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VIETNAM

04,05,06-2020

QUEEN BEES

A Collection of
Women-Led Businesses

PAGE 10

EAT MORE VEGETABLES

Exploring Vietnam's Best
Vegetarian Ingredients

PAGE 42

ESCAPIST FICTION

How Reading Sci-Fi Can Build
Resilience in Kids

PAGE 58

Stay Well



Tập 2/2020

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"Lotus Landscape" Artist: Ngo Duc Hoang Dimensions: 90x120cm Medium: Son Mai Lacquer Art Year: 2019 Price: 92,000,000 VND (\$3,900 USD)	Archival paper Gallery Framed 230 GSM 60x90cm 4,700,000 VND (\$199 USD)	Multi-panel Limited Edition Print 60x90cm 5,900,000 VND (\$255 USD)
	Limited Edition Print on Stretched Canvas 60x70cm 5,900,000 VND (\$255 USD)	Multi-Panel Limited Edition Print on Stretched Canvas 8,900,000 VND (\$380 USD)
		
"Vietnamese Landscape" Artist: Ngo Duc Hoang Dimensions: 120x240cm Medium: Son Mai Lacquer Art Year: 2019 Price: 92,000,000 VND (\$3,900 USD)	"Bo Da Pagoda" Artist: Ngo Duc Hoang Dimensions: 90x120cm Medium: Son Mai Lacquer Art Year: 2019 Price: 105,000,000 VND (\$4,500 USD)	"Dreams" 2018 Artist: Ronald Paredes Dimensions: 40x180 cm Medium: Mixed media on canvas Year: 2019 Price: 45,000,000 VND (\$1,900 USD)
 Ngo Duc Hoang <p>I am from Hanoi, Vietnam and hold a degree in Fine Arts from the National University of Film. I specialize in using traditional Vietnamese lacquer as a medium to capture and recreate unique historical and cultural images that embodies the deep traditions of Vietnam</p>		 Ronald Paredes <p>My name is Ronald Paredes, I'm a Venezuelan artist with a trajectory of over 20 years with a formation in graphic design and visual communication. My work as an artist consist of compositions made of continuous lines and basic colors. Coming from a background in graphic design I wanted to continue producing work with a very strong graphic feel.</p>



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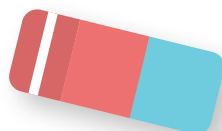
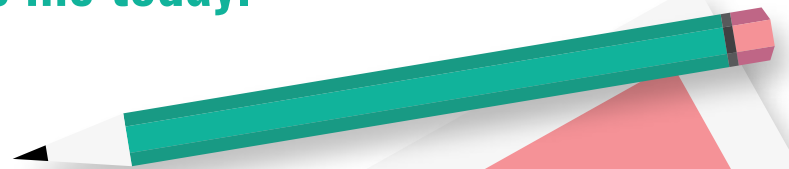
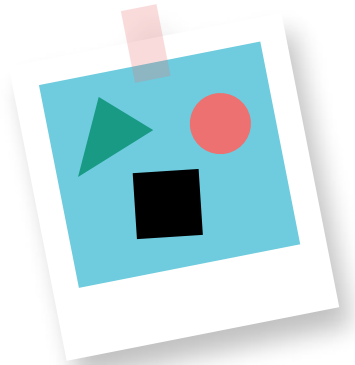
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Lawrence Young (FCSI) is the Senior Associate for Holborn Asset Management Group (HCMC office). Originally from the UK, Lawrence has been a finance professional for 30 years having worked across Europe and Asia as a stockbroker, Eurobond trader and interbank money broker. His areas of expertise lie in offshore tax efficient saving structures, higher education fee planning, inheritance tax planning, pension planning, life and health insurance, global investment property, offshore company formation and offshore banking. Email lawrence.young@holbornassets.com if you would like him to answer your questions on these topics.

Go Long

Markets are tanking. Should I cash out?

IT IS ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE

to read about anything other than COVID-19 and we are no different. As a wealth manager, I can only pass on my ideas on what to do given the turmoil in the markets. There are many losers in these markets, but with every loser, there is a winner. We can only hope that this pandemic comes to an end at some point. History shows us that it will.

In the meantime, we need to admit that there is going to be more pain than there already is. It will come in the form of savings disappearing and businesses going bust. The world is locked down and this will have a knock-on effect to supply chains and directly impact many industry sectors: travel, tourism, bars, restaurants, sports, festivals, etc. The list is endless.

How crazy has it been? On Thursday, March 12, both the S&P 500 and Dow Jones Industrials fell 10%, the worst day for stocks in 32 years. Pretty much any day in the last week could have been noted as one of the best markets days or worst due to the yo-yo volatility.

Add it all up, and history says the best move is to buy now, and certainly *not* sell. This is the time to circle the wagons on your existing investments, while looking to deploy extra cash methodically into the best stocks that are now selling at big discounts.

Where there is a collapse there is also an opportunity and this should be considered as to what is the best strategy. There is probably no better time to consider buying into the markets with smart investment choices.

One thing I keep getting asked is: "Should I sell down and go into cash only now?" The answer is absolutely *yes* if you want to be eating cat food in about 5 years' time. If anything, you ride it

out—long-term investors win.

There are a raft of stocks that are literally "On Sale" right now. Consider the following and the logic behind them.

FedEx is a good bet during the coronavirus situation—as COVID-19 continues to spread, there will be demand for more deliveries as consumers look to avoid crowded stores. That's where the freight and logistics company can benefit from an uptick in traffic, which could make for some strong quarters ahead. Online shopping plays a big role in the economy, and while there might be some short-term pain for FedEx's stock, over the long term it may recover a lot sooner than others will.

