’s mother said in an interview with *Tuoi Tre* newspaper that he dropped out of school when he was a tenth grader to help his mother earn a living after his father’s sudden death. He now works to ensure that his mother will have enough money when she is ready to retire in the near future. “Our family is poor but I’ve always taught my son to keep his dignity and be a good person,” the mother said.

1.2 MILLION

PIGS HAVE BEEN KILLED SO FAR AS AFRICAN SWINE FEVER SPREADS NATIONWIDE.

Pork accounts for three-quarters of total meat consumption in Vietnam, a country of 95 million people where most of its 30 million farm-raised pigs are consumed domestically. The virus was first detected in Vietnam in February and has spread to 29 provinces, including Dong Nai, which supplies around 40% of the pork consumed in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam’s southern economic hub. “The risk of the virus spreading further is very high and the evolution of the outbreak is complicated,” the government said in a statement. The disease, which is harmless to humans but incurable in pigs, has also spread quickly across neighboring China. The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) in March advised Vietnam to declare the swine fever outbreak as a national emergency.



104

PASSENGERS CRAMMED INTO 45-SEATER BUS HEADING TO HANOI.

Traffic police in Hanoi said they have caught an overcrowded passenger bus that carried holidaymakers from the north-central province of Thanh Hoa back to the Vietnamese capital. As many as 104 passengers had been crammed into the 45-seater bus, police said after pulling over the vehicle for check on Giai Phong Street in Hanoi’s Hoang Mai District. The long-haul bus, running between Thanh Hoa and Hanoi, was also found to have dropped off passengers at the wrong location, according to officers. Police said they managed to catch the overcrowded bus thanks to a tip-off made through a hotline for reports of traffic safety violations. Another tip-off from members of the public also led police to catch a 29-seat passenger bus carrying 38 passengers as it was heading to Hanoi from the northern province of Thai Binh.



418

USED MOBILE PHONES CONFISCATED FROM A SOUTH KOREAN MAN AT SAIGON AIRPORT.

The 35-year-old man was stopped at the airport after customs officials found 418 used cell phones, worth VND3 billion, in his luggage. Among the phones were brands popular in Vietnam, like iPhones and Samsung, media reports said. The man failed to declare the phones he was carrying in his luggage, customs officials said. Police are investigating the incident. Earlier this year, another South Korean man was arrested at the same airport smuggling 200 used cell phones into the country. In 2017, a Ho Chi Minh City court sentenced two South Korean men to three years in jail each for smuggling 96 used cell phones into Vietnam. Vietnamese regulations require mobile phone importers to register for quality inspections with the Department of Telecommunications. Importers who fail to do so will be fined and ordered to re-export their goods. However, passengers arriving in Vietnam are allowed to freely carry a second mobile phone with them if it is for personal use. The second phone is still subject to duty if its value exceeds VND10 million.

USD7 BILLION

APARTMENT COMPLEX PROPOSED FOR QUANG NINH BY VINGROUP.

The VND165 trillion Ha Long Green project in the northern province, that is home to world famous natural attraction Ha Long Bay, would cover an area of nearly 3,200 hectares. It would be located alongside the Ha Long-Hai Phong expressway, connecting Ha Long Bay with the northern coastal city of Hai Phong. It would consist of 55,300 properties for both residential and commercial purposes, as well as schools and parks. Quang Ninh has been receiving significant increase in investments in recent years. It is home to Vietnam's first private airport, the Van Don International Airport, which began operations last December.



USD4 MILLION

IS HOW MUCH HANOI WILL SPEND ON CNN ADS OVER THE NEXT FIVE YEAR

to reach global audience.

Hanoi officials early this week signed a memorandum of understanding with CNN to advertise on social media and air documentaries on the popular cable news network in the 2019-2024 period. Over the next five years, the network will produce 30-second and 60-second commercials introducing Vietnam's first Formula 1 race, which will be held in April 2020 and the 31st edition of the Southeast Asian Games (SEA Games) in 2021. Both events will be held in Hanoi.

In addition, the advertising series will include 30-minute special programs that show the city's unique values to a global audience. The campaign will be aired in Asia-Pacific, Europe, the Middle East, North America and South Asia. A survey conducted by the U.K. research firm BDRC Continental shows that 92 percent of interviewed viewers said the ads on CNN have sparked interest in traveling to Hanoi, as the capital has a lot to discover in terms of food, shopping, culture and historical relics.

The city is also on top of the list of most affordable destinations in the world, with backpackers needing just USD18.29 a day in Hanoi, according to the 2019 Backpacker Index formulated by *Price of Travel*, the world's largest database of travel costs.





Nevena Stefanovic studied at the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine in Belgrade, Serbia and Wroclaw, Poland. Her primary interest are companion animals internal medicine and surgery. Nevena is now working as a veterinary surgeon at Animal Doctors International Clinic, HCMC.

Achoo!

Spotting allergies in dogs and cats

JUST LIKE PEOPLE, DOGS AND cats can have or develop allergies at any time in their lives. Unfortunately, allergies are quite common in dogs and cats of all breeds and backgrounds. Most allergies appear after the pet is six months of age, with the majority over age one or two.

Did you notice that your pet is frequently chewing or licking their feet or rubbing or shaking their ears, biting at their tail base or scooting? These can all be the symptoms of allergic reaction. In more severe cases hair loss, repeated ear and skin infections can be seen. Sneezing and runny nose is mainly seen in cats.

Unfortunately, we are unable to completely cure allergies in pets. We, therefore, focus on maximizing your understanding of what is causing the problem in order to minimize any symptoms and keep your pet as comfortable as possible (and in particular—reduce the itch!)

Why allergy occurs? Allergies in dogs and cats occur when the immune system overreacts to something that isn't really a threat. For example, reacting to food, airborne pollen or laundry detergent—none of which should cause harm. Small food or environmental particles that are causing the allergies are named allergens. It helps to group antigens into three categories and to realize that your pet can be allergic to materials from more than one category:

- What your pet eats (foods, additives, preservatives, dyes, food storage mites)
- What your pet breathes in (cigarette smoke, pollens, perfumes, particles released from carpet underlays, cat dander,

decks treated with a preservative)

- What your pet's skin comes into contact with (dust mites, fleas, soaps, wool)

The most common allergies in Vietnam, from my personal experience at the animal practice, are environmental and food allergies. When we are talking about cats, the most common reason for reaction are insect bites, like fleas, ticks or beetles. That's why you need to make sure that your pet is up-to-date with external parasite prevention.

What to do if you suspect your pet has an allergy?

Any kind of skin irritation, hair loss, runny nose, painful ears, frequent head tilting is definitely sign to seek professional help for your pet. Depends on the type of allergy, your veterinarian will choose the treatment that suits your pet the best.



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Queen Me



In conversation with Do Nhat Ha, winner of The Tiffany Vietnam 2018—the first reality show format transgender beauty pageant in Southeast Asia

Text by Jesus Lopez-Gomez

Images by Vy Lam

IT'S AROUND 11 PM ON A Friday inside of the cavernous Envy, the District 1 club that feels like a homage to some new, electronic god with its towering screen that presides over clubgoers, the newsticker-like ribbon of glowing LCD surface that winds above the edge of the dancefloor. The nearly-solid beams of multicolored light that shoot through space vertically are appropriate visual garnish. It's, then, particularly arresting when the lights go down and the EDM halts.

The towering screen switched a

large animation of red roses with a woman, Do Nhat Ha, taking center stage wearing a dress in the same color. There was no way for the audience to know that they were watching a decorated model, a contestant in the 2019 Miss International Queen transgender pageant and winner of Tiffany Vietnam 2018, the country's first beauty pageant for trans individuals. Knowing that might help explain the carelessly elegant way she moved through the stage while lip synching, the radiant smile that traveled the length of the room.

She performed Ariana Grande's liturgical homage to femininity *God is a Woman*, a song whose acuity is derived from the transgression of reimagining, assigning the gender of the deity. It's powerful assertion of identify, like when Do said "I feel I'm the real woman."

Do spoke days later in a private area above Ca's, the costume shop owned by J's Band organizer Jessica Ca. In the small room amid empty sleeping bags, Do spoke seated on the ground, physically smaller and diminished compared to her stage presence but still offering a winning smile.



The permission to be herself is given or withheld the same way one would win or lose a game, Do said recalling the first time she revealed herself to her family. “First time when I come out with my family, I don’t have any acceptance with my parents,” she said. “I just have acceptance from my sister because my sister and I are very close.”

Do held the conversation with her parents as she was leaving to study hotel management at Hoa Sen University. She said she’s come to a truce with them, but she sometimes gets a prying inquiry from a professor who wants to know why her name doesn’t match the one she enrolled in. “They see a girl, but they want to know why it’s the name of a boy,” she said.

Vietnam created regulations in 2015 allowing citizens to legally change their names and gender. Four years in, Do reported that the regulations are inconsistently observed and she is often forced to use her male birth name, as in school.

The Vietnamese government reportedly plans to discuss an omnibus transgender rights bill in 2020 to strengthen and extend the landmark 2015 legislation. The country’s estimated 300,000 transgender persons report much less healthcare access than the general population and medical support for gender reassignment remains scarce.

Do herself said when she started transitioning in 2016, she had no guidance. “The first time when I

find (out) about myself and I want to be the real girl, the real woman, I don’t have any information about that,” she said. “Everything I did by myself.”

Meeting Ca and joining J’s Band gave her a clearer sense of the path forward to transitioning. Ca gave her guidance on how to use hormones and advised her on surgeries. Do performs regularly with the nine performers that make up J’s Band, though she has since gained her own profile as a model. She won the top prize in the Miss International Queen contest among top Vietnamese transgender models in 2018, which allowed her to advance and become a finalist among models from around the world in a global ranking of the Miss International Queen winners in March of this year.

Do describes her model look and style as “elegant, a little sexy,” she said with a coquettish smile. “Sometimes sweet and sometimes strong.” On stage, she is other worldly, elevated. In other parts of her life, the model’s prestige counts for little as Do is regularly rejected by employers for gender identity. In spite of it, Do expresses optimism for her future, a job in her industry, later successes. “Sometimes, I think everything is okay. I can find my job that (will) match with my major, you know?”

She speaks while having makeup powdered onto her face with her profile stayed to a single position to the side like the face of a coin or a meticulously made statue. She could pass for aristocracy or someone else who might also have it all.

“One day I can... shine by my way,” she said. ■

Answering a question about the dangers around Vietnamese trans persons, Do’s face went neutral and her eyes fell as she reached for an iPhone in front of her and held it close to her chest like a bird fallen out of its nest. “Do you know the lotto?” she said explaining that trans people in the country often feel that their safety and livelihood is a matter of chance. “Ho Chi Minh City is an economic city and everything is fine in the city, but sometimes in the country or outside the city... they still have the violence with transgender.”





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Shared Experiences

Text by **Jesus Lopez-Gomez**

Images by **Vy Lam**

The Art of Acting

You're sitting across from Lam Vissay, a German actor with numerous Vietnamese films credits, reading a professional script for a movie that's not out yet. No pressure. He just wants you to read it again.

"Now I would like you to read it more like," Vissay pauses, considering how best to voice the morally bankrupt villain he's cast you for, "more angry."

Vissay is your instructor today in a film workshop offered by skills sharing platform Landed Vibe. But in the scene, he is not. Rather, he's your film counterpart on scene. And you're the villain, a crime boss who's been betrayed by subordinate and you have to order his murder. "You think Garvey is the snitch. Show me that you're more... hm... dangerous."

Vissay coaches and directs in a precise direct manner. "Actors, they use text just as a tool. The subtext is more important," Vissay explains in his workshop. Vissay's two decades of acting started in his home country Germany where he earned roles in feature films—one of which, *Unter Dir Die Stadt* (Under Your City), was screened at the Cannes Festival 2010—before returning to Vietnam in 2013. Here, he's acted in a number of Vietnamese films and television productions.

There are so many ways to do the same scene. "Let me give you an example, I can say 'I hate you' in two different ways," he says. "I can say, 'I hate you' and I can smile. It's like, you're my friend, you know? Or I say," he said pausing before narrowing his eyes and saying, "I hate you."

This particular tutorial offered by Landed Vibe could go a number of ways. Vissay tailors the session to the participant's interest, whether that's in filmmaking, script writing or production. He shows finesse and confidence as an acting coach too and can speak for what works for him, what directing styles there are.

"Take your time," he says before asking you to read it again, more angrily, less rushed, more conniving the fifth time. "That's it! Did you feel it?" Vissay exclaims excitedly. You can take the compliment. He's a professional, and he knows good work when he sees it.

Espresso Yourself

Step back behind the coffee bar at Toong



Lam Vissay



Toong co-working space

co-working space as part of the Landed Vibe espresso and latte workshop. There, you'll get a better sense of how many small, delicate factors go into making each cup.

On the user end, you're just served an espresso inside of a little cup, and end of story. But seeing the process from the beginning brings a new appreciation to the drink. This is a full training course where a professional barista will guide participants through everything starting with measuring the right amount of coffee, packing it into the portafilter—the handled spoon-like thing that holds the grounds—and creating a smooth surface before brewing, what those in the industry call "polishing."

Your professional trainer will be able to tell you about the importance of polishing, and how the taste of an espresso changes if the water flows unevenly through the grounds. Your caffeinated self will absorb these materials seriously.

During this workshop, participants can try their hand at a traditional

coffee drink like a hand-dripped brew or may wish to make something more interesting, like the matcha latte. A trained and very patient barista will be at your side as you angle the milk into the steam wand and heat the coffee in a very precise manner: with just a little churn and froth to make a creamy fluid.

Watch with awe as your barista makes a nice heart or leaf on the surface of their latte. He or she will look as supportively to you as your first latte art starts to take shape, some kind of shape. Spend some time with the apron and try something different to learn more about your favorite drink. ■

Landed Vibe is a platform that helps millennials turn shareable values of their profession, skill or hobby into on-demand payable activities, either for entertainment, skill learning or travel experience purposes, to be booked by millennial locals, expats and travelers alike. To explore the 80+ experiences that are available, visit landedvibe.com.

Babes and Boobs



Artist uses her whimsical
characters to promote
body-positivity

Text by Jesus Lopez-Gomez

Images by Vy Lam

THERE ARE MANY NAKED women in Sofia Holt's studio.

Some of the women are dancing, some are just standing. Some are facing the viewer, some are looking away with their backs turned exposed back and bottom facing the viewer. These women have raised a middle finger, like a challenge to those who'd prefer that the ladies be clothed, but none of them are. All are drawn carefree, seemingly living in an imagined world free of body image pressure.

"As a woman, I have a lot of pressure on me. Almost every time I speak to a woman, she agrees with me. My artwork, the women are dancing and they are happy," Holt said. "For me when I draw something I can start laughing, and I know that that's good."

The piece is part of the "Babes" collection, a series of drawings and paintings that depict naked women and female body parts. The pictures eschew straight realism for a more lively, playful look that favors heavy lines, strong colors and curves creating bodies that feel delightful. The look is something like the cartoonish, real enough feeling of something like *The Simpsons*.

There's a playfulness in it that's intentional, Holt said. Seeing women's bodies—the whole thing, legs, breasts, stomachs, backs and all—in a style like this reflects a body positivity message she means to convey to those who see the females. "It's a lot of pictures on social media, you will look at them and you will feel not enough," she said. "With this collection, I want people to be aware of this... that you're criticizing yourself. You're being negative to yourself—'There's always something wrong with my body.' There's so much brain activity that goes in this that could go to reading a book or learning a language or enjoying my life."

The women are supposed to be every woman, so there's a little of every woman scattered throughout the works. Some of the women are tall, some are short. Some are thin, and some are not. Some women are white like Holt, many are not. Usually people get it. Holt said she usually get positive responses from people who see her work. The embarrassment some women feel at seeing naked female bodies she said can sometimes give way to a conversation about where that embarrassment comes from.

Sometimes people don't get it. Occasionally, her posts on Instagram posts are flagged for elicit content citing the nudity. She remembered getting one comment from a male commenter on her work saying "who doesn't love boobs?"

Though bearing some surface similarities, the difference is in fact great between appreciating woman as sexual objects—and the appeal to that through pornography, as Instagram's



moderators have sometimes labeled Holt's work—and the serious, affirming depiction of women as beautiful outside of their erotic appeal. It's something Holt takes seriously.

As a young girl, Holt describes herself as "really big," a 78 kilogram 12-year-old. She got diabetes and trimmed her weight dramatically but still felt inadequate. "It doesn't matter. If I was big I was judging myself, my body. If I was skinny, I was judging myself, my body," she said. "I just don't want to waste time with this anymore."

Holt cited the dangers that stem from body image issues as a reason for her creating the works, too. Eating disorders, specifically anorexia, are a leading cause of female mortality for women aged 15 to 24, according to research compiled by US treatment center Mirasol Recovery Centers. They also show that untreated eating disorders will claim a fifth of the lives of those who do not treat it, a higher mortality rate than any other illness including chronic depression.

"People die from this, it's very serious," Holt said plainly. Breasts are an important artistic feature, Holt said, because they're the source of many people's first meal.

The nudity is the natural state. "The dog walks naked," she reasoned. "We are also animals."