Amazon (NASDAQ: AMZN) is a good buy for very similar reasons. It doesn't pay a dividend, but the tech stock is near its 52-week low as well. It still has a high forward P/E ratio of more than 50, but that's not unusual for the online retailer, which investors typically value highly thanks to its growth.

These are just 2 reasonable suggestions of how a stock can benefit from the change in behavior. How long do we see this before it all starts to come back to some normality?

That is the 64-million-dollar question that everyone wonders. Most investors are longer-term investors and for the smart ones it makes the question redundant. Trying to play the short game most often leads to failure and loss.

It is quite hard to not find an area to invest in. The perfect storm occurred with the ongoing war between Russia and Saudi Arabia, which kicked over the oil pricing war. The timing could have not been better. My personal view is we are going to go lower yet between \$20

and \$30 a barrel. It is unsustainable in the longer run and both OPEC and OPEC+ (Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries) will have to sit down at the negotiation table at some point. Break-even point has already been broken for both the major players. As always, do your own study and make an informed decision on your own or come and talk to me directly.

Many people will have questions and uncertainty during this period. But keep in mind that emotions make for terrible investment decisions. Now is not the time to allow emotions to get in the way of an investment decision.

The reason it's hard to buy right now.

Watching the value of your portfolio plummet so far over such a short period of time hurts. According to scientific studies, your brain responds to financial losses in the same way it responds to physical pain. This explains why people sell during periods of uncertainty. Losing *hurts*, and people act quickly to avoid further pain.

The opposite side of the psychological coin explains why it can be *so* hard to buy right now. As much as it hurts to lose, the pleasure we gain from a winning investment doesn't feel as *good* as the pain from losing *hurts*. Your brain is telling you "it's going to get worse. Get out now and stay out," in an effort to avoid further suffering. This is an evolved response that's baked into our DNA.

The problem will become worse if and when we end up in an "I told you so" moment. Instances such as what we are witnessing right now only come around very infrequently. It will always come down to how much you can stomach.

But one thing is always true. "You have to be in it, to win it." ■



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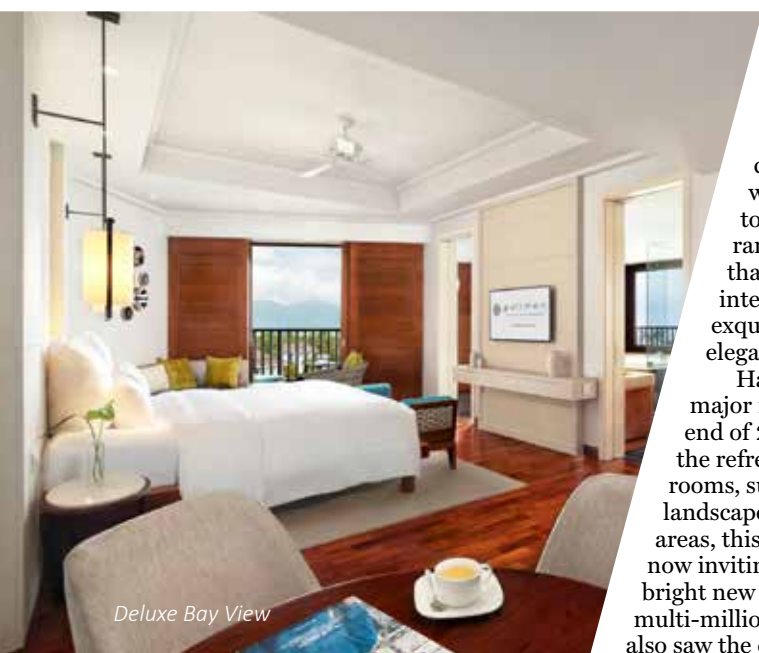
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Experience a New Era of Modern Vietnamese Hospitality at **Pullman Danang Beach Resort**

Text and Images Provided by
Pullman Danang Beach Resort



Deluxe Bay View

PULLMAN DANANG BEACH RESORT, the vibrant tropical oasis on Vietnam's central coast, is now welcoming guests back to paradise with a full range of five-star facilities that blend contemporary international style with exquisite Vietnamese elegance.

Having completed a major refurbishment at the end of 2019, which included the refreshment of all 186 rooms, suites and cottages, the landscaped gardens and public areas, this international resort is now inviting guests to discover a bright new era of hospitality. This multi-million dollar transformation also saw the creation of brand a

new two-bedroom Family Suite, which can accommodate up to four guests, and the installation of a spectacular fiber-optic lighting system in the sea-facing swimming pool, meaning that guests can now dive into a galaxy of twinkling stars.

Nestled on the soft sands of Bac My An Beach, just moments from downtown Danang, Pullman Danang Beach Resort promises the perfect blend of beachfront bliss and urban convenience. This prime location is enhanced by the fact that some of Vietnam's best golf courses (including many designed by the sport's top names) and a trio of UNESCO World Heritage sites – Hoi An's ancient town, My Son Sanctuary, and the citadel of Hué – are just a short drive away. Danang International Airport can also be reached in only ten minutes, making it easily accessible for quick beachfront breaks.

The resort features a choice of spacious and stylish rooms, suites and cottages, all blessed with contemporary



Epice Restaurant



Fiberstar Swimming Pool



The Nang Spa

interiors, the latest technology, spa-inspired bathrooms and private balconies or outdoor terraces. With options for between two and four guests, Pullman Danang Beach Resort is ideally suited to every type of stay, from romantic couples' escapes and special occasions to fun-filled family vacations and weekends with friends. The rooms all overlook the beach, infinity ponds or lush gardens, so every guest can soak up the serene seafront ambiance.

When guests are not relaxing on the beach or exploring the wonders of Vietnam's central coast, they have a wealth of leisure opportunities at the resort. The starlit outdoor pool (the first in Vietnam to be adorned with the unique Krislite LED lighting system) provides an appealing place to chill out during the day. Alternatively, the fitness centre features a full range of cardio equipment for an energizing workout, while The Nang Spa is an oasis of tranquillity where

expert therapists offer a full range of body scrubs, wraps, massages and more.

Pullman Danang Beach Resort is a fantastic family retreat and parents have plenty of ways to keep their children entertained during their stay. The Kid's Club is a fun and fully supervised center where younger guests can play games and learn new skills, and kids' massage services are available for 4-12 year-olds, ensuring that all ages can indulge in a little pampering. With plenty of seaside sports and games, a beachfront playground, and courts for tennis, badminton, pétanque, youngsters will be able to burn off all their excess energy. Families can also enjoy plenty of activities together, such as bike rides through the scenic countryside, local area tours and Vietnamese cooking classes.

Naturally, there are plenty of opportunities to savor world-class cuisine at Pullman Danang Beach Resort. Guests have two restaurants to

choose from, Azure Beach Lounge specializes in casual daytime and evening dining, including cool drinks, healthy bites and divine desserts; and Restaurant Epice is a chic and sophisticated all-day dining destination that serves modern Vietnamese cuisine and international fusion dishes. Alternatively, guests can unwind at the Infinity Bar, gazing out over the reflective ponds and shimmering sea whilst sipping a refreshing beverage or even a smoking liquid nitrogen ice cream – the signature of this popular lounge.

Guests can now explore all these attractions and activities with a new exclusive, value-added offer at Pullman Danang Beach Resort. Valid from 11th June to 15th July 2020, this promotion includes a Deluxe Room for just VND2,500,000 per night, plus VND1,500,000 of free resort credit for Spa or FB, which can be redeemed for dining, beverages or spa services during the stay. Alternatively, suites or cottages are available from just VND2,900,000, with the same amount of resort credit.

Pullman Danang Beach Resort is not only a sensational setting for beachfront breaks; it is also a dynamic destination for weddings and events. Couples can exchange their eternal vows on the soft sand, next to the pool or on the alfresco terrace, surrounded by their loved ones. There is also a selection of indoor venues, Lotus Ballroom and several more intimate options, which can be tailored to every type of function. So whether you're seeking a grand gathering or an exclusive event, a modern meeting or a traditional Vietnamese celebration, the resort's dedicated team of planners can create experiences that will live long in the memory.

A series of meeting and wedding packages are available; for example, the "Meet and Play" package offers a full day of venue hire for up to 400 delegates, a Vietnamese-themed welcome dinner, a free coffee break and plenty of added extras from VND 600,000 net per person, per day. Alternatively, brides and grooms can get married in paradise with a beachfront wedding venue, guest room discounts, a complimentary room for the happy couple and much more, all for just VND399,000 per guest. Many other options are available for various different types and sizes of celebration.

With its fresh look and feel, award-winning amenities, enchanting atmosphere and authentic Vietnamese service, Pullman Danang Beach Resort is now ready to welcome guests back to Vietnam's stunning central coast. ■

For more information about Pullman Danang Beach Resort, or to book your stay in paradise, please call +84 (0) 236 395 8888, email H8838@accor.com or visit www.pullman-danang.com.



Vivian and Julie

Queen Bees

The Beehive is a curated pop-up shop featuring a collection of women-led businesses

Text by **Michael Arnold**
Images Provided by **The Beehive**

FEW PEOPLE GOING INTO business for themselves are prepared for how lonely the experience can be. The demands on an entrepreneur trying to build a brand from the ground up are immense, and it can often feel like there's no one around to offer support—and while the elation of personally overcoming critical business challenges can be extremely satisfying, this just isn't something that friends working a regular 9–5 can relate to, meaning that even success can feel isolating.

"You tell them you've just launched a new product, and they're like, oh that's

cool," says Julie Huynh, who along with co-founder Vivian Story established networking platform The Beehive (www.facebook.com/thebeehivehcmc) to help women entrepreneurs facing exactly these kinds of pressures. "You're like, no! I went to Korea five times to make sure I got this right. I've been on 17 calls to make sure that they got the consistency right and I did all this packaging by myself. That feeling that you did everything by yourself, and then to have someone else who actually knows the pain of that, and they're happy for you—you're overjoyed being able to share it with them."

Vivian and Julie's idea to coordinate with other businesswomen in Saigon, offering mutual support as they build their respective independent brands, grew organically out of their initial plans to hold a pop-up event together. While they're in different industries (Julie's Rita Phil brand retails highly customized tailor-made pencil skirts, while Vivian's skincare line Soul Story addresses the demand for healthy skin products free of toxins and chemicals) they discovered they had the same group of target customers—people in the community seeking to purchase high-quality products who are open-minded about supporting independent businesses.

"We both sell online, and the biggest challenge when you don't have a brick and mortar is how do you reach more people and get people to touch and feel and smell the goods that you sell," says Vivian. "We realized that we knew other female entrepreneurs in Saigon who had a similar problem."

"One of the things that improves online marketing is that you need the right target customer," observes Julie, "and we found that the people who are buying my stuff would also buy her stuff and vice versa. So we thought, let's bring in the same type of people and see how this goes. It just started really small, just the two of us. Then we convinced three other businesses to join us."