Holt is a freelance artist and designer whose work record includes interior and industrial design,

textiles, pottery, prints, painting and furniture. She arrived in Vietnam in 2014 as part of a work agreement with furniture maker UMA. She handles lots of deadline centered work like the illustrations she was assigned in summer 2016. She remembers reaching a point where the work wasn't coming and all she could feel was the pressure. Her body was stiff and she was feeling unhappy. "It doesn't release my creativity just to sit like this," she reasons. "I was just loosening up and doing what I like instead. It just came to [drawing] some naked, dancing people having fun. It was such a relief. It just came as so natural."

Holt said sustainability is also a big part of what she does. Where possible, she uses locally sourced materials and fabrics for her work, including the "Babes" collection. Holt said she kept sustainability in mind when she decided to create a product and print collection with the "Babes." The cotton for the "Babes" bags is locally sourced, for example. The opposite of sustainability is mass production an existing item, and there aren't many other designers drawing dancing, nude, happy women.

"Why would I do the same? It's just adding more products too the world. But this is, it's coming for a purpose. It's something I want to say." ■

To see more of Sofia Holt's artwork, visit www.sofiaholt.com

Mental Health Abroad

Living abroad comes with a lot of unexpected challenges, and help is available if you need it

IF YOU'RE READING THIS, you probably don't belong here. Maybe that's okay. In a foreign country, you get to choose who you belong to. You don't belong with anyone, so you can be part of any of them. If no one belongs anywhere, then maybe we can belong everywhere.

That's at least how International Center for Cognitive Development (ICCD, www.iccd.info) co-founder and psychologist Dr. Azreal Jeffrey believes expat social dynamics work in his observation. Expat social groups can be more porous, and it can be easier to move into and between them, he observed. "Social networks are quicker here. You know, (people) know each other for a year or two and it's as if they've known each other for a long time."

That lack of stability works both advantageously and as a liability to expat communities, DR. Jeffrey said. Absent marriages or some other extraordinary commitment, expats tend to end their stay abroad after a few years to repatriate or move elsewhere. This creates an environment where long-running, deep friendships are regularly ending. "Expats can be isolated," he said. "There can be a lot of goodbyes."

The depression and the isolation that can come from not talking about it is just one of the many mental health hazards

that can befall expats, a community that can also fall prey to culture shock or has difficulty forming meaningful romantic relationships with those with different cultural backgrounds.

There's no exact description for who needs therapy, and worse yet there are active stigmas still for people who decide to seek treatment. Nevertheless, Dr. Jeffrey and the team of internationally certified therapists who work with the ICCD have become known as a reliable mental health treatment for the many foreigners who use the center's services.

A US native, Dr. Jeffrey has spent the last decade in Vietnam. When he arrived, "there was almost zero understanding of mental health." Until he co-founded the ICCD in 2015, the nation's mental health resources were largely served by expat clinicians who brought a traveling practice to Vietnam, then left. A dearth of mental health resources and, for children, developmental support meant that individuals with special needs—be they physical or cognitive, like a learning disorder—were simply excluded from schools.

The practice was especially disconcerting to Dr. Jeffrey given his country's tradition, a cultural norm as well as a legal mandate, to educate all children and provide them with the resources they need to succeed. "I come

from the States where special needs is law," Jeffrey said.

The ICCD has become a resource for a group of schools in the city who rely on the center's counseling and developmental services offered to pupils. "Many children, they don't need much to stay in school," he said. "A little bit of help, a little bit of support, and they don't have to stay home" as special needs students usually do. Some of the practices and therapies that ICCD offer are somewhat new to Vietnam—the country's first speech therapy training occurred in 2010, program ICCD co-founder Simone Maffescioni worked closely with. "It's a very new profession," she said adding there are around 10 trained speech pathologists in the entire country.

Dr. Jeffrey said the country has been quick to adopt and normalize developmental services as standard as they would be in Western environments. "As Vietnam opened to the world, parents just came looking (for these services). It became quite symbiotic," he said. "The idea that there's a stigmatization for the Vietnamese and they won't use it is wrong, it's just wrong."

Ho Chi Minh City researchers convening at a conference last month told the reporting press that the



country has 3 million young Vietnamese with mental and psychological health problems; of these, only a fifth were getting support by trained professionals.

"It's been the last 5, 7 years. People are much more aware, more worldly," he said.

Dr. Jeffrey is married to a Vietnamese woman, an experience that, combined with his work at the ICCD, has given him an understanding of gender dynamics that may seem jarring to stereotypes about Asian woman. "The quiet obedient Asian woman is far from the norm," he said. "Women here have fought in the wars, they manage businesses" as well as whatever familial responsibilities they may be accountable for. "I don't think Vietnamese women are weak at all," he said.

The ICCD's portfolio of services includes marriage counseling for couples who come from different cultural backgrounds. For the men who court, date and eventually marry Vietnamese women, Dr. Jeffrey said it behooves them to fully appreciate the number of pressures the modern woman who's grown up in this country may be experiencing: the call to realize their professional potential, to get educated, maybe also the call to marry, or to fit into someone's definition of a "good" (insert female relational pronoun here).

Mental health issues are becoming more common in conversation, Dr. Jeffrey said, but a local tradition of privacy and saving face keeps these conversations below a whisper.

Similarly, Westerners have watched a small battery of celebrities have their mental health and addictions become public—the outbursts of Kanye West who admitted to being bipolar, the drugs involved in the deaths of Carrie Fisher and Prince—but the

awareness doesn't always translate into compassionate response.

"Go on the forums, someone says 'I'm depressed,' and watch all the advice, you know what I mean?" Dr. Jeffrey said. The conversation "definitely not as enlightened as we say we are. 'Oh, you're not depressed. Do yoga and smoke pot.' Wow, you know? You look at Vietnamese, they may not be as loud, but I wouldn't say they're 'unenlightened,'" he said.

Dr. Jeffrey's goal has been to create a widely known yet discrete mental health services provider with a modest profile but a deep portfolio of services. He said clinicians there "run the gamut" and do everything, from teaching wellbeing courses for indigent children to suicide awareness to detecting and treating learning disabilities in corporate environments. To focus on the the work itself over everything, the ICCD has never run any advertising.

The center's practices are, where necessary, combined with drug therapies. Sometimes a lifestyle change can be a big thing. For his own wellbeing, Dr. Jeffrey said he's tried to stay adventurous to stay out of ruts. He joined an archery team on a whim, for example. He drives like a local, according to his wife. If belonging is so malleable, it's tantalizing to think what other features of one's identity may also be so fluid. ■



Attention to Detail

Meet Nhat Quang, an artist whose work is measured by one grain of sand at a time

Text by NPD Khanh
Images by Oi Vietnam

SAND ART USUALLY SUMMONS up images of intricate sand castles and sculptures created on wide open beaches that live for only a short time before being washed away by the tide. However, Vietnamese sand art is anything but. This decade-old art is created in tiny workshops in the city.

"If I have a thousand dong for every person who has asked me what Vietnamese sand painting is, I would probably be a billionaire by now," says Nhat Quang, one among the four who created the famous collection of sand portraits as national gifts to the 21 APEC heads of state in 2006. "But it does not matter how much I talk and talk, I can never truly explain what sand painting is. Only when I actually show them the process of how Vietnamese sand paintings are created, do they actually start to grasp the essence of what it is."

Quang was raised in a family of artists. His parents regularly acquainted him with famous artist friends in the hope he

would slowly absorb their experience and techniques. Graduating university with a degree in art, it was in those college years that he first heard about a new discipline called sand painting and later on encountered it during his work at Kim Sa, the art company that set the standards in the sand painting industry.

"I was hired, at first, as an art instructor," he explains. "I did not have the necessary skill then and I had to learn it on the job, but years spent in university and at the knees of my elders had given me the eye of an artist and a foundation that those first sand art 'workers' did not necessarily have. I was paid VND1.8 million per month. In 2005, that was just about enough for gas, coffee, and two meals per day, but I was fuelled by something more than that. You see, I was suddenly in love."

"At the time, sand art was something that was still very new and most people had never even heard of it. For an artist, dedicating himself to something so new

with no history or guarantee of success is a risky move," Quang adds. "Once I acquired the skill however, I found I simply could not let go."

"The process of training for sand painting is harrowing, requiring far more patience, dedication, and commitment than any other forms of painting. To work with something as fickle as sand, one has to dedicate himself to even the smallest detail and be prepared to redo all his work for even the tiniest mistakes. To love sand painting is to never look back. That's what I always tell my students. When my family found out I want to specialize in sand art, they protested and we fought many times, but I've never looked back."

In 2006, following the collapse of Kim Sa, Quang was invited by Y Lan, the creator of Vietnamese sand painting, to work in a team of four and create the collection of sand portraits as gifts to the international leaders at APEC 2006.

Counting Sand

Quang pours his materials into flat and thin glass containers, using a wand-shaped 'spoon' to pour layers and layers of multi-colored sand in a meticulous and painstaking process that takes days to complete until a painting takes shape and can be seen through the glass. The sand, taken from all corners of Vietnam and bearing a limitless gamut of colors, is poured, woven, threaded, pressed, coaxed until, standing together and held only by the pressure of countless grains of sand on top of each other, they create a unified vision of beauty. A true painting with defined shapes, strokes and colors, but instead of oil paints or powder, it is with sand that the artist recreates his vision in still life.

"It usually takes us four to five days to completely 'paint' one sand painting," says Quang. "But that's only the creation process. The real work starts weeks or sometimes months before that."

Pointing at the various sand bowls on his desk, he continues: "The sand that we use cannot be bought. Us sand artists cannot simply go to art supply shops and ask for a bag of blue sand and a bag of red sand and maybe that other bag of skin color sand too. The sand that is actually sold in the market is used for construction. They are coarse and unrefined and their variations of color too lacking for even the most experienced artist to mold into something worth looking at. There is only one place where we can find the tools of trade. Out in the nature."

Every other month or so, painters organize sand collecting expeditions.

"We go to coastal towns like Phan Thiet or Nha Trang for most of our needs and take back truckloads of sand. Nha Trang has a lot of fine white grains, but in terms of colors, Phan Thiet is the place to go. There are other places for special types of sand or colors that can't be found anywhere else in Vietnam as well."

When all the sand is finally brought back, the next step is the treatment

process. Bags upon bags of sand, already categorized based on their colors and texture, are put through days of sifting, grinding, filtering, drying and bleaching under the sun until they are transformed into appropriate materials for painting.

"Few people actually understand the hard work and dedication that goes behind a single sand painting," says Quang. "Even fewer look into each grain of sand that make up the tiniest part of the painting and wonder where it comes from. The artist, on the other hand, remembers all of that. We know this grain came from the sand dunes of Ninh Chu, exactly one meter under the surface, and that grain came from Tru beach of Nha Trang, collected right at the first touch of dawn when the sand is still wet with the sea and the salt, before the place is swarmed with swimmers and tourist. We remember all of that. We know where they come from. We see the stories behind the littlest details in our creations." ■





In Line With *Fashion*

Style and life coach Bui Viet Ha opens up about body imperfection, divorce and dressing for the beauty within

Text by Michael Arnold
Image Provided by Bui Viet Ha

NOT EVERYONE CAN BE SO

objectively beautiful as to be swept up into a professional modeling career at the age of 17 in a country where such a thing doesn't even exist yet. For Bui Viet Ha—a woman who had zero intentions to enter the public eye before this fairy tale actually happened to her—it was a transformative journey that ultimately taught her what beauty really is, and why it's important for Vietnamese women to aspire to the kind of beauty that emerges from the inside out.

"So many Vietnamese woman I talk to lack confidence," says Ha, whose latest project *Styleline* is an agency coaching women to recognize, celebrate and manifest their own personal beauty. "They have a very negative body image. A lot of them have so many clothes in their closet, because 'my mother, my husband, my colleague bought that for me.' They wear anything that people put on them."

Ha spent six extraordinary years in San Francisco, where she discovered her passion for working as a personal stylist. By then a seasoned local media personality—she was one of the original presenters on YanTV and a household name at the time—Ha returned to Vietnam and established a business to help local women to benefit from her discoveries.

"To me, fashion is like math," she explains. "You have to understand the basic formula of everything in order to be creative. It's a science about the body shape. It turns out women fall into eight different shapes—it depends on where you live, the demographic, the culture, the way you're eating—the shape may be a little different. For Vietnamese women, I know now they fall into five shapes. Every single woman here will be one of those five."

"So when you know the shape, you understand proportion," she continues. "And what is beauty? It's the harmony between the bottom and the top. If you understand your shape, you can look good in anything because you know what kind of cut and silhouette looks good and complements your shape."

Sharing her discoveries turned out to be more difficult than Ha expected. Starting out with three businesswomen

who personally asked for her help, she spent a great deal of time explaining the dress code and how a fashionable style could help them in the professional environment—but ultimately hit a wall.

"I changed them," says Ha. "I worked with them, I talked, and observed their lifestyle, and chose the right style for them, and then we went shopping and they were very happy. And one week later, when I saw them, they were back to their old style. I said what happened? They said, 'oh yeah, my husband said I look strange with this style, this is not you.'"

"They were very confident and successful in the work environment, but they were so insecure about themselves," she observes. "They let what people said about their look affect them so much, even a very powerful CEO—if there's just one comment from somebody saying 'Oh, why are you wearing that?' they lose their whole confidence."

Body Image

Ha reasons that Vietnamese women tend to suffer from a particularly negative body image as an element of the local culture of brutal honesty.

"That's really the impact of the Vietnamese culture—people being honest," she sighs. "If they see you're fat, they just say it out loud! And this is part of our culture. It's not meant to harm you, it's just what they think. But it hurts for the people who hear it, it makes you insecure. Sometimes some of those voices stick in your head for a very long time."

In fact, despite her lucky start in life, Bui Viet Ha's personal story is a parable on exactly this issue. Her striking look was a blessing that brought her opportunities in media and entertainment, which she quickly swapped out for a far more lucrative path in business and marriage to her teenage sweetheart at the age of 21. That house of cards began to topple after her pregnancy made predictable changes to her figure—transforming the bombshell model into a human woman.

"When I had my son, I gained so much weight—and my body changed after that, so I could never go back even though I was still really young," she remembers. "After my son was six

months old, then I started to go back to work. I opened the closet and found I had nothing to wear, nothing that fit me. That was the first time in my life that I felt insecure about my body. I felt ugly."

From the Inside Out

No longer the "same wife", the sea change in her figure affected her marriage—which promptly ended in a painful divorce. The ensuing depression cost her three businesses, and she was bankrupt by the age of 26. Fortunately she discovered the self-help industry, reading Jack Canfield's *Chicken Soup* series and attending courses and seminars run by Tony Robbins and the like. By the time her confidence was sufficiently repaired to start out again as a television personality, her steps to heal herself emotionally had resulted in a conviction about the importance of healing from within.

"So—self-development, and my bad experience with the first three clients when I was here," Bui Viet Ha sums up as she traces the origins of her *Styleline* business. "I decided I wanted to learn more about psychology, about the way people think. I took a course in neuro-linguistic programming, and I qualified as a master practitioner, and as a life coach, and it changed my life. Then I understood it at a deeper level, and that's when I started to create content for *Styleline* in the early stages, with the concept of 'beauty inside out'. I want to change the way people think about themselves, using NLP techniques to change their mindset and help to build their confidence, and then give them all the fundamental knowledge about style and colors so they know how to express it from the outside."

"I think that what I'm doing right now is just to help women to understand that you are not alone," she concludes, "and what you feel about yourself right now is very normal. It's just a matter of, do you want to fix that or not—do you want to change that image of yourself inside your mind or not? And if you want to change, I can help you. So many women have changed and they've been happier and they're so much more confident. I think that's my job and my joy with *Styleline*—that's what we want to do." ■

Pet of the Month



A Beautiful Rose

Rose is part Phu Quoc ridgeback with brindle colorings and a huge warm smile, however, that has not always been the case. When she first arrived at ARC, she was in bad shape with blindness in both eyes, severe malnutrition and a bad skin condition that had caused a lot of her fur to fall out. With access to proper treatment and nutritious food, she regained full sight in one of her eyes and, as you can see, has lovely healthy, shiny fur.

She is about 5 years old, so well past the puppy phase, a little shy at first but warms up very quickly. She likes to go for a good walk in the morning then spends the rest of the day chilling. She would suit someone who enjoys exercise and ideally lives in a house with a garden. Rose has been joining the ARC walks each day and is getting pretty good on the leash, but will need someone with a little patience to continue her training. She is also muzzle trained, which makes it easy for vet visits and travel. She enjoys the company of other dogs, but we feel she is not suitable for a household with young children under 13.



Images by Sawano Newell



Image by Mel Cartlidge

The Marvelous Mr. Maron

Maron is a beautiful white boy with a cute tabby ear and striped tail. He's currently in the cat room in Thao Dien and is such a loving young cat. Maron's fur is as soft as a rabbit's, making it impossible to walk by him without reaching out to stroke that lovely coat, while his mild manner makes it difficult to leave without wanting to spend more time with him. Maron was fostered in a loving home and moved reluctantly by his fosters to the cat room so he could be readily available for adoption.

At the moment, Maron is the only male kitten in the cat room. He doesn't seem to mind that and, in fact, gets along quite well with the other females. It is obvious, though, that Maron's priority is spending time with our volunteers. He was left at Saigon Pet Clinic as a small kitten, so we don't know Maron's early socialization opportunities, but what we do know is that he is now well accustomed to spending time with people and other cats, and is comfortable in a variety of surroundings. Maron is about ten months old, neutered and vaccinated, and is a lovely calm chap ready for his forever home. ■

The best way to meet Rose and Maron and feel all the love that both have to offer would be to make an appointment through arcpets@gmail.com.