The first pop-up, a tiny event held in Julie's tailoring showroom with tablecloths thrown over the office furniture, led to other events that drew the participation of women running diverse businesses across the city.

"It's kind of a gathering of all these queen bees," says Julie. "The idea is that when you're an entrepreneur, you're your own queen bee, you run the business, you put out the commands, you get everything done—but you're all by yourself and it gets very lonely. When you're able to bring people together to support each other, there's no competition—everyone knows that loneliness and stress, but also the motivation that we get from each other too. That understanding really, we thrive on that."

The Beehive now boasts an alumnae of 26 women entrepreneurs, so many that the platform can no longer accommodate every business at its regular pop-up events, and is now hosting stalls on a rotational basis. Vivian and Julie now assess each business participating in the network on the basis of the quality of products and the degree of care shown by the owners (be they local or expat women) in making a difference in their business as well as being involved and supporting each other. Business types range from producers of bespoke furniture (In Concepts) and fine arts jewelry (Ojects) through to truffle-based condiments importer (Truffle Hill) and artisanal kombucha tea brewer (Chill Kombucha), among many others.

"That's why The Beehive makes a lot of sense," explains Vivian. "It's a platform for people to come in and try all the products—and also just about brand awareness, to touch new customers that we weren't able to reach online, because everything we've done so far has only been through social media and other online platforms. I guess it's social commerce as well as e-commerce."



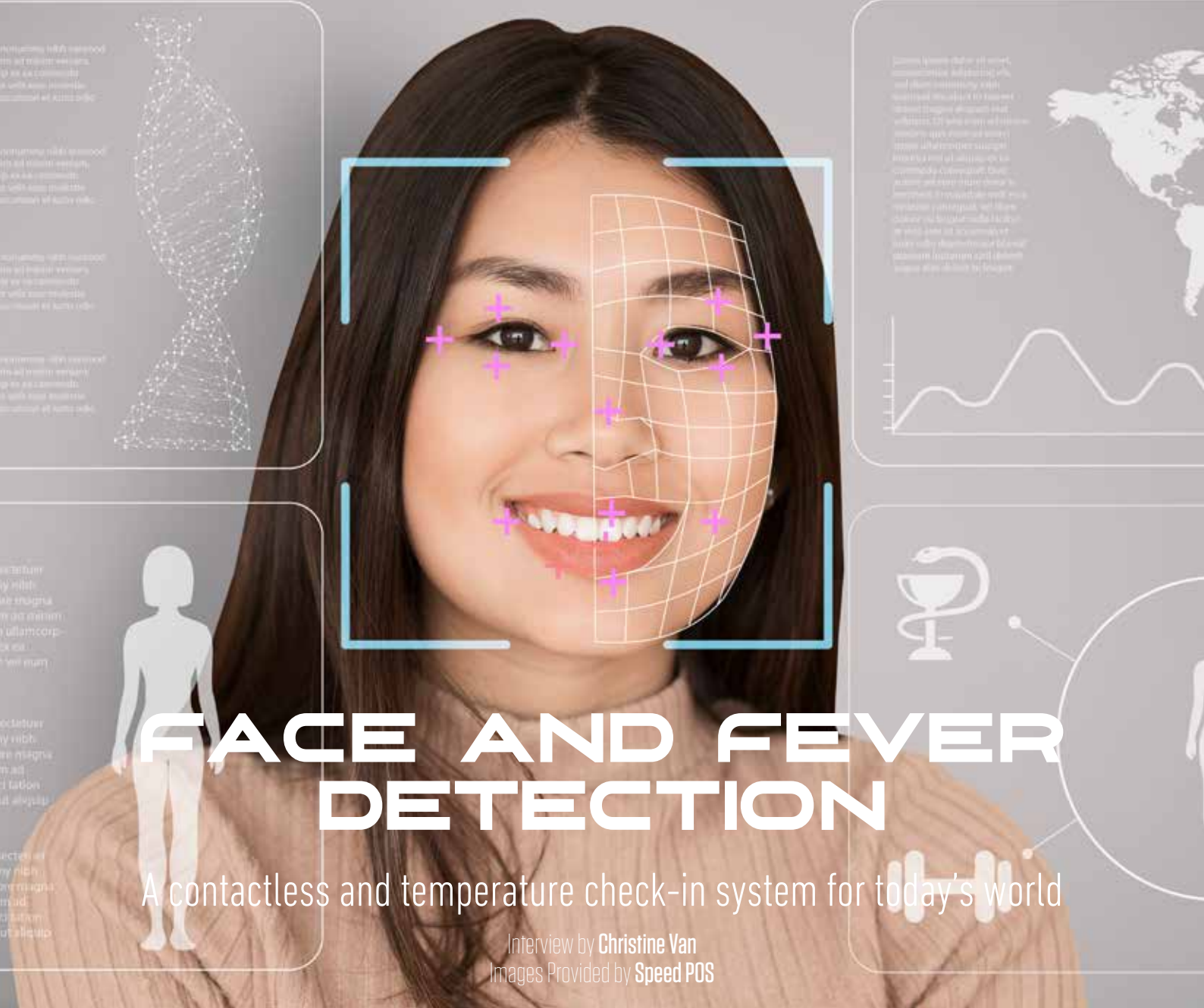
"It's hard to compete with a multibillion dollar company," she adds. "So to have other women who share what we're doing is a great way to do marketing that doesn't cost an arm and a leg. Surprisingly, there are many people in Saigon who want to shop local, who want to support local businesses."

One thing that makes The Beehive work is that the small enterprises curated by Vivian and Julie fall within the same range and scale point, and are attracting the same type of people. This means the quality of those potential customers is significantly higher than for those reached online, and the chances that

the businesses involved will actually sell items or attract repeat customers are also much higher.

"It's a community that's created organically by women," says Julie. "When you think of a lot of the networking or clubs that are available for business owners or business people, they tend to be men. The majority are men-focused, but this is more women-focused."

"The awareness that goes with our platform is also awareness for women within the community. There are a lot of women doing a lot of awesome things who are just not as acknowledged as they should be, and we want them to be showcased." ■



FACE AND FEVER DETECTION

A contactless and temperature check-in system for today's world

Interview by **Christine Van**
Images Provided by **Speed POS**

FACE RECOGNITION IS GETTING a lot of momentum. In the recent context, where touching a surface by multiple people has emerged as a potential cause of infection, Speed POS provides face recognition systems embedded with temperature recording. *Oi Vietnam* speaks to Luan Khanh, Director of Speed POS, about the company's newest Fever Detection Kiosk System.

What is FKS?

"FKS" stands for "Fever Detection Kiosk System." We built a thermographic camera into our kiosk system so we can detect people's temperature from a distance of 1.5m to 2.5m.

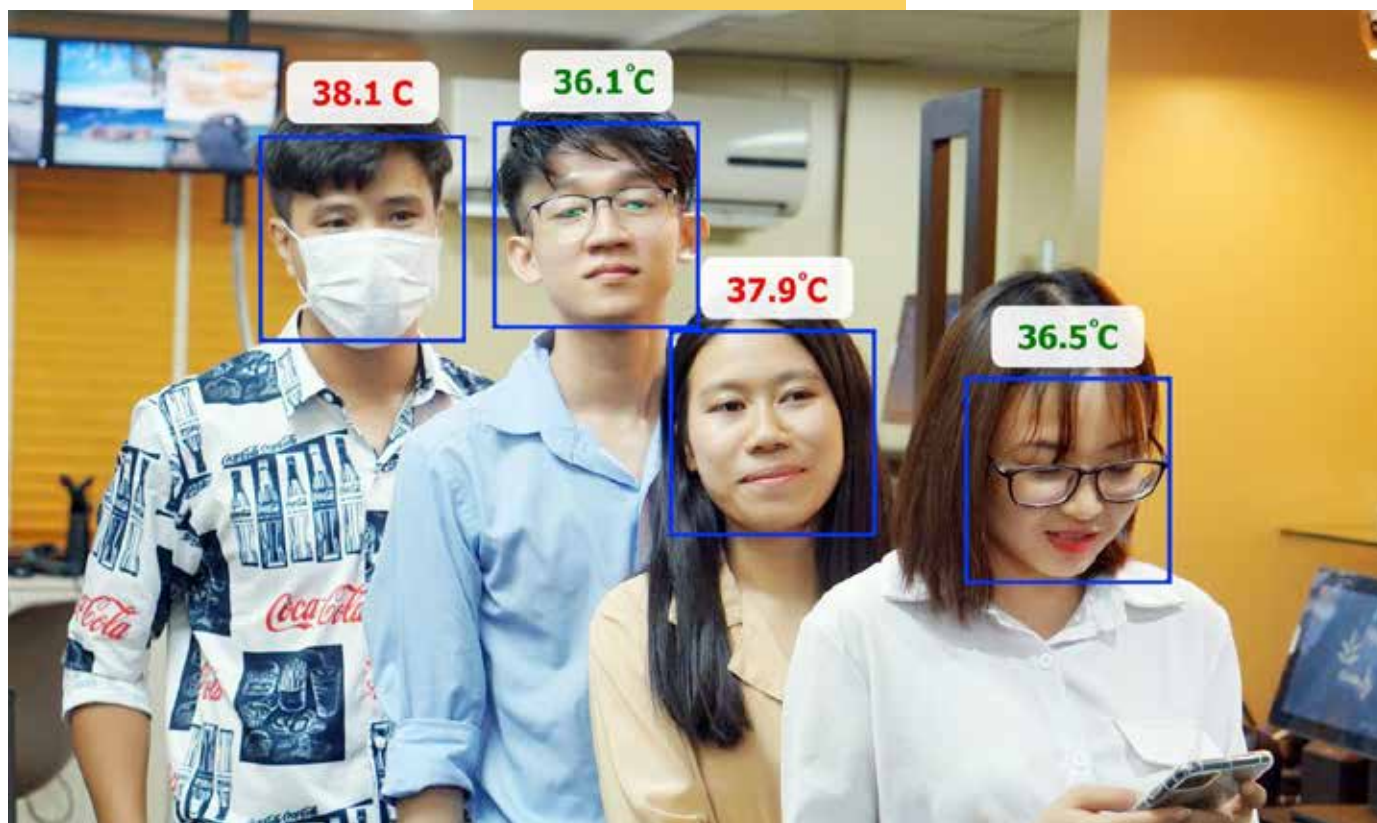
Why is it important now, more than ever, to use face and temperature recognition tech in public places and establishments?

Covid-19 often causes an increase in body temperature. According to the German Robert Koch Institute, almost 90% of Covid-19 infected people have a fever; therefore this focus on fever screening



is a preventive measure to contain the current pandemic. With its Fever Detection Camera, Speed POS Vietnam has developed a kiosk solution that provides fast and precise measurement results and reduces significantly the risk

of infection spreading in many areas of our daily lives. We also have a Face ID recognition function to track histories of every visitor—this process will help the building and company protect their premises and facilities.



How does thermal imaging technology work?