Animal Rescue+Care
VIETNAM

URGENT

Vietnam animal lovers!

What is ARC? ARC is a non-profit volunteer group founded in 2010 to help abused and abandoned animals in Ho Chi Minh City. ARC is 100% run by donations of time and money.

What does ARC do? ARC volunteers provide care, socialization and rehabilitation for rescued animals and help to find loving adopters and forever homes.

What are volunteer opportunities? ARC is seeking volunteers to help with:

- Dog walking, occurring daily at 8:30 am and 4:30 pm in Thao Dien, District 2
- Cleaning of ARC Cat House and Dog Aisle
- Fostering of cats and dogs
- Adoption of cats and dogs
- Answering email and social media inquiries

How can you help? In summer many ARC volunteers go on holiday, so there is an urgent need for cat fosters and dog walkers. If you would like to help with these or any of the above activities, or to make a donation, please send an email to arcpets@gmail.com.

www.arcpets.com



ARC has cared for and rehomed hundreds of animals, but volunteers are needed to keep these efforts going strong.
Thank you for your interest, ARC looks forward to hearing from you!



Mind Over Matter

A visually impaired woman's path to becoming a national judo champion

Text by Naomi Sutorius-Lavoie

Images by Vy Lam

Tuyen Tran, top

TUYEN TRAN'S PATH TO

independence and self-empowerment began seven years ago, the day she set foot in the dojo for her first judo class. Visually impaired since birth, by the age of 12, Tuyen had already undergone three separate eye surgeries to correct cataracts. But the health problems didn't end there, at the age of 15, Tuyen underwent yet another surgery, this time to repair a leaky heart valve.

With limited vision and a weak heart, it was with great trepidation that Tuyen took those first few steps onto the mat. It wasn't "love at first throw" but over the weeks and months that followed, her confidence grew slowly as did her sense of spatial awareness and her balance. The latter being extremely important for those living with visual impairments, as they are more prone to falls related to uncertainty of movement.

Judo, known in martial arts circles as "the gentle way" is particularly helpful for individuals with visual impairments as it relies primarily on one's sense of touch, grip and balance. It also teaches techniques for falling safely and rolling,

and of course self-defence. These techniques can make all the difference in preventing injuries for the visually impaired in real life scenarios.

According to the World Health Organization, Vietnam is home to approximately three million visually impaired people. In this country, visual impairments and poverty often go hand in hand because more than 50 percent of Vietnam's visually impaired are suffering from conditions like cataracts that are treatable and even preventable if they had access to early detection and corrective treatments.

While cataracts are often thought to affect older people, in countries like Vietnam they are a huge problem for children too. Cataracts can be present from birth, or may develop as a result of eye injuries. Although cataracts are not difficult to treat, it's vital for children that the condition is caught early or it can cause the eye to stop developing, meaning sight can never be properly restored, as was the case for Tuyen.

In Vietnam, employment options for the visually impaired are limited. The

"luckiest" are able to find employment in IT but for many, the best-case scenario is to be a massage therapist, as "blind massages" are popular with tourists. Those less fortunate and stuck in a cycle of poverty mostly sell lottery tickets or beg for a living.

Visually impaired women face additional barriers integrating into Vietnamese society since they are much more vulnerable to harassment and sexual violence. As a result, many visually impaired women feel safer at home and are not fully active in society at large, living a more sedentary and isolated existence. This isolation keeps them in a cycle of dependence on caregivers, unable to undertake simple daily activities and more likely to fall prone to low self-esteem, depression and anxiety all linked to low self-efficacy.

Tuyen is the exception to every single one of these rules. Despite being raised in difficult circumstances she manages a life of independence in which judo plays a big role. Tuyen lives independently, a rarity for a young woman in Vietnam, let alone one with a disability and sells cosmetics over the Internet. After multiple surgeries

to restore as much sight as possible and with the aid of glasses, her vision is still less than 50 percent but it is enough to manage some computer work which helps her make ends meet.

She's a spirited young woman who says she loves fighting. "It makes me feel like a warrior," says Tuyen. "When I'm fighting, I feel relaxed and excited at the same time." Her favorite technique is the Ippon Seoi Nage, a one armed shoulder throw and one of the highest scoring judo techniques in a competition. Tuyen dreams of a career in digital marketing "so I can expand my online cosmetics business, but mostly so I can help my dojo and encourage more visually impaired women to train and learn to protect themselves."

Dr. Dai Nghai Ly, Executive Vice President of the Vietnam Judo Federation, explains that judo is an excellent choice of physical activity for the visually impaired and is the compulsory physical education required for all students in the Blind Schools throughout HCMC beginning in Grade 2. The main difference in the practice is that for the visually impaired, the grips are secured before a fight and then training and muscle memory just kick in.

Dr. Dai explains that "Judo is an all-encompassing sport that challenges many elements of human movement such as strength, flexibility, balance, coordination and agility." Improving any of these five pillars can have an extremely meaningful impact on a visually impaired person's life on or off the mat.

Instructors use two main methodologies to train visually impaired judokas; auditory and kinaesthetic. Through the auditory learning technique, the instructor speaks or makes a sound, such as clapping to cue or thoroughly explain a technique. Through the kinaesthetic method, the instructor executes a technique on the student and encourages them to touch and feel the angle of their body, the grips and the momentum needed to execute a throw correctly. These work best in tandem, slowly talking a student through a technique while executing it at the same time.

"Frankly, it's not very different from training sighted judoka's," says Dr. Dai,

"at least from a trainer's perspective. In fact, it is not uncommon for visually impaired judoka's to train or fight with sighted competitors because very few accommodations are needed in this sport."

Unsurprisingly at first, many visually impaired students are afraid of the throws and falls so the instructor's main role is to work on making them feel more comfortable and confident on the mat. An instructor may begin a class with an orientation of the room and mat area. This allows the visually impaired individual to become aware of his or her surroundings through exploration and verbal descriptions, noting any potential hazards and allows the student to be as self-sufficient as possible. This basic orientation is generally followed up with games and exercise drills, which first create a sense of trust and community amongst the judokas and the instructor. Once everyone is comfortable with falling and rolling, the class will move on to real techniques and eventually fights.

Dr. Dai is no stranger to coaching Tuyen to reach her full potential, in fact he was her coach in 2018 when she fought and won the gold medal at the National Para Games held in Danang last April. According to him, "Tuyen is an exceptional athlete. She learns techniques so quickly and performs them with such efficiency. She's just brilliant." Under his coaching, Tuyen trains three times a week at the HCMC Sports Center alongside two other champion judokas who are also visually impaired. Once a month, she trains with a sighted team and more than keeps up.

Seven years since her first judo class, today at the age of 21, Tuyen is one of the top visually impaired female judokas in Vietnam but she has her heart set on something even bigger, to compete internationally at the ASEAN Paralympic Games in 2020. Needless to say, this will take a lot of time, dedication, sweat and training, but she's up for it. The mat is after all where she feels her best.



Art & The Designer

European life and cultures, along with the accumulation of her research on Eastern - Western fine art, have brought fashion designer Thuy Nguyen an essential approach to contemporary art. Passion, consistency and endless effort have empowered Thuy to stay firm and successful in her fashion design career loaded with artistry to build up her very own brand - Thuy Design House.













Photographer: **Milor Tran**
Model: **Quynh Anh**
Art Director and Stylist: **Yen Nguyen**
Assistant Stylist: **Tien Nguyen, Tan Lee**
Makeup: **Khoa Le**
Hair: **Thai Nguyen Hoang**
Costumes: **Thuy Design House**
Accessories: **Lovisa Vietnam**
Props Design: **Ly Binh Son**



Make/Create
at
Saigon's Workshops



Chipping Away

How woodcarving can soothe the spirit

Text by **Carly Naaktgeboren**

Images by **Vy Lam**



IF YOU TURN OFF OF BUSTLING

Bui Vien, enter a retro building, and follow a winding staircase, you will find the bright, breezy creative retreat of Tay Tay Workshop. “Tay Tay” means “hands hands”, and hands will be your main tool in this three-hour class focused on woodcarving.

Started by instructors Huong, Buzen and Hung, the idea of Tay Tay was born three months ago, “I hosted homestays and it gave me the chance to talk to a lot of people from around the world. I heard a lot of questions about HCMC, and I realized it’s a destination for history, for the war. As a local, I know the city is so much more than that, so I wanted to do something new for the tourists, we are more than history. Especially activities that work with art,” says Huong. “I did interior design for five years and wanted to release stress by doing handicraft. Any activity that uses hands. So when we met, we started to think about the workshop

and try anything we can to think about wood and the culture of hands,” says Buzen. “We thought ‘we use wood every day, why don’t we do that?’”

After speaking with several skilled wood craftsmen, Buzen and Huong met Hung “and he was the perfect guy for us to meet” says Buzen. Hung is young, but has ten years of experience, “It is the traditional work of his family. When he finished his junior year of high school, he stopped studying and followed his uncle to learn it, but after two years he decided studying was still very important and went back to school. After he finished high school, he went to university to study the fine art of wood sculpting. He has been practicing his skill since 13 and he is the youngest in his school and his major and he has the highest skills,” says Huong. “We had the idea but not the skill and it took a long time to find the right guy. We received a lot replies





simple to complicated and we want to follow step-by-step to make sure students feel supported. Our purpose of the class is helping people to learn basic techniques of the sculpture, not to finish the art and forget everything. Then they can do it a home. This is why we encourage them to practice from short lines to long lines to many more challenges. Then they feel very comfortable. Every artwork at our place is unique. Then you care and paint and if they need advice we will teach them how to transform their idea to their artwork more effectively," says Huong.

Once students have practiced using their mallets and gauges, they select a design of their choice and cut it into a smooth, carefully selected, circular piece of wood. After painting it, their work is complete.



Classes last around three hours, but can go longer if students prefer a more complex design. Classes are capped at five people and are exceptionally personalized. "We want to create a memory," says Huong.

With a goal of a new kind of tourism for Vietnam, one that values the creativity of the city and the possibility of tourists seeing Saigon from a different perspective, Tay Tay Workshop offers a unique creative experience that allows class goers to check out of the fast paced world outside and into a physical, slow and focused one.

Says Huong, "It is a very ancient technique, it is not unique to Vietnam but it is maybe the first technique of humanity, human kind. The technique has developed year-by-year and nowadays people can do it by machine, but we want to keep the original hand design. The imperfect is your perfection. New life is too easy and too fast, we want people to come to our place and take a breath. Even though the hands are the hardest working part of the body, even though they may not be perfect, they're yours, it's your own unique body. Respect your imperfections." ■

Classes run every day except Thursday, from 9am-2pm and 4pm-9pm (three to five-hour running time based on level of designs). You can book classes with Tay Tay Workshop on www.facebook.com/TAYTAYworkshop or taytayworkshop.com.

and they said we couldn't do it in three hours. We started to worry about our crazy idea and then we met Hung. He gave us the the hope for our project and he said yes to our idea and together we completed our dream," says Buzen.

In the class, students are first taught the basic skills of this style of woodcarving by learning about the tools needed and line cutting techniques before moving onto more difficult designs. "When you come to class we want to introduce traditional sculpture, then we move onto practicing from



A Tangled Web

Wordpress SOS rescues a website hostage

Text by Rebecca Jones
Image by Vy Lam

RUNNING A WEBSITE IS NOT FUN.

Rewarding? Perhaps. And for entrepreneurs and small business owners it's absolutely necessary. But is it fun? Oh no: no it is not. And this, dear readers, your writer can say from bitter experience.

For over six months I have been managing a well-established UK blog that runs on Wordpress, during which time I have had to learn on my feet while being roundly ignored by our developer—something I have since discovered is almost par for the course for small business owners.

Imagine my joy, then, to discover a workshop dedicated to Wordpress right here in Saigon. Founded by German-born designer Anita M, the workshops happen from all-female co-working venue Co-Space in Thao Dien and cover almost anything anyone needs to know about Wordpress.

Anita has a colorful career history: having trained and worked as a designer in her early career, she later managed private fine art collections in New York. This she did for more than ten years before recently moving with her husband to Ho Chi Minh City. Here, with the art scene still in its infancy, Anita has rediscovered her joy for designing websites.

She explains: "These days, I think everyone should be familiar with how a website works. Especially small business owners—many people run their businesses from Facebook here in Vietnam, which is ok, but what if Facebook stops operating? It's important to have your own website. And with Wordpress the most widely used publishing platform, it's a good place to start."

The joy Anita takes from sharing her skills with Saigoners means she is planning to expand, and will soon be launching a new class, Turn Your Passion into Profit, later in the summer. With it she plans to show people how they too can set up courses—both face to face and online—through which they can share and cash-in on their own skills and hobbies.

Cradle to Code

For now, though, Anita runs three Wordpress courses. The first course is her Wordpress Web Design workshop, which takes participants through how to start a website from scratch. Taken in three sessions over three weeks, the course covers finding a domain name, a host and then the Wordpress design process, making it perfect for those with little to no experience.

The second course—Share Your Adventures with Wordpress—is aimed

more at those looking to develop public or private sites to share pictures or stories with friends and family. This, says Anita, is perfect for travel or food bloggers, or parents with family members living abroad that would still like to share in the day-to-day lives of grandchildren, nieces or nephews.

Finally, and the newest addition to the stable, Anita offers Wordpress SOS, a course designed for struggling business owners who may have already designed—or paid someone to design—their website, but have now lost their bearings. As highlighted above, this described me perfectly and so was the course I opted for.

Back Up To Basics

Filled with the usual dread that consumes me upon even thinking about making long-needed changes to this website, I was instantly put at ease upon meeting Anita: her bright and breezy manner is a world away from the pale, hunched-over grumpy male developers I have so far encountered.

First and foremost Anita reassured me that mine is—as I have mentioned before—not a unique situation and that, in fact, she had had seen a client just before me that is in the exact same online 'hostage situation.'

"It's very common—developers create a website and then disappear, and people are left with out-dated sites they can't manage as they don't have the access that they need, which also means they can't leave. This is one of the main reasons I decided to start this course—so I can show people that it's really not so scary to click a few buttons and take back control."

As a first step, Anita showed me how to back up my site, which means that—worst-case scenario, any changes can be reversed while I can also rest assured I have a copy should my developer refuse to co-operate. In the latter case—a nightmare for a business owner—Anita assured me that the site could be started afresh with the same web address on a new server without disrupting the business.

Secondly, we went through some basic housekeeping, looking at where storage can be optimised to ensure the site is running as fast as it can, which includes getting rid of unwanted images and plug-ins, while we also covered some basic SEO tips that can be easily integrated into day-to-day operations. Anita even offered some suggestions on layout and design, advising on what might make a better user experience.

She says: "Ultimately, the aim of these classes is to show people that

they needn't be afraid of either creating or running a website: it's honestly not as complicated as some people think. It's always really pleasing to see people's faces light up in our sessions when we are able to solve a problem they have been struggling with for so long. This is why I do it."

After our two-hour session there were certainly one or two such moments for me, and I left with a glow of empowerment the likes of which I haven't felt in months. That afternoon, as if by divine providence, my developer also answered an email—a rarity. However it doesn't matter now—thanks to Anita and Wordpress SOS, I am no longer an online hostage. ■

Wordpress Courses at Co-Space:

- Wordpress Web Design Workshop

- Share Your Adventures With Wordpress

- Wordpress SOS - Troubleshoot Your Website

Co-Space members receive discounted prices

To keep up-to-date with Anita's new courses, including the upcoming Turn Your Passion Into Profit, visit www.anitam.com or www.facebook.com/anitamcom





Sweet Ambition

Learn how to make your favorite desserts so you don't have to share

Text by Rebecca Jones

Images by Vy Lam

AS MOST WOULD AGREE, Vietnamese food is some of the most delicious in the world. From foreigner favorite *bun thit nuong*, to iconic *pho bo*, to crowd pleasing appetizer *goi cuon*, to the joys of a fresh, crispy *banh xeo*: the list is endless. One thing lacking in the country's culinary pantheon, however, is cake.

As in most Asian nations, when it comes to dessert, the Vietnamese like to keep things light, be it with a *che* or a *banh dau xanh*, rather than finish with the type of weighty, chocolate and butter laden treats preferred by Westerners. However, founders of Kayke Didier Tayoro and Joel Zorrilla are hoping to change all that.

A professional pastry chef trained in France, Tayoro has more than a decade of experience creating delectable treats in some of the world's most demanding kitchens. This includes at home in France, four years working for Le Pain Quotidien in London, as well as restaurants in New Zealand and more than five years working for Maison Marou here in Vietnam.

In January, spotting a gap in the

market, Tayoro joined forces with Zorrilla, a passionate foodie from Ecuador who has been eating and blogging his way around the world for some years. In February they launched Kayke—Saigon's newest bakery and culinary school that is developing a strong focus on workshops for both the everyday amateur as well as the aspiring pastry chef.

Despite having launched less than six months ago, the duo's workshops have already proved popular. Among the first to launch was a vegan baking workshop, which Zorrilla says reflects the fact that Kayke's best sellers are its vegan treats: the Kayke Vegan Donut Bites and Kayke Vegan Macaroons.