We have a built-in thermographic camera and AI Face recognition. Any object with a temperature above absolute zero degrees is constantly emitting an amount of radiations so the thermographic camera converts IR radiation into gray value and calculates the thermal information through a measurement algorithm model (temperature gray level curve) according to the corresponding relation between gray value and temperature. We detect Face ID and keep track of people with the correct temperature.

Do I need to use a black body for EST screening?

The temperature range is 30°C to 45°C and temperature accuracy is ffl 0.5 °C. If you use a black body you will increase the accuracy to ffl 0.3 °C.

Is there any interaction required for scanning? Is this completely touch-free?

It is designed to be completely touch-free, thus preventing the spread of the COVID-19 virus through contact. We can also include touch-free access control for doors and turnstiles to allow people to enter via Face ID—a total automation process.

Where are the best places to use FKS?

We have there difference models: K01 for fast-food restaurants and retail shops with stands, K02 for company employees, and A01 for airports, theme parks and malls with more than 5,000 visitors per day.

Does FKS also work outdoors?

This is an in-house product only.

How accurate are the temperature readings and facial recognitions?

With the Model A01; temperature range: 30°C to 45°C; temperature accuracy: ffl 0.5 °C and ffl 0.3 °C with a black body.

It can detect up to 30 faces simultaneously, however, at the actual site the scanned zone we tested can read 15 people at most with screening results within 0.5 seconds. Facial recognition is 98% accurate and in our system we set up the default value to identify the same person at 98%.

Can the software still identify and check a person's temperature with their mask on?

Yes, we can check their temperature with their mask on, but can't recognize their face. The system can detect if a person is not wearing a mask and will alert them to wear a mask.

Does it scan overall body temperature or the forehead skin temperature?

It scans the forehead to measure the temperature. Its benefit is to focus the measurement on the person's face to reduce false alarms caused by other heat sources (such as coffee cups).

What steps have been taken to protect privacy?

We work with a thermographic camera manufacture to comply with GDPR from the EU and if it is to

be used in public spaces only the basic version to measure temperature is turned on, we won't turn on face recognition. But if it is used in private buildings to prevent the spread of viruses and employees are aware and communication is made with employees and all the features are still in compliance with GDPR then our CMS is installed in LAN only. Regarding FDA compliance, we are not focusing on medical usage, so we will not apply the FDA.

What information will the software tell about each person and who has access to this information?

If you're using it for your private company, the software will keep track of names, group of person, time access, gate access, face captured every two minutes at each same gate, and his/her temperature when captured.

Can the machine and technology be used anywhere?

We can customize our system to adapt to most businesses, if not private then we can connect to each database to have API to integrate.

Where can we see Fever Face Checkin in action in Vietnam?

Recently, fever detection camera is already in use at border controls at Don Mueang International Airport in Bangkok and Tan Son Nhat International Airport, however, they are not our customer, they used another company's technology. We just finished our development last month. ■

For more info on Fever Detection Kiosk System, visit www.speedup.vn

Switch Off and Connect

DIY workshops for crafts
and beauty products
with Amber House

Text by Dana McNairn
Images by Vy Lam



THE DO-IT-YOURSELF (DIY) URGE is in full resurgence as people voluntarily limit their (solo!) social media consumption in favour of face-to-face interaction with others and creating communities. More and more people are seeking new experiences instead of obtaining more and more things.

Amber Nguyen established Amber House in October 2019 as a response to a finance and operations career. She felt her life was lacking clarity and purpose. "Sitting in an office all day," she says, "that's not really me."

"My friends were always telling me I'm so creative and full of energy," she continues, "so I knew I had to do something else." Talking with friends and family, she (re)discovered her purpose and meaning was handicrafts: making things by hand and taking the time necessary to do so. Being a crafter since she was a kid, Amber House is a handicraft studio and workspace where Amber holds workshops that uphold that DIY ethos.

Her pleasure, she says, comes from hearing the different perspectives each of her clients brings to the studio as they sit around the worktable and crochet or make their own lipsticks.

"You know it's funny, I don't even wear makeup, but I just love the pop of color," she laughs, "and lipstick is also exactly that, a pop of color." And this is why we're here together today in her serene and shaded studio: a DIY lipstick workshop to make natural and chemical-free lip color in my favorite shade.

Across the worktable are digital weigh scales and pots of colored powders. The powders are expertly weighed out by the milligram and mixed. My orange oxide and terra cotta colored powder is cut with a bit of very bright fuchsia after much laughing input from Amber and Vy Lam, the *Oi Vietnam* staff photographer. Bees wax pastilles, jojoba oil, olive oil and finally, almond oil are weighed on the scale and carefully blended with a whirl of shea butter. This beaker is gently heated. We joke about being a *Breaking Bad* lab of powders, oils, metal spatulas, digital weigh scales, beakers, scented potions and a portable burner to 'cook' our stuff. But actually the room smells like warm chocolate and vanilla because of the melting wax. Vy says it smells like walking into Maison Marou. From a selection of essential oils (such as eucalyptus or rose) I chose chamomile, stirred into my custom color mix.

This joins the melted wax and the entire mix is quickly poured into the lipstick mold and put into a fridge to cool and set. We tease Amber about the beer and wine bottles inside. "My friends always want to come over and hang out and make stuff," she laughs good-naturedly. "But people are certainly welcome to bring something with them if they'd like to really make it an event, a celebration about spending time together and making things together." Private groups are welcome at Amber House, as well as individuals booking and taking a small group class with new people. So while her studio is most comfy, Amber



says, with around five participants so she can give highly personalized attention to her student, she has externally hosted a number of larger teambuilding groups in co-working spaces around town.

People can book via Vibeji Culture Hub, a platform curating experiences that users shop and browse to inspire themselves or find like-minded community. Amber says this is one of the reasons she's on the platform. She wants to make it fun for people to meet and learn from each other face-to-face. It's back to perspective for Amanda and her clients. Amber House is currently open seven days a week with a range of times available for bookings. She offers crocheting lessons, the DIY lipstick workshop and crafting dreamcatchers. Soap making is a likely future offering. "I love working with people to co-create a more meaningful hands-on experience."

Amber sweeps her arm across her studio space. "So many people think they can't make anything, so I want to show how handicrafts can be taught to anyone," she says. "It's about exploring the world through our hands." ■

Vibeji is the world's first marketplace platform for online and offline skill-sharing activities that are bite-sized, entertaining and interactive—connecting hosts to seekers of new experiences. To explore the experiences that are available, visit vibeji.com.



How to make the remote work transition with ease

Text by Cameron Chapman

WHILE 83% OF WORKERS SAY remote work would make them happier with their jobs, not many people anticipated that the shift would happen as suddenly as it did.

With companies around the world quickly transitioning their workforce to working from home, some employees will find it a challenge to make the switch. While designers may have dreamed of working in their pajamas from their couch all day, the realities of being a productive remote worker will quickly show that this method is not optimal.

Figure Out the Optimal Working Style

When working from home, it can be difficult to get into the “groove” of the workday. Dedicated home office spaces aren’t always possible, especially when workers are suddenly transitioned to a remote position. Mistakes that affect both productivity and morale are often made.

Many new remote workers often feel like they need to keep up their regular 9-to-5 routine. For many designers, that’s not necessarily the best way to work from home. It can be more effective to work during the hours when you’re at optimal productivity. For some, that may be first thing in the morning. For others, it could be late at night. And still other designers may find that working in bursts throughout the day works best.

Remote team collaboration can happen asynchronously. In an office environment, designers can spend at least some of their working hours waiting for others to complete or review work. But in a remote work environment, they don’t have to wait around or find “busy work” to *look* as if they’re being productive. Instead, they can focus on other areas of their lives while waiting for teammates to complete work, or clients to review design elements they’ve submitted.

Working asynchronously takes some adjustment. It’s important to stay available during “working hours” even when not actively working, in case a teammate has a question or needs help with a project. Thankfully, mobile app versions of tools like Slack make it easy to stay connected even when you aren’t sitting at your desk.

Smartphones allow remote designers to stay connected to their team even when not in their home office. It’s important for anyone working from home to establish a healthy work-life balance. When work is happening in the same space as everything else in a designer’s life, it can be easy to stay connected all the time. It’s important to establish personal guidelines for logging off. For example, apps like Slack allow people to set their available and unavailable hours, muting notifications during that unavailable time. This is particularly important at distributed companies who have team members spanning multiple time zones.

Sitting at a desk all day is also detrimental to remote workers’ productivity and health. Establish a routine for things like

meditation, exercise, yoga, taking a walk, or even just basic stretches. Calendar reminders to do these things can prevent them from slipping through the cracks. At the very least, it’s a good idea to get up and stretch every hour or so and work regular exercise or other self-care into the day.

Neglecting self-care and failing to log off from work on a routine basis can quickly lead to burnout for remote workers. For designers who love what they do, it can be all too easy to keep going on a project until they’re exhausted. Those eight-hour workdays can quickly stretch to 10 or 12 hours—or longer. While that may occasionally be necessary to meet a tight deadline or tackle a big project, it’s not a healthy habit to get into.

Optimize for Home Office Productivity

As tempting as it can seem for newly remote workers to work from their couch in their pajamas all day, it’s not the best way to become a successful remote designer. At the same time, recreating the exact environment you had in an office doesn’t necessarily translate into productivity, either.

Having a dedicated workspace is important. It’s a signal to the brain that it’s time for *work* when there. This is a huge motivational component for many remote workers.

Ideally, a separate room that can be closed off from the rest of the house both during and after the workday is the best option. If that is not an option, however, a desk tucked into the

corner of a less used room can suffice. It's important to set up a desk that's functional and includes everything necessary for the day's work. An ergonomic chair is also a must-have for anyone who spends hours at their computer every day. Standing desks are also excellent for home workers. If a standing desk isn't an option, a kitchen counter (depending on the height) is an excellent alternative.

Invest in Reliable Technology

Reliable technology is one of the most important aspects of any home office setup. Technology failures are one of the biggest blocks to productivity for remote workers, and since the IT department isn't readily available to fix problems, it pays to invest in solid technology up front.

A good laptop is key for many remote workers. While most work can be done in a dedicated workspace, having the option to work from a different location—even if that location is just a patio on a nice day—can be key to maintaining productivity and morale.

Since most distributed companies conduct meetings via video conferencing, a good set of headphones is essential equipment for many remote designers. There are a lot of options out there, both over-ear and earbud style. The main thing to look for is a set with an inline microphone. Some remote workers prefer Bluetooth headphones, while others don't want the hassle of remembering another device to charge and opt for wired headphones.

Sufficient data on a cell phone plan helps remote workers be less tied to their desks. When notifications can come through from anywhere, this makes it possible to step away from work without worrying about missing important information or communications. This is especially important when working with teammates in different time zones, who may have an important question after you've logged off for the day.

Reliable, high-speed internet is also a must, especially for video conferencing. Without a sufficient internet connection, video calls become choppy and difficult to manage. In many locations, reliable internet is readily available—not necessarily the case everywhere, even in some major cities.