Mirror, Mirror on the Cake

Since then Tayoro and Zorrilla have also run a Berry Scones and Raw Chocolate Cake workshop—which Zorrilla says was a big hit. Most recently, however, the team added a Cake Mirror Glazing workshop, which *Oi* had the privilege to attend.

Currently Kayke is run out of Tayoro's kitchen, and so to hold their events they team up with Audrey Pravata at Cuisine

Cuisine, who allows the duo to rent her luxuriously appointed professional kitchen. Normally used for Audrey's high-end culinary classes, the kitchen is a fine setting for an evening of baking fun.

On the evening we attended we were joined by a select few other amateur bakers, including one already devoted client and her daughter, who have pledged to attend all of Kayke's classes and it was soon easy to see why.

The well-structured class began with an hour of cake sponge 101, during which Tayoro ran all participants through the fine art of creating a winning cake foundation: from mixing and pouring the best batter to perfect oven temperatures and baking times.

This was then followed by a complementary glass of French wine—a feature of all Kayke's workshops—before the group moved on to part two: show-stopping mirror glazing. A tricky technique for even seasoned bakers, results may not be perfect first time, however all participants left with a feeling that it is at least possible—if only with a little practice.



Didier

Team Bakes

Currently, Zorrilla says the firm is doing well in terms of sales of its baked goods—with newly launched *Marketo*. *com* featuring three of its baked treats for online orders, while customers can—and frequently do—order through the Kayke Facebook page (www.facebook.com/KAYKESGN).

Workshops, however, are an area that Zorrilla is very keen to expand. One idea is to provide on-going classes for students at Ho Chi Minh City's many international schools who may be keen to take up a career in pastry. With no formal cooking schools in the city, the duo hope to fill the gap for those teenagers perhaps wishing to pursue culinary studies in Europe.

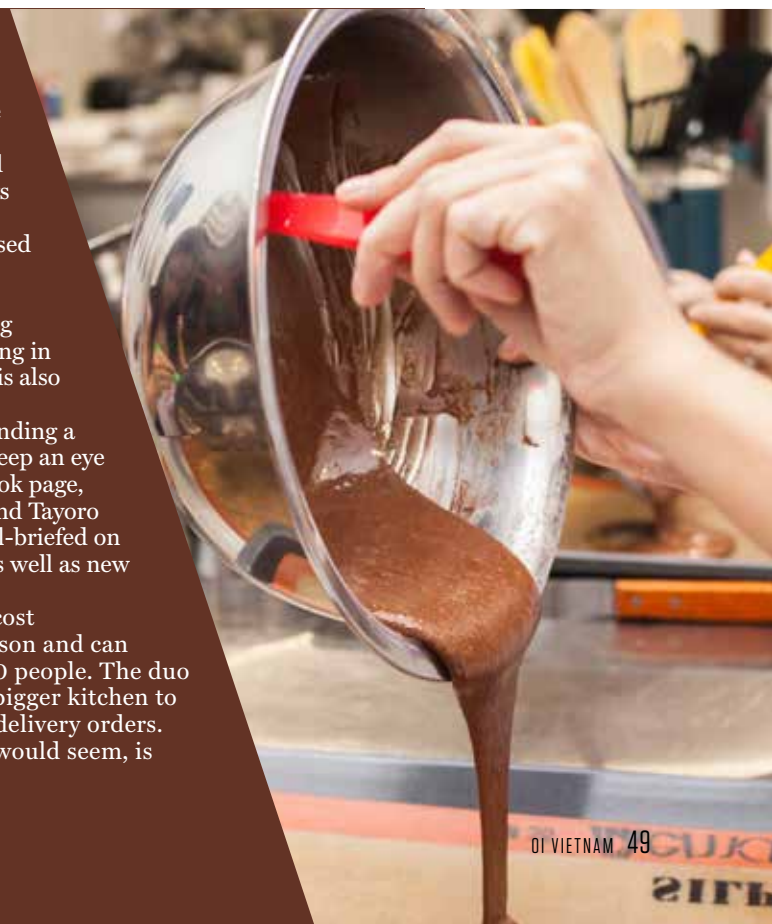
The corporate world is also a potential target, with Zorrilla having spotted a gap in the burgeoning teambuilding market that is currently flourishing among companies throughout the city. Similar to the Mirror Glazing workshop, Zorrilla says these are likely to be half-day events where Tayoro will focus on bakes that need a team to

work together to create great cakes.

As vegans continue to be some of Kayke's most loyal and devoted customers, Zorrilla says they plan to run many more workshops focussed on plant based baking methods while gluten free baking—something that is increasingly rising in popularity in Saigon—is also on the agenda.

Those keen on attending a Kayke workshop can keep an eye on the bakery's Facebook page, were Zorrilla says he and Tayoro will keep followers well-briefed on all upcoming events, as well as new product launches.

Classes currently cost VND800,000 per person and can accommodate up to 10 people. The duo is also planning on a bigger kitchen to accommodate pastry delivery orders. The cake business, it would seem, is booming. ■



IRIE AND *My Lips*

How one woman is on a mission to create her own organic Vietnamese beauty brand and teach others along the way

Text by **Katie Kinnon**
Images by **Vy Lam**

AROUND A LARGE WOODEN table in the Pandora Studio in Thao Dien (www.facebook.com/PandoraStudioVN), Queenie and Huong, the workshop facilitators, make sure each participant has a small glass beaker, a long glass mixer, a plastic spoon, gloves, a small spatula, a sheet of plastic and a list of ingredients in front of them. This is everything they will need to create their own, unique lipstick.

Firstly, the participants need to calculate the percentages of each ingredient so that they can be correctly weighed, the ingredients comprise of waxes, oils and color powder. Queenie explains, “We use five different types of waxes to ensure that the lipsticks will hold and last in the Saigon heat, the waxes help to make it stable and not melt.” Queenie ensures me that her products are organic and natural—all ingredients are FDA approved and imported from the US.

Queenie has been running cosmetic, soap and candle workshops for almost a year now. Her interest in creating her own products began four years ago when she started experimenting with different recipes and ingredients. Queenie has a degree in International Relations and now splits her time working in the Bank of Taiwan and running her workshops.

With no background in science or cosmetics, Queenie set about learning how to create organic products by herself, “I spent the first two years learning techniques and creating recipes and then for the past two years I have been perfecting the recipes and teaching people how to make their own products.” She now has over 20 recipes for all her homemade, organic products, including lipsticks, blush, foundation, shampoo, soaps, candles and more. For lipstick alone, she has a variety of recipes to make them matte, semi-matte, a balm or a lip gloss.

Once all of the waxes have been weighed and added to the beaker, the oils can be added, these help to make the lipstick smooth and nourishing on the lips. Next, the group must decide what color they will make their lipstick.

Participants can mix reds, oranges, pinks, browns and more to create their own unique shade, however, Queenie advises to “not start with a purple or brown base as it can be hard to mix in brighter colors and make it lighter.” Using the small spatula, the participants have to repeat the process of cutting up the powders and smoothing them out until they have a fine, non-grainy mix that can be added to the wax and oils.

Huong, the owner of Pandora, has worked with Queenie for a while now and provides the space for the workshops to be held. Huong partners with local craft talent and frequently hosts a variety of events and workshops, she also runs her own workshops including marbling art and jewellery creation. Huong has been running Pandora for two years and has recently moved to Thao Dien, and as a talented artist she has a fantastic collection of paintings as well as her own unique baby clothes line. She hopes to host more workshops and even teach people how to make their own clothes.

Before the color can be added, the wax and oil mix needs to be melted down by placing the beakers into a large pot of boiling water, gently stirring it using the long mixer. Once the mix has completely melted, the beaker is taken out of the water and the color powder is mixed in. This has to be done quickly otherwise the wax will harden. The beaker then goes back into the hot water until the mix has reached 80 degrees Celsius, which can be checked with a laser thermometer.

When it has done so, the mix is then whisked to ensure that all of the powder, wax and oils have combined. This only needs to be done for a few seconds then it can be poured into the lipstick mould. The liquid needs time to set before it can be taken out and put into the lipstick container. Queenie has sourced stylish containers for the lipsticks to be stored in and due to the amount of lipstick mix everyone can take home two lipsticks, one for themselves and one for a friend. Learning how to create your own lipstick is a very interesting and fun process that is great to do

with friends, it's also a good way to meet people in the local area and bond over something you have in common.

In the future, Queenie hopes to have her own fully organic and natural Vietnamese product line. She tells me “a lot of people use cosmetics from Korea, but I think it would be really great to have an organic, natural Vietnamese beauty brand.” ■





Quan & Huong



Reinventing Tradition



The national costume of Vietnamese heritage has become a street style trend. Now fashion designers want to change the traditional ao dai. Some have printed lines of poetry on the panels so they look modern and fashionable. Other designers have taken inspiration from Vietnam's ethnic minorities. They have visited villages and studied traditional designs and symbols such as suns, stars, crosses and stripes. They have added these patterns to the ao dai, so Vietnamese women can continue to wear this unique dress for any occasion any time of day.







Designer: **Duong Ngoc (Katty)** for
The Kat House (14 Nguyen Huu Cau, D1)

Wine & Dine

BIG PIG BBQ & BEER / IMAGE BY VY LAM







Grilled Bliss

Love for barbecue in the city is strong, and Big Pig BBQ & Beer is set to fill the love

Text by **Daniel Spero**
Images by **Vy Lam**

ORIGINALLY OPENED AT THEIR Truong Son location (46 Truong Son, Tan Binh) by the airport, due to its growing popularity **Big Pig BBQ & Beer** has expanded to two more locations, one in Hoc Mon and one that opened last month in District 3 (12 Cao Thang, D3), which we visited for this review.

Walking in the ambiance is one of a sports-themed bar and grill, with large screen TVs switched onto sports channels (as just one example, Big Pig shows the entire AFL football season). Prominent on one wall is a sizeable display showing all of the craft beers, both draft and bottled, that are available from East West, Pasteur Street, Rooster, C-Brewmaster and more. An advantage that Big Pig has over the competition is that their beer prices are comparatively lower.

After taking in our surroundings we sat at a high table in the comfortably temperature controlled room. The



menu offers a large selection of traditional bar and grill fare: salads, sandwiches, burgers, pizza, pasta, steaks, ribs, seafood and more. They also have hot pots, oysters, a good dessert selection and a tasty looking breakfast menu of hearty plates, such as Saigon's Best Breakfast (VND150,000), which includes two eggs, home smoked bacon, sautéed mushrooms, grilled tomato and roasted potatoes served with mashed avocado and a toasted baguette.

While there were so many appetizing choices we started with the quinoa and lentil salad (VND190,000) that includes quinoa, lentils, mixed greens, avocado, cherry tomato and asparagus tossed in a balsamic dressing and topped with grilled Halloumi cheese and fresh mint. Most of the BBQ joints in the city either skip salads altogether or underwhelm with what they have, but the salads at Big Pig are on par with the quality of their grilled meats. The lentils and quinoa were fluffy and chewy, the veggies were crispy and the cheese was subtle and savory, while the balsamic was nicely tart and fruity with hints of the mint popping up in the occasional bite. For vegetarians or health-conscious eaters accompanying their more carnivorous mates, you'll really enjoy the salads on offer. The tabbouleh salad (VND160,000) and the summer salad (VND150,000) also look fresh and exceptional.

We soon had a difficult choice to make: Do we want pizza, pasta, something from the grill, something else? We went with the biggest meat selection (well I did already ate a healthy salad) on the menu since, after all, Big Pig is a BBQ joint, and we paired that with a few fried sides. We ordered The American Platter, which includes German sausage, ribs, prawn skewers and homemade bacon (VND540,000). We accompanied it with french fries (VND75,000) and onion rings (VND70,000).

When the American platter came it took up half the table: the sausage was at least a foot long and thick, there were half a dozen ribs, the bacon was piled high, the prawns were large and separated on the skewers by grilled peppers and onions. There were also three sauces, barbeque, honey mustard and a spicy, yet sweet chili sauce, all house-made. The pork for the sausage, ribs and bacon is imported from Poland and Germany and the bacon and sausage are prepared in-house.

The bacon was thick and chewy with touches of crispiness around the edges. Big Pig takes their bacon seriously, marinating it for seven days before it's smoked. The smoky flavor was distinctive and I envisioned how amazing this would be paired with a couple of scrambled eggs and some hash browns. At this point the server set down the french fries and onion



Chocolate mud pudding with vanilla ice cream



Onion Rings

rings, straight from the fryer, so after I swallowed the bacon I detoured to the sides while they were piping hot. The fries were a spot-on replica of McDonald's, which are consistently listed at the top of the world rankings for fast food fries. The onion rings were large, a crispy golden brown batter curled around a thick section of fresh, crunchy onion.

Next we tried the ribs, which were coated in a tangy, tomato-based marinade. The meat fell off the bone, which I dipped in the chili sauce for an added kick. The German sausage was delightful, salted slightly and quite juicy, seamlessly matched with the house-made honey mustard. Meanwhile, the large prawns were

buttery, sweet and flavorful.

And to finally finish off our lunch, we ordered a chocolate mud pudding with vanilla ice cream (VND120,000). The ice cream comes from Fanny and they have a number of flavors available (VND35,000/scoop). This was rich and sweet, the brownie soft and warm with the liquid chocolate center mixing with the melting vanilla ice cream as we finished every last bite.

They have a three-course set menu for lunch from 11am-2pm Monday through Friday, normally VND199,000, but currently being offered for the promotional price of VND99,000. Big Pig BBQ & Beer is sure to satisfy your hunger for beer, BBQ, bar food and sports. ■



Quinoa and lentil salad



The American Platter

Inspired Dining

Behind Ben Thanh Market, on the second floor of a building across the street, is an intriguing foodie experience

Text by Daniel Spero

Images by Vy Lam and Xi Xup Noodles & Tapas



Cauliflower

XI XUP NOODLES & TAPAS

(Level 1, 31B Thu Khoa Huan, D1) is a small, intimate room, seating around 20 diners inside with room for an additional five outside. There are high tables with stools in the middle of the room and counter seating around the edges, complemented by a large window into the kitchen to watch the chef work his magic. Along the walls are displays of various types of noodle strainers. The room is air conditioned, with ambient hip-hop playing in the background.

Opened for just over a month, and with a menu as intimate as the restaurant, Xi Xup is difficult to describe. The chef, an import from Hong Kong, reluctantly calls it Asian fusion, but that fails to describe the unique gastronomic experience he creates. After sitting at a

high table and pouring a can of Winking Seal craft beer, a Baby Fatso Dry Stout, the server brought over raw oysters with Sriracha caviar, cucumber and calamansi granita on ice (a half dozen for VND138,000) for us. They were smooth and subtle, just hints of the spicy Sriracha and the tang of the calamansi granita, allowing the flavor of the oysters and caviar to come through in waves.

Next came salmon cones, which are small miso cones with salmon, wasabi yogurt espuma, sea grapes and local herbs (VND128,000). The flavor of the cream hits first, followed quickly by the more reserved taste of the salmon, then a touch of miso and ending with a little heat of the wasabi in the back of the throat, like a puzzle of layers being put together with each small bite. Like any

celebrated culinary delight, the flavors of the dishes at Xi Xup reach the palate in stages. After the salmon cones the server brought what they call The Last Jedi to celebrate May the Fourth **Star Wars** Day, which are handcrafted beetroot gyoza wrappers with wagyu and black truffle paste served with a soy and mirin dipping sauce (VND12,000k). While the wagyu is tender and savory, the truffle paste is distinctive and the dipping sauce offers a sweet complement. For the less adventurous this is probably a great dish to start with, and one of our favorites.

After the gyoza, we were served zucchini flowers with Xi Xup house XO sauce, goat cheese and shiso (VND108,000). There is a tempura-style batter fried to the outside, yet inside the fresh zucchini is thick and



Darth Vader



Oysters



The Last Jedi

ripe, understated compared to the bold spicy seasoning accompanying each creamy bite of the distinct flavor of the goat cheese. After devouring them, the server brought the next plate—razor clams with crispy pork rinds, vermicelli, dien dien flowers and a soy garlic sauce (VND98,000). The clams, fresh and splashed with the piquant soy garlic sauce, are locally sourced from Nha Trang while the noodles are handmade in-house.

We continued with our foodie journey with cauliflower in oat batter with salted coconut cream and roasted coconut chips (VND88,000). The cauliflower in oat batter was divine and savory, while the sweet coconut cream gave it the sensation of being part dessert, a wonderfully paired juxtaposition. After that the friendly server left another **Star Wars**-themed special, the Darth Vader, handcrafted squid ink noodles with clams, Dalat cherry tomatoes and a house XO sauce (VND108,000). A scrumptious dish with a citrus tang to the noodles, there was a slight spicy kick in the aftertaste, with the different textures of the noodles, tomatoes and clams countering each other playfully on the palate.

Despite being thoroughly stuffed by the array of dishes we couldn't turn down the opportunity to have dessert, a brownie with local coffee beans, pecans, caramel drizzled popcorn, and served with an in-house condensed milk ice cream (VND68,000). The plate was cleaned of this velvety, sweet dessert too fast. It was so good, yet when I return I want to try the other dessert on the menu, a homemade tamarind popsicle served with chili prawn salt (VND38,000).

Xi Xup Noodles & Tapas offers a unique gastronomic undertaking for any foodies in Saigon and is clearly a great place to bring a date as evidenced by the couples that filled the restaurant. Don't miss this singular dining experience: Portions



Salmon Cones

are larger for brunch and tapas style for dinner. They have monthly specials and frequently experiment with new dishes based on the availability of fresh ingredients and the inspiration of the chef. ■



Razor Clams



Zucchini



Wines of Argentina

Argentina is the fifth largest wine producing country in the world and it makes some outstanding wines



Alfredo de la Casa has been organizing wine tastings for over 20 years and has published three wine books, including the Gourmand award winner for best wine education book. You can reach him at www.wineinvietnam.com.

ARGENTINA IS AN AMAZING country—the people, the various landscapes, and the extreme in weather—and so are its wines, which are generally overlooked by consumers.

I first came across Argentinian wines when I was living in London. A friend brought a bottle of a beautiful Malbec to a dinner I was organizing. She had been visiting the country and brought the bottle back for me, and it was amazing—full of fresh red fruit and silky at the same time—and so different from the French Malbecs I had tried before, I fell in love with it, and I still am. I then went on a road to discover Argentinian wines.

Although, historically, Argentina focused on growing Criolla and Cereza grapes, mostly used for cheap table wines, it has gained a reputation for its Malbec-based wines, and fresh Torrontes, and, in fact, the

best Argentinian wine of 2017 was a Cabernet Sauvignon.

When you drink traditional Argentinian Malbec you will enjoy its deep color and blackberry and dark plum flavors. Produced in different styles, the full body high alcohol ones have gained international popularity, especially when paired with a good steak. Young full of fruit Malbec wines are ideal to get the party started, easy to drink, uncomplicated and don't need food pairing.

However, the full bodied, higher quality Malbecs, which usually have a minimum of twelve months in the barrel, is where people tend to be more impressed: full body, sometimes quite tannic, plenty of fruit and great complexity, making them ideal when paired with roast meats, especially beef.

Although Malbec is the most popular

red grape in Argentina, Merlot and Cabernet Sauvignon are becoming very popular. But don't miss Bonarda, the second most popular red grape in Argentina, which is hardly seen anywhere else, and which deliver fruity interesting wines.

Of the wine producing areas in Argentina, Mendoza definitely wins for both reputation and for producing high quality wines, with around 70 percent of all Argentinian wine being produced in this region.

If you are into white wine, another pleasant surprise coming from Argentina are the Torrontes white wines, and although they have a similar name, have nothing to do with the Spanish grape. They are fresh, floral and very aromatic, while dry or semi dry, bringing the best of both worlds, unless of course, you like sweet wines, as they are usually not. ■



Wine & Dine

ROOFTOP BARS



Escape Lounge and Rooftop

Escape Lounge and Rooftop, a new stylish, sophisticated lounge in Thao Dien is a reminder of the time when flying was elegant and romantic. You can enjoy the view from their rooftop surrounded by palm trees, bamboo, murals, relaxing music, all in a vacation atmosphere. Escape serves tropical cocktails, spirits, great food, and Saigon's best craft beers.



11 Thao Dien Street, Thao Dien District 2
083 827 9179/escapelounge.vn



Rex Hotel Rooftop Bar

Set on the fifth floor, Rex Hotel Rooftop Bar makes up for its modest height with breath-taking views of Vietnam's French colonial structures such as Saigon Opera House and People's Committee Hall. Rex Hotel Rooftop Bar is also fitted with an elevated stage and dancefloor, hosting live Latino bands and salsa performances at 20:00 onwards.

141 Nguyen Hue, D1



Social Club Rooftop Bar

Part of the Hôtel des Arts Saigon, Social Club Rooftop Bar is a great place to overlook Saigon's glittering skyline sipping on a cocktail and unwinding. Things become more vibrant with the ambient music and DJs at sunset. Social Club Rooftop Bar has the highest rooftop infinity pool in the city.

76 - 78 Nguyen Thi Minh Khai, Dist.3
Tel: (+84) 28 3989 8888

MICROBREWERIES & CRAFT BEER BARS



BiaCraft

BiaCraft is renowned for its extensive selection of craft beers. The back to basics décor only serves to enhance the laidback ambience which BiaCraft prides itself on.

90 Xuan Thuy, D2



East West Brewery

Saigon's Local microbrewery located in the heart of District 1, HCMC. Offering a taproom, restaurant, and rooftop beer garden where customers can enjoy local brews and food crafted with ingredients from the East to the West.

181-185 Ly Tu Trong St. District 1, HCMC 091 306 07 28
booking@eastwestbrewing.vn www.eastwestbrewing.vn
facebook.com/eastwestbrewery



Rehab Station

Gastropub in a lovely quiet alley, serves Asian fusion food, 15 kind of different craft beer from most of the popular breweries in Vietnam, along with 60+ imported bottle beers, mostly from Belgium.

02839118229 hello@rehabstation.com.vn
facebook.com/rehabstationsg/

Also Try...

Winking Seal

Winking Seal offers a revolving selection of craft beers brewed by the bar. Enjoy their Happy Hour from 7pm to 9pm or come by on a Saturday night to join the beer pong tournament on their rooftop terrace.

50 Dang Thi Nhu, Nguyen Thai Binh Ward, D.1

Tap & Tap Craft Beer

Tap & Tap is the first bar of its kind in Thao Dien. This is a self-serve craft beer bar using the 'Pour My Beer' digital tap system. You can pour as much or as little as you like and sample 20 different kinds of beers in their open air bar and courtyard.

94 Xuan Thuy, Thao Dien, D.2

Heart of Darkness Craft Brewery

Heart of Darkness are prolific brewers - having brewed over 170 different styles of craft beer since they opened in October 2016.

31D Ly Tu Trong, Ben Nghe Ward, D.1

Belgo Belgian Craft Beer Brewery

Inspired by the beer culture of Belgium and Vietnam, Belgo built a unique place inspired by Belgium architecture with its own brewery, offering typical Belgian dishes combined with a local twist.

159A, Nguyen Van Thu, Da Kao Ward, D.1

Pasteur Street Brewing Company

They opened their first Tap Room 'The Original' in January 2015 and now have 5 tap rooms spread out in D.1, 2 and 7. Pasteur Street Brewing Company distributes its beers to approximately 150 locations in Vietnam.

Address 1: 144 Pasteur Street, Ben Nghe Ward, D.1
Address 2: 144/3 Pasteur Street, Ben Nghe Ward, D.1
Address 3: 29 Thao Dien, Thao Dien Ward, D.2
Address 4: 120 Xuan Thuy, Thao Dien Ward, D.2
Address 5: 67 Le Van Thiem, Tan Phong Ward, D.7



Lê La Saigon

Set in a vintage-retro style décor, this open-air oasis on city's liveliest corridor offers coffee in the morning, vietnamese and western cuisine from a renowned local chef in the evening, and live music welcoming guests from around the world nightly. Cafe-Restaurant starts 10AM, everyday live music starts at 9PM.

138 Le Lai street, D1, HCMC.
090 816 61 38
FB: Lelabarpag



CAFÉS

Bach Dang

An institute that's been around for over 30 years, Kem Bach Dang is a short walking distance from The Opera House and is a favorite dessert and cafe spot among locals and tourists. They have two locations directly across from each other serving juices, smoothies, shakes, beer and ice cream, with air conditioning on the upper levels.

26-28 Le Loi, D1

Café RuNam

No disappointments from this earnest local cafe consistently serving exceptional international standard coffee. Beautifully-styled and focussed on an attention to quality, Café RuNam is now embarking on the road to becoming a successful franchise. The venue's first floor is particularly enchanting in the late evening.

96 Mac Thi Bui, D1
www.caferunam.com

Chat

A quaint cafe with a red brick wall on one side and a mural of everyday life in Saigon on the opposite. A friendly staff serves smoothies, juices, and a good array of Italian-style coffee such as cappuccinos and lattes for cheap, prices start from VND15,000.

85 Nguyen Truong To, D4

K.Coffee

Accented with sleek furniture and dark wood, this cozy cafe serves fresh Italian-style coffee, cold fruit juices, homemade Vietnamese food and desserts. The friendly owner and staff make this a great spot to while away the afternoon with a good book or magazine.

Opening time: 7AM- 10PM (Sunday closed)
86 Hoang Dieu, D.4 - 38253316/090 142 3103

La Rotonde Saigon

Situated in an authentic French colonial structure, this relaxed cafe is the perfect haven to escape the hustle and bustle of District 1. The east meets west interior décor is reminiscent of Old Saigon, and is greatly complemented by the Vietnamese fusion cuisine on offer.

77B Ham Nghi, 1st Floor, D1

The Workshop

The cafe is located on the top floor and resembles an inner city warehouse. The best seats are by the windows where you can watch the traffic. If you prefer your coffee brewed a particular way, there are a number of brewing techniques to ask for, from Siphon to Aeropress and Chemex. Sorry, no Vietnamese cafe sua da served here.

27 Ngo Duc Ke, D1



French Restaurant

Daily Set Lunch
at **VND180.000**

2 courses + 1 soft drink
Le Bacoulos french bistro,
13 Tong Huu Dinh
Thao Dien. Q2. HCMC

02835194058



The open-air premises include a bar and terrace and there is an air-conditioned dining room.



FRENCH



Le Bacoulos

Le Bacoulos is a French restaurant, bar and lounge that serves French cuisine, bar food like burgers, fish and chips alongside vegetarian options like spinach soup and Greek salad. There's also a garden to unwind in with a glass of wine.

13 Tong Huu Dinh, D2
028 3519 4058
www.bacoulos.com



L'Escale by Thierry Drapeau

Chef Thierry Drapeau a 2 star Michelin chef in France takes his inspiration from the surrounding countryside and its top-quality ingredients, then adding an artistic flourish to his fine regional cuisine.

90 Quoc Huong, Thao Dien, D.2 - 028 3636 0160
manager@restaurant-thierrydrapeau.asia
www.restaurant-thierrydrapeau.asia

Also Try...

Le Jardin

This place is consistently popular with French expats seeking an escape from the busier boulevards. It has a wholesome bistro-style menu with a shaded terrace cafe in the outdoor garden of the French cultural centre, Idecaf.

31 Thai Van Lung, D1

Ty Coz

This unassuming restaurant is located down an alley and up three flights of stairs. The charming French owner/chef will happily run through the entire menu in details and offer his recommendations. An accompanying wine list includes a wide range of choices.

178/4 Pasteur, D1 - www.tycozsaigon.com



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www.printlogic.vn



ITALIAN



Ciao Bella

Hearty homestyle Italian food served with flair and excellent service. An extensive menu is complemented with daily specials. Arriving guests are greeted with a free glass of Prosecco. Diners sit in a cozy setting upstairs or on the ground floor for people-watching. Big groups should book in advance.

11 Dong Du, DI

028 3822 3329

tonyfox56@hotmail.com

www.ciaobellavietnam.com

Ciao Bella



Italian Trattoria Oggi

Italian Trattoria Oggi is a perfect place for either a dinner, night out or special party in the breathtaking resort setting and distinctive interior, where you can enjoy the best that American and Australian beef has to offer together with premium wines.

2A-4A Ton Duc Thang Street District 1

(0)28 3333 3333

www.lottehotel.com/saigon

Oggi

JAPANESE



Chaya Restaurant

Chaya, a new small Japanese Cafe is coming to town. We are here to bring the best Japanese atmosphere to Saigon customer. At Chaya, customer can relax on the Tatami, taste some delicious Sushi Roll, Japanese sweets or local cuisine while enjoying Japan historically decorated space. Most of our ingredients are imported directly from Japan, especially Kyoto Matcha. Welcome!

35 Ngo Quang Huy Street, Thao Dien, District 2

0938 996 408 (Vietnamese)

0939 877 403 (Japanese)

chayavietnam.com

Facebook: chayavietnam

Chaya

Also Try...

Casa Italia

Filling, hearty Italian fare served with a smile in the heart of District 1. Authentic pizza and a comprehensive range of pasta, pork, chicken and beef dishes offers something for everyone. Located a stone's throw from Ben Thanh Market.

86 Le Loi, DI

028 3824 4286

Carpaccio

Rebranded "Carpaccio" after many years under the name Pomodoro, this Italian restaurant still has a simple, unpretentious European decor, sociable ambiance and friendly welcome. A small corner of Italy in Saigon.

79 Hai Ba Trung street, DI

+84 90 338 78 38

La Forchetta

La cucina La Forchetta is located in a hotel building in Phu My Hung. Chef Gianni, who hails from Sicily, puts his passion into his food, focusing on pastas and pizzas with Italian meat and fish dishes as well delicious homemade desserts. Most of the tables are outside, so you can enjoy a relaxing outdoor dinner.

24 Hung Gia, PMH, D7

028 3541 1006

Opera

The luxury Park Hyatt Saigon is home to Opera, an authentic Italian dining experience open for breakfast, lunch and dinner. Try their famous lasagna and tiramisu. Head chef Marco Torre learned his craft in a number of Michelin-star restaurants throughout different regions of Italy during a 14 year career. Dine on the deck alfresco or inside in air conditioned comfort.

2 Lam Son Square, DI

Pasta Fresca

Hidden on a rooftop in District 1, in a secret garden in District 2 and now also found in District 3, Pasta Fresca offer vegetarian friendly pastas.

Address 1: 28 Thao Dien Street, Thao Dien, District 2

Address 2: 13/1 Le Thanh Ton, Ben Nghe Ward, District 1

Pendolasco

One of the original Italian eateries in Ho Chi Minh City, Pendolasco recently reinvented itself with a new chef and menu, and spawned a sister eatery in District 2. Set off the street in a peaceful garden with indoor and outdoor eating areas, separate bar and function area, it offers a wide-ranging Italian menu and monthly movie nights.

87 Nguyen Hue, DI

028 3821 8181

Pizza 4P's

It's too late to call this Saigon's best-kept secret: the word is out. Wander up to the end of its little hem off Le Thanh Ton for the most unique pizza experience in the entire country – sublime Italian pizza pies with a Japanese twist. Toppings like you wouldn't imagine and a venue you'll be glad you took the time to seek out.

8/15 Le Thanh Ton, DI

012 0789 4444

www.pizza4ps.com



Also Try...

Ichiban Sushi

Ichiban Sushi Vietnam serves fine sushi and signature drinks/cocktails in a lounge setting. Featuring one of the most eclectic Japanese menus in the city. The current Japanese venue to see and be seen in – everyone who's anyone is there.

204 Le Lai, DI

www.ichibansushi.vn

Kesera Bar & Restaurant

An Ideal place for your city escape and enjoying Japanese fusion foods. We have the best bagels in town, fine wine and cigars in a custom cabinet and is a must-do for anyone visiting the city.

26/3 Le Thanh Ton, Ben Nghe Ward, Dist 1

028 38 270 443

Sushi Dining Aoi

Sushi Dining Aoi is one such restaurant, where the whole atmosphere of the place evokes the best of the culture. With its typical Japanese-style decor – the smooth earthen tones of the wooden furniture and surrounds, the warmth and privacy of the VIP rooms – it's possible to believe you're in a more elegant realm.

53-55 Ba Huyen Thanh Quan, D3

028 3930 0039

www.sushidiningaoi.com

Yoshino

The decor is straight out of the set of Shogun, with black wood, tatami mats, stencilled cherry blossoms and all the trappings of Japanese exoticism – tastefully done. While Ho Chi Minh City is certainly not short of fine Japanese eateries, this one is particularly impressive.

2A-4A Ton Duc Thang, DI

028 3823 3333



Gyumaru

Gyumaru is a quintessentially minimalist Japanese dining experience rotating around the style of meat meal Westerners would be quick to link to a gourmet burger, but without the bread. Fresh, healthy, innovative cuisine in a relaxed, cozy environment and regular specials including quality steaks.

8/3 Le Thanh Ton

028 3827 1618

gyumaru.LTT@gmail.com

Gyumaru

KOREAN



Galbi Brothers

Superb casual BBQ venue focusing on every foreigner's favorite K-dish: galbi. Home of the only all-you-can-eat Korean BBQ in Saigon, GB is distinguished by its inexpensive lunch sets and unabashed enthusiasm for Korean spirits.

R1-25 Hung Phuoc 4, Pham Van Nghi – Bac, D7
5410 6210



Lee Cho

The venue may be upscale, but the service and feel of this local-style Korean restaurant is very much down-to-earth. Enjoy the pleasure of casual outdoor street-style Korean dining without worrying about the proper decorum for an international venue. Great Korean dishes at good rates.

48 Hung Phuoc 2, D7
5410 1086



Seoul House

Long-standing venue serving Korean delicacies in this city for many years, Seoul House is simple on décor and strong on taste. Specializes mainly in Korean hotpot and grills.

33 Mac Thi Buoi, D1
3829 4297



THAI



Koh Thai

Supremely chic Thai venue with all the authentic burn you need – or without if you prefer. An opulent, fashionable decor with the cuisine to match – often reported to serve dishes comparable with those of Thailand itself.

Kumho Link, Hai Ba Trung, D1
028 3823 4423

Lac Thai

Hidden away down a narrow alley in the heart of downtown this unique Thai restaurant boasts authentic flavours and surprising character. Eat downstairs at tables in a cosy, themed environment - or be brave and climb the narrow spiral staircase to the attic and crouch on cushions in true Thai style while attentive staff serve plates to share.

71/2 Mac Thi Buoi St. D1
028 3823 7506

Thai Street

Authentic Thai Food in a fun street-food setting. All the favorites of Thailand - Tom Yum Goong, Red and Green Curries, Som Tum - prepared by their Thai chef.

26 Thao Dien Road, Thao Dien, D2
028 6654 9525

The Racha Room

Brand new fine & funky Thai venue with kooky styling and a great attitude – and some of the most finely-presented signature Thai cuisine you'll see in this city, much of it authentically spicy. Long Live the King! Reservations recommended.

12-14 Mac Thi Buoi, D1
090 879 1412

Tuk Tuk Thai Bistro

Kitch and authentic, Tuk Tuk brings the pleasure of street-style Thai food into an elegant but friendly setting. Now a fashionable venue in its own right, Tuk Tuk's menu features some unique dishes and drinks you won't see elsewhere.

17/11 Le Thanh Ton, D1
028 3521 8513 / 090 688 6180

VIETNAMESE



Five Oysters

Five Oysters serves authentic and excellent Seafood & Vietnamese food with 5G Green beer at VND12,000 as well as a promo of VND10,000 per fresh oyster daily. There's also a rooftop, a great place to start or end the night! Recipient of Certificate of Excellence 2014-16 from TripAdvisor and Top Choice 2015 by Lianorg.com. Recommended by VNexpress.net, Lonely Planet, Utopia and Saigoneers.

234 Bui Vien, D1



Ngoc Chau Garden

Serving up fresh and traditional Vietnamese fare since 2015, Ngoc Chau Garden is a centrally located gem in District 1, just a stone's throw from Nguyen Hue. The menu has local favorites, such as Vietnamese Grilled Pork Patties with Citronella and Pork Ribs. The menu and decor reflect Viet Nam's countryside with vintage window shutters and walls made from mud and straw with oil lamps - giving the restaurant a charming, homely atmosphere.

116 Ho Tung Mau, District 1, HCM City

(028) 6687 3838

ngocchaugarden116@gmail.com



Red Door

Red Door offers traditional Vietnamese food with a contemporary twist. The restaurant is also a platform for art talk, science talk, and social talk; where ideas and passions are shared.

400/8 Le Van Sy, D3

012 0880 5905

Facebook: Reddoorrestaurant



Ben Thanh Streetfood Market

Located in the city center there is a food court filled with dishes from all over the world, cooked by indigenous people, at affordable prices. Open most of the day and night, Ben Thanh Street Food Market offers live music on Tuesdays and Saturday night.

26 - 28 - 30 Thu Khoa Huan, Ben Thanh Dist, W 1, HCMC 0901 26 28 30

Open Time: 09:00 AM - 01:00 AM

FB: BenThanhstreetfoodmarket

Instagram: benthanhstreetfoodmarket

Also Try...

3T Quan Nuong

Tasty BBQ venue situated above Temple Bar. The venue has a traditional, rustic theme with old-style furniture and a quaint Vietnamese decor, making this a nicely atmospheric restaurant and a great place to dine with international friends new to the cuisine. The menu features a number of local favorites.

Top Floor, 29 Ton That Hiep, D1

028 3821 1631

Banh Xeo 46A

Fun Vietnamese-style creperie popular with locals and expats alike for its tasty, healthy prawn pancakes, along with a number of other traditional dishes.

46A Dinh Cong Trang, D1

Cha Ca La Vong

If you do only one thing, you'd better do it well - and this venue does precisely that, serving only traditional Hanoian Cha Ca salads stir-fried with fish and spring onion. Delicious.

36 Ton That Thiep, D1

Com Nieu

Famous for its inclusion in the Anthony Bourdain *No Reservations* program, the venue is best known for its theatrics. Every bowl of rice is served in a terracotta bowl that is unceremoniously shattered upon serving. Unforgettable local food in a very pleasant traditionally-styled venue.

59 Ho Xuan Huong, D3

028 3932 6363

comnieusaigon27@yahoo.com

comnieusaigon.com.vn

Cue Cach Quan

Deservedly one of the highest ranking Vietnamese restaurants in Saigon on Trip Advisor, this delightful restaurant serves up traditional, country-style foods and contemporary alternatives in two character-filled wooden houses located on opposite sides of the street from each other. Unique food in a unique setting and an unbelievably large menu.

10 Dang Tat, D1

028 3848 0144

Hum

Hum is a vegetarian restaurant where food are prepared on site from various fresh beans, nuts, vegetables, flowers, and fruits. Food are complemented with special drinks mixed from fresh fruits and vegetables.

2 Thi Sach, D1

028 3823 8920

www.hum-vegetarian.vn

May

Fine Vietnamese fare served in a character-filled three-story rustic villa located up a narrow alley, off the beaten track. Watch the chefs prepare authentic food from a varied menu in an open kitchen.

19-21 Dong Khoi, D1

028 3910 1277

Mountain Retreat

Home style cooking from the Vietnamese north in a quiet alley off Le Loi, Mountain Retreat brings a rural vibe to busy central D1. The breezy and unassuming décor nicely contrasts the intense northern flavors ideally suited for the international palate.

Top floor of 36 Le Loi, D1

+84 90 719 45 57

Nha Hang Ngon

Possibly the best-known Vietnamese restaurant in Ho Chi Minh City, Nha Hang Ngon serves up hundreds of traditional local dishes in a classy French-style mansion.

160 Pasteur, D1

028 3827 7131

www.quananngon.com.vn

8am - 10pm

Temple Club

Named after the old-style Chinese temple in which the venue is located, the ancient stylings of this impressive restaurant make for an unforgettable evening spent somewhere in Saigon's colonial past. Beautiful oriental art that will please all diners and great local cuisine.

29-31 Ton That Thiep, D1

028 3829 9244

templeclub.com.vn

The Hue House

Located on the 10th floor roof of the Master Building, The Hue House opens up to a breezy space with views over the city. The décor is simple yet elegant - bird cages repurposed into lamps, bonsai centerpieces in pretty ceramic bowls and lots of greenery. The menu highlight unique ingredients only found in Hue, like the Va tron fig salad with shrimp and pork, assorted platter of rice cakes meant to be shared, the sate-marinated ribs come with a plate of crunchy greens and mixed rice, originally grown by minority groups in the Central Highlands, and many more.

Rooftop Master Building

41-43 Tran Cao Van, D3

Opening time 10am-10pm.

0909 246 156 / 0906 870 102

INTERNATIONAL



Madcow Wine & Grill

Mad Cow combines the feel of an edgy grill with the casual tone of an urban wine bar to create a stylish, laid-back atmosphere. Guests can enjoy a delicious meal on the 30th floor of the award winning 5 star Hotel, Pullman Saigon Centre, and look out over vibrant Ho Chi Minh City. Mad Cow's expert culinary team brings each cut of meat to flavorful perfection on handmade charcoal grill. Aside from grilled delights, delicious tapas are on offer – sourced locally and created fresh every day.

30th Floor, Pullman Saigon Centre
(0)28 3838 8686



Tomatito Saigon

Tomatito won the award for Best Restaurant of Saigon 2018. This sexy tapas bar is Chef Willy's casual interpretation of the prêt-à-porter concept. Willy has a very personal perception of style, that is reflected in all his creations. His universe is colorful, funky and eclectic.

1st Floor, 171 Calmette, District 1, Ho Chi Minh City

www.tomatito.vn

www.facebook.com/tomatitosaiagon

+84 869 388 864



twenty21one

A new casual dining venue with an innovative tapas menu divided into two categories: Looking East, and Looking West, with dishes such as

Crispy shredded duck spring

rolls and Bacon-wrapped

dates stuffed with Roquefort

blue cheese There are two

dining levels: an upstairs mezzanine and downstairs

are tables with both private and exposed positioning

(open-air streetside; and a terrace by the pool out back).

21 Ngo Thoi Nhiem, D3

TWENTY21ONE



Saffron

The first thing that will strike you when you enter Saffron is the terracotta pots mounted on the ceiling. Located on Dong Du, this restaurant offers Mediterranean food, some with a distinct Asian influence added for further uniqueness. Prepare to order plates to share and don't miss the signature Cheese Saganaki! Guests are welcomed with complimentary Prosecco, fresh baked bread served with garlic, olive tapenade and hummus.

51 Hai Ba Trung, D1
(0)28 3824 8358

Also Try...

Blanc Restaurant

How to listen with your eyes? Blanc Restaurant employs a team of deaf/hearing impaired waiters. Try a new dining experience and order your dishes from the a la carte menu in sign language; communication will take on a new form.

178/180D Hai Ba Trung, Da Kao, D1

02862663535

www.blancrestaurant.vn

Butcher MANZO & Craft Beer Bar

Manzo means "Beef" in Italian and as the name implies, it's a "Meat Bar". Manzo also offers several different dishes matched with local craft beer and selected wines, set in a classic European bar atmosphere.

Butcher MANZO & Craft Beer Bar was established in the heart of HCMC on Le Thanh Ton Street in District 1.

17/13 and 17/14 Le Thanh Ton street, District 1, HCMC

028-2253-8825

www.butcher-manzo.com

FORK Restaurant

Open from 11 am till 11 pm everyday, Fork Saigon gathers Spanish tapas and asian one going from 50.000 VND to 160.000 VND. It offers an expensive list of international

wine and 16 available by the glass. A mixologist corner is

also present with Gin and Vodka base in addition to local

craft beers and seasonal white or red sangria. A set lunch

at 190.000 VND served Monday to Friday from 11 am to

3 pm is also available. It allows you to pick any 3 three

items between a large selection (Montaditos, meat, fish

and vegetable), iced tea and dessert of the day included.

15 Dong Du, D1

028 3823 3597

info@forksaigon.com

www.forksaigon.com

Noir - Dining in the Dark

Can you differentiate beef from duck? Mystery meals

are served in complete darkness by blind/visually

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Travel & Wellness

TOKYO/IMAGE BY DAVID DREDGE







Herbal Healing

An insight into the ancient practice of healing through herbs and needles

Text by Jonathan Rebours

Images by Oi Vietnam



“EASTERN MEDICINE IS FOR everything, not one specific problem,” explains Dr. Le Van Canh, who studied at the Ho Chi Minh Medicine and Pharmacy University, and who now owns a small practice in the heart of Cho Lon. His clinic is like any other with an examination bed, a small desk, and a pad for writing prescriptions. The one exception is the anatomical chart hanging on the wall showing where needles must be applied on the body for acupuncture.

Where Western medicine works by attacking the source of the problem, Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) works in a more universal way. This practice believes that problems arise from blockages of *qi*, energy, in one's body and you must unblock this to get back to a proper state of health. There are many different theories and beliefs associated with *qi*—the energy works

in conjunction with your blood. Its two main functions are to transport the blood around the body as nourishment and to protect against harmful imbalances within the body.

To keep *qi* flowing as it should, the medicine must remain 100 percent natural rather than relying on chemicals or other substances which may have adverse side effects.

“People come to me based on trust. I am personal, I have been here a long time and I know my patients,” says Dr. Canh, who feels that trust is key when treating people's health.

He believes this personal approach is something that can be lost—albeit unintentionally - in modern hospitals where the patient is treated after a fair wait by the next available doctor on duty, in often over-crowded conditions. “My aim is to bring people back to their real-self.”

Dr. Nguyen Thi Le also emphasises the need for trust between patient and doctor. “I have been practicing Eastern medicine since 1992, and for any emergency, as soon as I detect it, I refer the patient to a hospital. First and foremost is my duty to the patient and their well-being.”

Both doctors, who have over 40 years experience between them, assert there must be compatibility between Eastern and Western medicine. Dr. Le's patients predominantly complain about bone and joint problems, not cancerous livers or tumors. She believes treating these problems with acupuncture is more useful than treating them with modern medicines or physiotherapy. “Acupuncture has been used for centuries to release blockages in the body and Western medicine doesn't have this understanding yet.”

Dr. Canh agrees. “The body, and in



particular the nervous system, is like a sewage system in a city. It is of course necessary for the health of the whole city, but occasionally blockages do occur, and we must unblock them quickly and efficiently. This is what Eastern practices do for the nervous system.”

Cang is 48-years-old and began visiting Dr. Le for nerve pain from his spine to his feet. He places his trust in acupuncture and the doctor. “She knows my symptoms and treats me personally, rather than any other patient. Having acupuncture really helps me feel more mobile.”

However, acupuncture is only a part of Traditional Chinese Medicine. The other involves hundreds of various herbs, fungi, seeds, nuts, plants, barks and animal parts—all stored in wooden drawers behind the counter.

At Dai An Duong herbal medicine shop, Hue Lien can concoct any herbal remedy out of her 1,000 plus ingredients.

“I get these ingredients from all across Asia—Hong Kong, Singapore, Thailand, Taiwan... the list goes on,” she says.

Asking for something to say a cold, brought on by the recent intense humid weather, no fewer than 11 ingredients are mixed whole or crushed as required and all wrapped in a tidy book sized package.

At only VND80,000 it seems a bargain and with instructions to drink four cups as a first dose and three cups as a second, all mixed with warm but not boiling water, I was hopeful for a quick recovery. Although the final instruction of “don’t make in metal pan,” seemed like overkill, Lien’s instructions were followed to the letter.

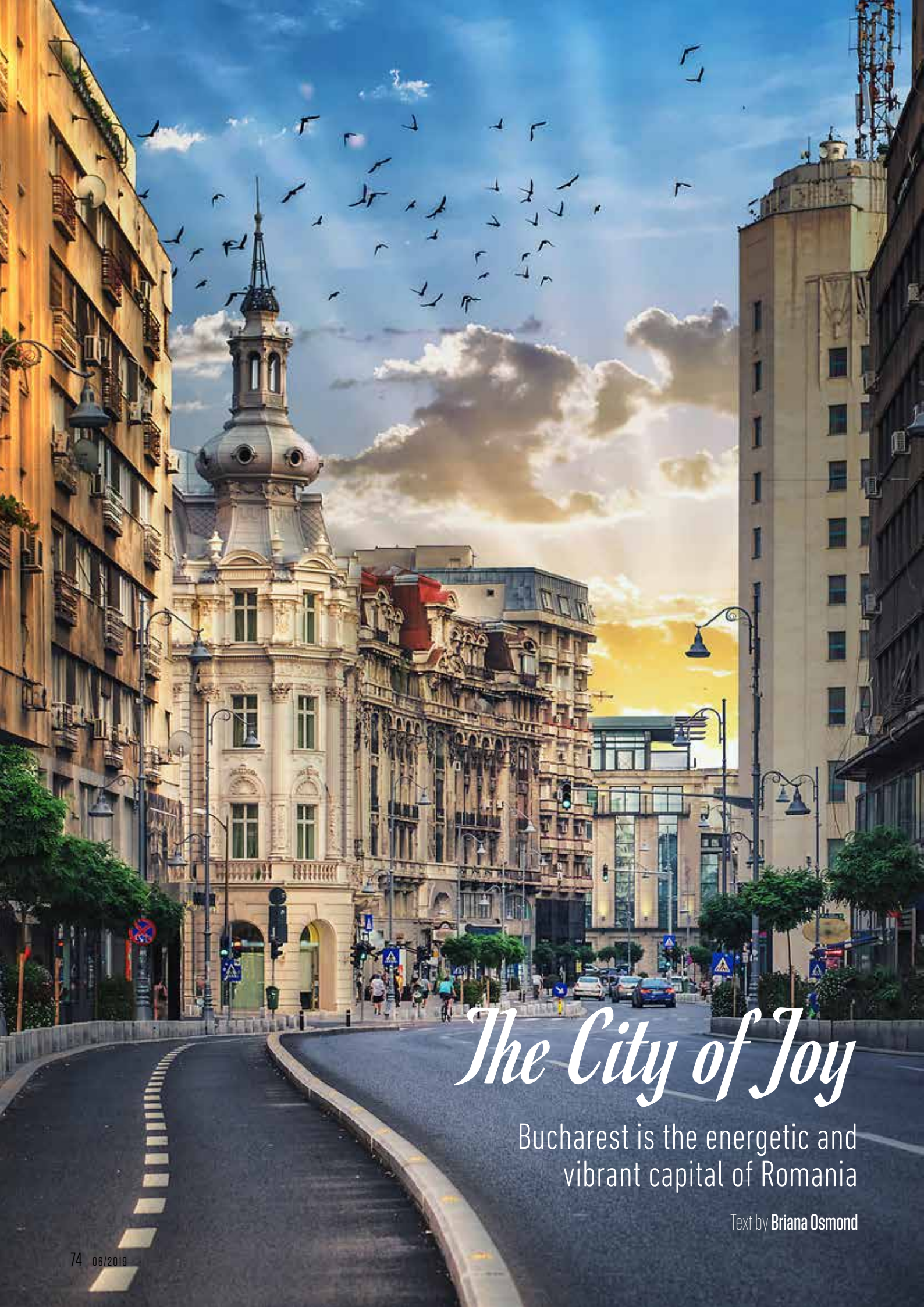
The cold symptoms began disappearing the very next day and although the sniffling nose persisted, the chesty cough and sore throat were gone completely. However, on paying Lien, a bottle of Vietnamese mass produced

cough medicine was also added to my bag, with advice to take as needed, and this may well have made the real difference in the gravelly chest.

Over at Vinh Phat, Le recommends dried artichoke and Linh Chi mushroom as go-to ingredients for boosting your immune system. She goes the furthest of all those interviewed to declare that Linh Chi mushroom can help fight against cancer and HIV. She does then add, however: “But I am only the pharmacist, not a trained doctor.”

While all the doctors, pharmacists and patients interviewed were extolling the benefits of TCM, none took the leap to say that it is better than Western medicine.

It is evidently true that most feel they gain something from TCM, but should anything serious arise, don’t take the gamble on exclusively TCM treatment. Even the doctors in the know will tell you so. ■



The City of Joy

Bucharest is the energetic and vibrant capital of Romania

Text by **Briana Osmond**

CONTINUING TO REBUILD

itself after the fall of the communist regime in 1989, Bucharest (meaning “city of joy” in Romanian) is embracing modernism and evolving at a fast pace. Emerging from its darker times, Bucharest is now dotted with opulent malls, countless shopping centers and a myriad of fashion boutiques. Around its center, the restoration of several charming baroque houses, history museums and art galleries has been completed. Just like Paris, Bucharest has a terrific café culture, as well as its newest tea craze taking over the city. But don't just take my word for it, check out the best things to do in Bucharest.

Rising like a Phoenix from its ashes, many bars and clubs are currently undertaking major works after the Colectiv tragedy. The Romanian spirit has always been of unity, solidarity and kindness, and nowhere in Europe the voices of the youth have screamed louder in hope for change.

What To Visit In Bucharest

From hipster bars to luxurious rooftop restaurants, from art museums to summer festivals, Bucharest will surprise you by how versatile and amazing it really is. Together with some of Europe's friendliest people, you are guaranteed to have an epic time in the Romanian capital.

The Palace of Parliament - Casa Poporului (literally meaning the People's House) is the second largest administrative building in the world and the largest in Europe. Although its exterior is quite simple from an architectural point of view, the interior of The Palace of Parliament is perhaps as opulent as a French castle. Only 400 rooms are in use out of 1100. This building features 8 underground levels and 20 km of catacombs. The interior of the bunker is made of 1.5 m thick concrete that cannot be penetrated by radiation.

University Square - There are several reasons why I believe you should visit the University Square. Firstly, because it is in downtown Bucharest, at the km 0 mark. Secondly, because it features one of the oldest Universities



Natural History Museum

in Bucharest, the National Theatre, the Coltea Hospital (an architectural gem), an old orthodox church called The Three Hierarch and the Intercontinental. When I was young, I used to spend most of my afternoon and evenings by the National Theatre, partly because as teens we were art enthusiasts and partly because it had a roof bar with great views, cheap beer and awesome live bands.

Natural History Museum - Recently renovated, the Antipa Museum is one of the best ways to spend an afternoon in Bucharest. It's home to an incredible collection of animals, insects and birds from Romania as well as from around the world. There are many interactive activities for adults and children alike and plenty of information in Romanian as well as in English. Because I love sea creatures so much, it was great to see some rare specimens from the depths of the Black Sea.

Herastrau Park - This is Bucharest's largest park surrounding Lake Herastrau. There is evidence that this place was inhabited since the Paleolithic age due to traces found in the lake associated with the Neanderthals. This beautiful park features several plant species, Japanese gardens, a tree walk



Herastrau Park

and beautiful aquariums. Many come here to have a Sunday stroll, roller skate or simply bask in the summer sunshine. On the lake, there are plenty of old boats that have been converted into bars and restaurants. You could spend a day in this park and still not discover all everything.

The Romanian National Art Museum - I spent countless hours walking around this museum, learning its secrets and understanding its magical history. The museum is in the former Royal Palace, which was completed in the early 19th century. Most of its contents have been acquired by the Romanian Royal Family and are now available for all to marvel at. It features Romanian and international artists and the entry fee is a modest £3.

Tip: The entry to this museum is free for all on the first Wednesday of every month.

Cismigiu Park - Located right in the heart of Bucharest, Cismigiu is a park long associated with intellectuals from the past. Writers and artists used to meet here, share ideas and hold debates. Nowadays, it's a peaceful park dotted with chess tables for the elderly, blooming flowers for the keen photographers and an old



Casa Poporului

ruin where youngsters meet to play their guitars.

The Opera House - Built in 1953, The Romanian Opera House is an absolute must for opera and ballet lovers. It was in this very building where I saw my first ballet performance *Romeo and Juliet*. Featuring a beautiful interior and over 900 seats, the National Opera House hosts many international shows. *Tip: The Opera House holds a free open-air show that takes place at the beginning of each season. It is called "Promenada Operei" which translates to the Opera Stroll.*

Calea Victoriei - No better way to retrace the steps of Royalties than strolling on Calea Victoriei (The Way of Victory). This is an old street dotted with theatres, exquisite hotels, brand boutiques and quintessential patisseries. Calea Victoriei also leads you towards the Old Town, where you can enjoy an evening out sipping craft beer in the company of friendly locals.

Tip: Although Romanian people drink when out with their friends, Bucharest doesn't have a culture of drunkenness. People go out to socialize over a cold beer or a delicious cocktail. Some even have coffee during the evenings or alcohol-free beverages. Although local drinks are relatively cheap, the youth have other ways to party and very rarely will you see them drunk through the streets of Bucharest.

What To Eat And Drink In Bucharest

Romania is well-known for some seriously delicious food. The most authentic dish is called "sarmale"—a combination of mince and rice wrapped in pickled cabbage stewed for a few hours in a special spiced tomato sauce. Usually, this comes with a portion of polenta, traditional pickles and a side of salad. You can opt-in for some amazing homemade lamb sausages, dried and cured meat or soup served in a bowl made of bread. Make sure you leave enough room for dessert so you can try sweet cheese pies, chocolate biscuit cake and, my personal favorite, plum dumplings.

Hanul Lui Manuc - This is a traditional restaurant that serves authentic Romanian food. The look and feel are very rustic and because I visited during winter, in January, the inner courtyard and garden were all full of snow. It looked beautiful. The restaurant offers well-priced dishes and exceptional food quality. I would recommend this place with all my heart.

The Front Room - "Camera din Fata" or "The Front Room" as per its literal translation, is one of the coolest tea and coffee house in Bucharest. The place itself is super small, tastefully decorated and has amazing customer



The Romanian Opera House



Calea Victoriei

service. I have traveled my way around the world and I must say their Blue Mountain coffee was the real deal. I also tried their Sencha tea and it was as delicious as the one I had in Kyoto.

Tea at Green Tea - My second favorite teahouse in Bucharest is Green Tea. What sets it apart from the rest is that each room is tastefully decorated to resemble a different theme. For example, you can have your tea in the Japanese room, where you will be served tea from Asian chinaware. Alternatively, you can enjoy the front garden, the Indian room or have a cuppa in the attic, which is full of books. With an extraordinary variety of teas, it's no surprise I used to spend

many summer afternoons here reading books, daydreaming and making plans of traveling the world.

Cakes at Hotel Capsa - For a royal treatment, make your way to Calea Victoriei and enter the old and majestic Hotel Capsa. Ask for a table and indulge yourself in some of the most delicious cakes you will ever try outside of Paris. Dare I say, they were even better! The service here is excellent, the lobby and the restaurant look incredibly extravagant.

Lounge 18 - For a more exquisite dinner, head over to 18. This is a rooftop restaurant that offers picture-perfect food, and those beautiful views over Bucharest we so love to see. The view



Sarmale



Hanul Lui Manuc



Hotel Capșa



Lounge 18

and quality come with a relatively high price tag in comparison to other restaurants in Bucharest, although on average a meal is around £15 and a cocktail is £4.

How To Travel Around Bucharest

The infrastructure in Bucharest is well defined, yet the traffic can be daunting, especially during peak times. To save yourself frustration, I recommend traveling by subway—it's very cheap and easy to navigate around. Most subway stations, especially around the center, have been renovated and new trains have been added. Avoid taking a cab unless strictly necessary, as usually they tend

to charge you more if you are a tourist. Even so, rest assured the prices are incredibly low for cabs (in comparison to Bristol). Perhaps try an uber, at least you know the price in advance.

Must Know Before You Go

Romania is still recovering from communism and nowhere is this more obvious than in Bucharest. Yet, the younger generation is hopeful, ambitious and determined to change the country for the better. Although believed otherwise, Romanian people are actually incredibly friendly, welcoming and really keen to help out. Romanian people are always trying to accommodate others

and you will notice that people will try to speak English to you. This is just to make you feel comfortable. Most Romanian people speak better English than you think. Although the older generations are shy in this regards, I don't think I met many youngsters not speaking English, French or some other languages.

If you are invited to a Romanian home, note that it is customary to bring some food or a bottle of wine. If you stay in a Romanian house, you will be treated as an honored guest. People will go out of their way to feed you lots, show you around and change their habits so you have a great time. ■



Straight to the Top of Saigon

Text and Images by David Muller





Currently, Landmark 81 offers a happy hour discount between noon and 3:30pm and the ticket is discounted to VND500,000 for adults and VND300,000 for students. Take your kids during the summer holidays. If you are lucky enough you'll see the power of nature during the rainy season. Not for the faint-hearted, expect delays should there be lightning and during this time elevators will not be operational. There is also an ice skating rink in the basement of the Landmark 81 mall. Vinhomes Central park public area is also a great place to take kids to enjoy the outdoors, go for a walk, play frisbee or use the playground facilities. The park located next to the Saigon Bridge is 13 hectares and the largest urban green space in downtown Saigon. ■

RISING UP INTO THE NEAR

stratosphere a calm comes over you as you step out of the elevator to walk out among the clouds at the newly opened sky deck in Vietnam's tallest building, the Landmark 81. As if rising up into the Kinh people's heaven, in the lobby you will find a diorama outlining the story of Thanh Giong, one of the four immortals who ate rice as a boy to become a giant and then rode an iron horse to beat back invasions from northern marauders. Looking from the viewing deck south, a wall of black rain clouds form and before one's eyes plays out an almost apocalyptic scene straight from sci-fi movie *Bladerunner 2047*. The clouds tumble straight towards us, yet because of the long distance the scene plays out inexplicably slow. To the west, a Vietnam airlines plane makes its descent to safely land at Tan Son Nhat airport just before a flash of lightning streaks across the sky illuminating the gray for an instance, the thunder reaching everyone's ears a few seconds later. The air is electrified and I walk over to the other side of the building where the weather is still strangely clear and crisp. The view to the east sees a medium sized container ship come to meet its friend the pilot ship, which then guides it to berth at Cat Lai port to offload its precious cargo.

Out on the balcony I sit to admire the view in the positively charged cool breeze that billows around the tower. A waitress dressed in a kimono approaches me calmly and after, a polite exchange, I order a sake-based cocktail. After ten minutes an attendant approaches, asking me to move inside due to rain and the possibility of lightning striking. I move to the inside bar and they close and lock the doors to the outside. Walking around the sky deck, there are teenagers on the side playing virtual reality challenges, oblivious to the forces of nature raging in front of them behind the thick double glazed glass. The lights from the machines reflect off the glass and almost look like the world outside is under attack by neon green and red lasers.

After the rain has moved onwards towards District 2 and District 9, I make my way out to the outside upper deck where I put on a harness and lock myself into the walkway with a carabiner. I traverse around the rail and get a picture from over the railing at the land below. After two hours I make my way to the elevator to descent. I enquire with the guard how long is the ride down and he replies, "53 seconds". Stepping inside, my ears pop as we make a measured descent back to the mall below. A surreal experience, I decide to end the afternoon by making my way to the Peach Garden, a dim sum Restaurant located on the fourth floor. It fits into my trip that day to the upper heavens of Saigon. The Peach Garden being the mythical place where the Monkey King caused havoc by devouring the peaches of immortality in the classic novel *Journey to the West*—a favorite story among children in Vietnam and throughout Asia.



Rainy Days in Tokyo

Images by David Dredge









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Kids & Education



Need to Know

What open educational resources look like

Text by **Adrian Stagg**

STUDENTS AND TEACHERS ALIKE

recognize that the learning landscape has shifted significantly with an abundance of learning materials available freely online. Previous educational systems, based on the expert knowledge residing in the teacher alone, and scarcity of educational opportunities have—in many parts of the world—been overturned by a democratization of access to knowledge, and tools to create new knowledge. While platforms such as TED, YouTube, Vimeo, and Khan Academy provide free access to some of the leading minds globally, on almost any topic, the legality of reusing, sharing and even altering the content to suit your local area is a fraught space that leaves many teachers lamenting the complexities of copyright. This is where Open Educational Resources (OER) plays an integral role in allowing more liberal, legal sharing of resources to reduce barriers to education, provide cost-effective and high-quality resources for learners and teachers, and create new opportunities for student learning. The following describe specific instances of teachers and tertiary-level academics applying OER to learning and teaching.

In a primary school in regional Australia, the teachers feel isolated from practice, and the budget allocation usually means that difficult choices need to be made about expenditure. Class sets of learning resources tend to be expensive and educational licensing on materials means that most resources (both text and video) have a very narrow definition of sharing and distribution. Consistent access in the classroom (and at home) is predicated on reliable, high-speed internet access; some of the vendors only offer streaming options for content, and so download limits for both the school and students are a major barrier. In particular, math support has been flagged as a priority. Some of the teachers have found Khan Academy, a site that offers a range of video tutorials for math at all levels of

study, from K-12, and tertiary studies. Those videos have a Creative Commons license and can be downloaded, stored on the school computers, and distributed via USB by the school. Over the course of several weeks, the teachers identify core materials and then download the materials for use at the school, and—due to the open license—can send the videos home with students. The students can see each step of the math concepts, can replay any part of the tutorial as many times as they wish, and can share the videos legally for revision among their peers.

A nurse practitioner has just started at an Australian university and will be teaching undergraduate students. The current course needs redevelopment, and he has been told that many students have indicated in their feedback that the textbook is a major barrier to participating in the course. The library has tried to keep multiple copies on short-term loan in an attempt to alleviate the access issue, but ultimately not all students can participate equitably in the second-year required course. Deciding that inclusivity and equity are not only drivers for higher education, but his profession, the lecturer decides to search for alternatives. Through the BC Campus Open Textbook collection, he finds a textbook that is free and open to redistribute, revise, repurpose, remix and reuse. However, the standards referenced in the text are relevant to North America, not Australia. The lecturer provides a core set of readings for the students to establish the major concepts of the course, and then asks students in their assessment to take a section of the open text, revise it for the Australian environment, and submit. Those students who meet the standards of the assessment criteria can re-release their revised chapters as a new book for other Australian courses to use. These students thereby become contributors to the knowledge marketplace.

A Learning Support Unit at a

TAFE is repeatedly challenged by the time required to create resources, but the vocational sector has recently been providing professional learning about Creative Commons licensing. One of the team leaders approaches teachers throughout the institution and collaboratively plans authentic assessment that will allow students to actively support their peers. The Animation, and Video Production course leaders both agree that their students will work with the Learning Support staff as clients to develop a brief, create resources, and then revise the resources based on feedback. The students retain the ownership of the resources, and the right to be attributed as the authors, but the open license allows them to share the resources freely. These learning resources become part of the students' ePortfolio for prospective employers to demonstrate real world skills, and the TAFE now has a suite of resources designed by students, for students.

These are only a few examples of the types of transformative, and authentic practices that have the potential to not only reduce the barriers and cost of education at all levels, but to make education a participatory, active experience that has impact on communities based on a 'common wealth' of knowledge. In the midst of government reports signaling under-representation in education by designated societal groups and rising costs of textbooks and other subscription-based resources, educators are considering alternatives to expensive, outdated notions of knowledge control. Exacerbating the situation are antiquated copyright laws. One of the earliest copyright laws was subtitled "a law for the enhancement of learning" and the irony of this statement in contemporary society is not lost on educators. Applying to use, copy and distribute proprietary resources can be confusing, complex and costly. Furthermore, while educators can access

the research output of their peers easily, accessing learning and teaching content is often considerably harder.

Open Educational Resources (OER) are the cornerstone of this practice. Shared freely and openly on a global scale, OER are digitized (but not only digital) resources that are created for learning and teaching, and bear an open license, such as Creative Commons. These licenses exist within the legal structure of countries (Australia recognizes the legal legitimacy of the licenses at the Federal level) alongside copyright. The major difference though is that a Creative Commons (or CC) license explicitly states upfront what types of use are permitted—other users do not need to contact the author of the resource

as long as their usage is described under the license.

A photography teacher needs a range of images as sparks for discussion in-class about the use of light. In the past, the lecturer has used books from the library and passed them around the class during the activity, but with increasing numbers of online students, this simply does not provide equivalency of experience for the entire cohort. Instead, the lecturer uses Flickr, setting the search parameters to only include images that can be reused under a CC license. From the results, she is able to select those that state other users can reuse any of the images, provided that attribution of the photographer is given. In a relatively short amount of time, the

lecturer has a small portfolio of images (attributed to show the original

author and linking back to the site) for students to use. As they are now hosted online in the Learning Management System, both on-campus, and online students share a common pool of resources—and can discuss them either synchronously in streamed tutorials, or asynchronously in a forum.

Meanwhile, a high school science teacher plans to introduce final year students to research concepts in the discipline, but needs some journal articles to do so. Using Google Scholar unearths a wealth of recent literature, but access is denied due to a pay wall—often asking as much as one hundred dollars per article. Turning to colleagues on Twitter, she asks for advice and a friend from university provides a link to the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ). The site provides access to tens of thousands of journal articles that are published under a CC license as ‘open access’. They are free to access, download, copy and distribute. After a few hours, the teacher is able to curate a small collection of articles for the students to use in learning activities this term.

Open educational resources are about free and open access to knowledge, providing learners with quality resources at little to no cost, and creating new and flexible choices to support both face-to-face, and online learning. OER embraces the teacher’s role as a specialist curator, using his/her discipline knowledge to collect meaningful, high-quality resources that support student learning. However, OER also acknowledges that as access to information and digital tools increases, students are creators, and co-creators, of knowledge and resources that can advance understandings. In the classroom, OER offers an alternative to high-cost, bandwidth-intensive resources governed by restrictive subscription contracts by instead using licenses that convey rights and responsibilities in ‘plain language’ terms. The choice then, as educators, is how one leverages these resources to create stimulating learning experiences that engage *all* students—not just those who can afford traditional education. ■

Adrian Stagg is the Manager (Open Educational Practice) at University of Southern Queensland





Young Children and the Environment: Early Education for Sustainability

Text and Images Provided by ISSP

WE LIVE IN A WORLD WITH a growing population of more than 7.5 billion. The environmental impacts of such a burden on the planet are visible and palpable, whether politicians choose to believe it or not. If the children are our future, then we must prepare them with the knowledge and skills to ensure that the earth can sustain that future. Inspired by that belief, International School Saigon Pearl (ISSP)—the only international elementary & early years school in HCMC to have the prestigious accreditation from the Council of International Schools (CIS) and the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC), are working hard to provide students with a holistic education and the necessary skills.

What is Sustainability?

Put simply, sustainability is “the avoidance of the depletion of natural resources in order to maintain an

ecological balance” (Oxford dictionary). Practically, it means taking action to avoid further destruction to the environment while simultaneously repairing the damage already done.

In Saigon, where approximately 9,200 tons of solid waste is discarded daily, it can seem an insurmountable problem. However, it is important to remember that each person can do their part in small ways to collectively make a big change. As a part of school curriculum and after-school activities, ISSP is taking up the task of ensuring young students are both aware of the problem and have the skills and motivation to do their part.

How Can ISSP Teach Children About Sustainability?

Children are impressionable sponges, eager to learn and grow. They easily pick up and retain information and can form new habits in a short period

of time. At this crucial stage of mental development and personal growth, children are the best candidates to teach about sustainability. At ISSP, teachers use several engaging, hands-on methods to help their students understand the importance of making changes, to ensure that this world is still habitable for generations to come.

Firstly, sustainability is submerged in the school lifestyle at ISSP. Movies, art, field trips, sports, daily food consuming, music, host country studies and a wide range of books are a readily available tool for teachers to impress upon children the impact of their consumption and how they can do their part to reduce their carbon footprint. A good example is Dr. Seuss’ *The Lorax*. Both the book and film show children what happens when resources are all used up, but give hope that one person can make a big difference.

Beside that, through student-led



International School
SAIGON PEARL
Elementary & Early Years



and the earth can work together to sustain life on the planet. Moreover, if they begin to understand how their carbon footprint in the city affects life outside of it and how important all living creatures are to the balance of the ecosystem, they will have more motivation to protect the environment.

ISSP believes we all have our part to play towards protecting the

environment, to help repair the immense damage that has been done. With the right schooling and with continued practice at home, children will be able to take responsibility for their own carbon footprint. It is evident that the responsibility doesn't stop with us adults, our children are in a better position to take control and to make a larger impact towards a brighter future. ■

ABOUT INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL SAIGON PEARL (ISSP)

Located in Saigon Pearl Complex, the International School Saigon Pearl (ISSP) is a part of Cognita Schools Group, focuses on an American-style curriculum that is based on teaching core values such as honesty, caring, respect, responsibility and wisdom.

With students coming from over 26 countries, ISSP provides a truly international environment and strong community for all children. The multicultural environment and English immersion curriculum will help students achieve academic excellence as well as the skills that are necessary to become socially responsible global citizens. In 2018, more than 85% of students achieve above grade level English & Mathematics, compared to worldwide results in MAP testing.

activities—an essential part of ISSP pedagogical direction, children naturally gain practical skills, such as recycling and composting, through interactive lessons, art & music performance and working in the sustainability gardens. These community activities encourage cooperation amongst peers, group dialogue and reflection. For a Strawless Ocean, Planet Plenty, Solar Buddy and Our Earth Festival are one of successful student-led activities of the school. Older students may be challenged to find more efficient and effective methods to clean up the world around them. With a sustainability garden—which is built by students, growing fruits, vegetables and flowers allows there help young learners to witness how long it takes the things they eat to grow and replenish. Children are given a more personal connection to their food and the ecosystems that are involved in the growth process. They see and experience first-hand how humans



Be Humble

Relationships marked by greater humility can help moms and dads in the transition to parenthood.

Text by Maryam Abdullah

WHAT QUALITIES DO WE LOOK for in a prospective co-parent? Partner preferences usually involve some winning combination of physical attractiveness, status and resources, at least according to evolutionary theory. But there's another quality we might be overlooking in the search for a mate: humility.

Humble people accurately acknowledge both their strengths and weaknesses. They're modest and considerate. Humility seems to be especially important in maintaining and repairing relationships. For couples, the transition to parenthood can be bumpy. They have to figure out how to take care of a new baby together—an experience that can lead to differences in opinion. Can having a partner—and *being* a partner—who is humble make the journey into parenthood easier?

In a recent study, Daryl Van Tongeren and his colleagues studied nearly 70 married, heterosexual, mostly white and thirty-something couples shortly before and after the birth of their first child. During the last trimester of pregnancy, couples completed questionnaires that measured their partners' (not their own!) humility with items like, "He has humble character" and "She knows her strengths." The researchers also asked

couples to complete questionnaires to measure their own stress, anxiety and depression during the first study visit, and then again when their newborn baby was three months old.

The study found that people who had partners with greater humility before they became parents tended to feel less anxious after they became parents. What's more, people who rated their partners as arrogant before their babies were born tended to have greater stress and depression three months after.

Unfortunately, humility needs to be a two-way street for the benefits to be felt. "Being the only humble partner in a [relationship] appears to be taxing," explain Van Tongeren and his colleagues. "The benefits of humility across a life transition appear to be reserved for those marked by humble *relationships*—both members of the couple are humble."

Another team of researchers re-examined the same nearly 70 couples in a 2018 study, this time looking at answers to questions about forgiveness, like, "I can usually forgive and forget an insult." The couples also reported on the quality of their marriage with questions like, "How often do you and your partner quarrel?" at four points in the study: during the last trimester of pregnancy, and when their newborns were three,



nine, and 21 months old.

The findings? Marital quality declined during the transition to parenthood in couples with both low and high levels of humility. However, people with more humble partners before their babies were born tended to have better marital quality at all time points, compared to people with arrogant partners. This was true no matter how forgiving they tended to be.

This doesn't mean that the ability to forgive doesn't matter in a relationship—only that the link between humility and marital satisfaction is not just a reflection of how forgiving partners are of one another, at least in this study. “A couple beginning their transition to parenthood may experience difficulty, but our results suggest that they will fare better as a couple if they begin their journey with full reservoirs of humility,” explain lead author Chelsea Reid and her colleagues.

So, what do these study findings suggest for expecting and new parents? Apart from attending childbirth classes and reading up on newborn care to gain parenting skills, couples can commit to strengthening their relationships, support one another's involvement as

parents, and approach parenting like they're both on the same team—with humility. Reid and her colleagues suggest couples in the transition to parenthood learn “how to communicate humbly over disagreements, negotiate intimacy concerns with humility, and humbly disengage from power struggles.”

Researcher Caroline Lavelock and her colleagues developed *exercises* that focus on the key elements of humility and found that it can be strengthened with practice.

- Take time to acknowledge, understand, and use your strengths to cope with feeling self-doubt.
- Write about acts of humility in a gratitude journal to help you notice and value that quality in others.
- Try to experience awe in the natural world, to

reflect on the world outside yourself rather than being self-focused.

- Have conversations with your partner that increase feelings of closeness, to encourage thoughtfulness between you.

Parenting is rife with opportunities for beating up on ourselves over “wrong” decisions and for partners to condescendingly call out each other's faults. But humility can cradle us in authentic self-awareness and commitment to uplift one another. When it's 3 am and we've been struggling for two hours to help our baby go back to sleep, our partner's looks, job title and investment portfolio might all pale in comparison to whether they're humble enough to put their ego aside and be in the trenches with us trying to figure out how to help. ■

Maryam Abdullah, Ph.D. is a developmental psychologist with expertise in parent-child relationships and children's development of prosocial behaviors.



Harmonious Hormones

Find out what hormone replacement therapy is, why it's used

SO MANY ASPECTS OF A woman's health are kept in balance by hormones. Understanding what's going on hormonally in a woman's body can be key to understanding why her period is irregular, why she cannot have a baby, why she feels pain during menstruation, as well as the activities of many other systems not directly involved with reproduction, including her mental health—all these functions are closely linked to hormones.

Hormones are like musicians in an orchestra, and the brain is like a conductor, balancing and controlling the music that they play. While each hormone has its own distinct part, the overall performance depends on their harmonious interaction with each other.



Dr. Tran Phuong Linh
Gynecology

A serious and intelligent physician with a flair for academic medical science, Dr. Linh has worked as an infertilitist and gynecologist before joining the FMP team to enhance their services to women. She is the founder of the NGO project "Under the Tree", dedicated to teaching English to children.

If one musician refuses to play or if a number of performers are out of sync, illness and disease can be the result.

There are profound differences between women based on the interplay of hormones in their bodies—not on the structural level, but on the functional level. The influence of hormones on a woman's overall wellbeing can be especially apparent during a time such as menopause, when the lack of hormones can bring on hot flashes, stress, and anxiety. Factors such as stress can conversely interrupt the brain's normal hormone release patterns, preventing the body's normal control of the menstrual cycle and causing missed periods and other related symptoms.

Of course, hormones are most intimately involved with the reproductive system, and they are directly responsible for nurturing the ovarian reserve—the cache of eggs in each woman's ovaries. It's the role of hormones to oversee the caretaking of these eggs, making sure that only the best quality among them pass the bar and go on to present themselves for fertilization.

A girl is born with all the eggs she will ever have. She actually has her highest egg count while still a fetus, at about 20 weeks after conception. A female fetus at that time carries around seven million ova, which are whittled down to around two million by the time she is born. By the beginning of puberty, only 400,000 remain in the ovaries as a rush of hormones activate them and awaken the menstrual cycle. Hormones released from the brain's pituitary gland drift down to the ovaries and compel the development of around 300 eggs, ready to be released from the ovarian reserve and delivered towards the uterus.

Of course, the human species cannot carry 300 babies at the same time, and so the eggs are subjected to a strict hormonal environment designed to starve all of them but one. This natural selection process—something like a beauty pageant—ensures only the most viable and dynamic egg survives to inherit the enriching flow of hormones, allowing it to fully develop and be admitted to its

destiny in the womb. If the egg meets its match, it could become a human child—but if two weeks pass without a peep, an impatient wash of hormones signals the onset of menstruation, and everything begins again.

You could say that a woman's health is controlled nearly 70–80% by hormones. This means that the modern science of women's health is largely concerned with hormone control, therapy and testing to ensure everything is in balance. Advanced knowledge of how hormones play their roles has given doctors the unprecedented ability to influence this system, often giving them the power to restore the balance when things get out of kilter. In recent years, Ob-Gyn doctors have become so confident in the safety and effectiveness of hormone therapy that it is now a recommended treatment for disorders such as endometriosis, ovarian cysts and uterine fibroids, which were previously resolved by surgery.

I often give hormone replacement therapy for women who have perimenopausal symptoms. These aren't related to reproduction, but symptoms such as hot flashes, insomnia, joint pain, and so on. So just with a relatively straightforward course of hormone therapy, all those out-of-tune musicians will be silenced. The symptoms vanish, they can sleep well, and they feel happy again.

Although hormones are the one factor that most directly affect women's health, the will to control and balance the body's hormones is very different between people. In my own practice, I have observed that foreign women who consult with me often accept my advice to use medication to control their hormones. For example, patients with endometriosis, which causes pain every time they have their period, are often willing to use medication to control the length of their menstrual cycle or to stop their period altogether. They understand that no period means no pain, and want to avoid the effect that pain has on their lifestyle—so they use contraceptive pills to hush the hormonal signals that induce periods.

My Vietnamese patients are generally much more hesitant to use such medication. I have found that if I prescribe a hormone pill to make their cycle longer—so that they will not need to endure pain every time they have their period—they will quite often not accept my prescription. I have often been told by Vietnamese patients that they prefer to deal with the pain rather than interfere with their natural cycle.

As a doctor I have to listen to my patients' thoughts about hormone pills. I have often found, however, that patients who view this therapeutic method as unnatural often base their opinions on stories about side effects read online. Sadly, these stories are often inaccurate. Side effects caused by hormone therapy can occur because of the way hormones are so completely involved in each woman's general health. However the health benefits of using hormone medication for those who need it usually far outweigh any negative consequences, which if they occur can often be reversed by switching to a different course of treatment.

I ask my patients to decide which is the better alternative—to treat the pain and inconvenience of a hormone-related condition, or to endure it for fear of a minor side effect (such as putting on weight) that may never happen and can be easily resolved?

I always try to persuade my patients that using pills or other medication to control hormones is a safe and well-advanced medical technique that can really make their lives better. This medicine is very commonly used outside of Vietnam with excellent results. ■

>>The List Education

INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS



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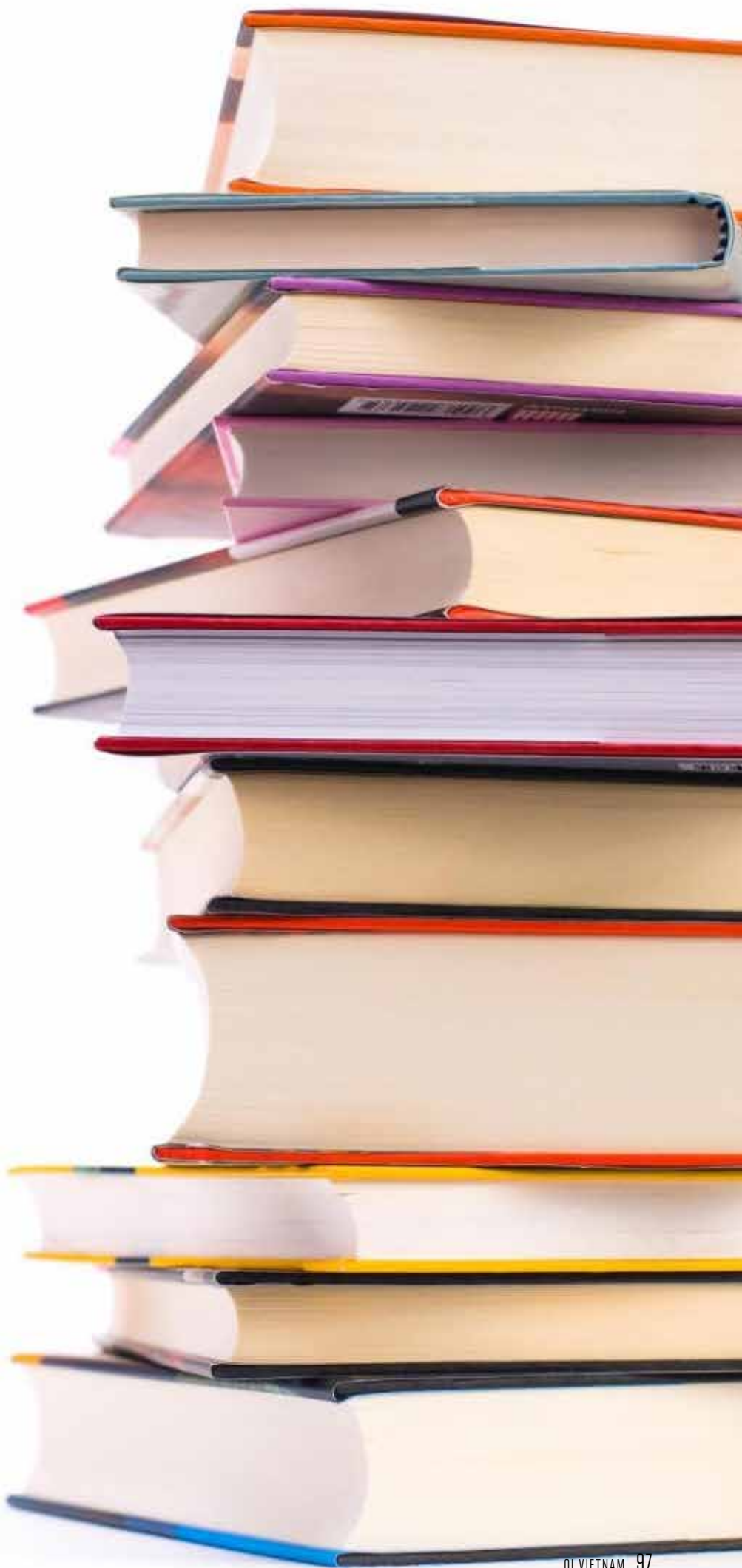
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