Overcommunicate During and After a Remote Work Transition

When a designer is sitting in an office, it's apparent to their coworkers that they're working. When a designer is sitting in a home office, it's no longer the case.

Because it's no longer possible for a manager or design team lead to see what their teammates are doing, it's important to communicate information more directly. Different companies and teams have varying policies on how often that information should be communicated; it can also depend on the specific project being worked on.

If there's no set policy about communication, at the very least, progress

should be communicated on a weekly basis. Any time there's a block or delay in delivery, that should also be communicated. The same goes for when a project is moving along smoothly and will be completed ahead of a deadline.

Transparency is also key to remote work communication. To prevent small problems from turning into large ones, it's important to discuss any blocks or issues early. In a traditional office, issues come up more organically than they do in a remote environment—making a point to bring up problems as they arise is key to solving issues quickly and preserving good team communications.

Lean on the Community

One of the biggest challenges that come up with any remote job is a feeling of isolation. When teammates aren't working together in person on a daily basis, disconnects can happen. In the worst-case scenario, members may stop functioning as a team.

It's important for remote workers to avoid feelings of isolation by leaning on their communities—both work and personal. Setting up a routine with others is a good way to keep those communities vibrant. For example, having lunch with a friend (even if virtually) once a week can be a good way to keep personal communities strong.

One way to keep work communities strong is through collaboration. Offering to help with another teammate's project is a great way to strengthen team relationships. It also makes it easier to ask for help when necessary.

Designers (and especially design team leads) should be sensitive to the idea that transitioning to a remote work environment may not be easy for every employee. Some may take longer to get into the flow of working from home, and sometimes, distractions may

cause productivity issues. A strong work community can help support remote designers through these issues.

Adopt an Iteration Mindset

If there's one thing designers should be familiar with, it's iteration. But many designers only apply the iteration mindset to their design projects. Instead, they should consider applying it to all aspects of their career, including how they handle the remote work transition.

Optimizing a remote workflow takes time. Very few people figure out the best way for *them* to work remotely on the first try. All of the productivity hacks they learned in the office may not translate into a home-work environment. The typical design iteration cycle can be adapted to iterating a remote work strategy. Designers who are working from home for the first time should consistently look for new ways to improve their work and their workflow. Try new things, techniques, and technologies. Don't get stuck in a rut of doing things a certain way because they've worked in the past.

There's always room for improvement in any designer's career. Adopting a mindset of testing and collecting feedback (either personal data or by asking teammates what seems to be working or not) allows designers to create better work routines and adopt better techniques.

Sharing what works and what doesn't with teammates is also a great way to both improve workflows and stay connected as a team. It improves team culture in ways that simply collaborating on projects doesn't always do.

Learning how to work remotely isn't always an easy transition, especially if it's sudden. But adopting an iterative approach, maintaining strong communities, and setting up a home office that's built for productivity are keys to being successful.

Making the remote work transition go smoothly takes planning and experimentation. Designers shouldn't be afraid to try different desk setups, working hours, and communication methods until they find something that clicks. ■





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Lacquer Art on the Blockchain

Five traditional son mai artists on the blockchain

Text by Thomas G. Giglione

I RECEIVED SOME UNWELCOMED news on March 5th from Anh Vu Tuan, the Director of Chong Gallery (www.chondaugia.vn)—the Son Mai Art Exhibit Opening scheduled for March 8th at Chon Gallery in Hanoi has been canceled. Instead, the exhibit of over 100 *son mai* (lacquer paintings) artwork went online (trienlam.chondaugia.vn). Tuan invited me to a private exhibition of the *son mai* (lacquer painting) art. This gave us the chance to talk more about adding the gallery's collection to the blockchain and collaborate on future workshops, to be held at Chon Gallery, to assist local artists in marketing their art online.

I realized that day the reality of how Covid-19 has affected all of our lives. However, the cancellation of the exhibition allowed me to talk to the artists

in their homes and discuss with them in more detail alternative ways of marketing their art online and also to share new methods on how to authenticate and register their art on my blockchain app in order to receive perpetual royalties for them and their families.

Traditional Vietnamese lacquer painting is known as “*son mai*” in Vietnamese; “*son*” means “lacquer” and “*mai*” means “sanding”. Very few people know about the craftsmanship, which is usually passed down from generation to generation, involved in making a traditional *son mai* painting with authentic Vietnamese lacquer, which is produced mostly in mountains of Phu Tho province, located northwest of Hanoi.

Vietnamese *son mai* natural lacquer requires very a unique skillset as well as patience because it involves a lot of physical work to sand down the layers of lacquer. The tradition of using authentic lacquer is slowly dying because over 90 percent of lacquer artwork produced in Vietnam are now finished with artificial lacquer. Mass production and fake copies are now threatening this traditional craft, which was



introduced to Vietnam by the French during colonial times.

The process involves adding a complex layer of lacquer along with different colors and textures using a variety of materials, such as real 24kt gold foil, silver, duck eggshells and river shells. The painting is repeatedly sanded flat between successive layers of lacquer to reveal the colors and texture of the underlining layers.

The following is a summary of the interviews conducted at the homes of five prominent *son mai* artists.



Ngo Duc Hoang

I was so intrigued by this craft that I decided to learn it myself. I was lucky to have been mentored by Ngo Duc Hoang, a prominent local *son mai* artist. Hoang allowed me to learn his craft at his secret art studio located in a large storage building at the Foreign

Trade University in Hanoi.

I visit his studio for a few hours a day, which allowed me to complete my first *son mai* painting and, in exchange, I offered Hoang complimentary digital certificates of authenticity and registered his art on my blockchain to help him market his art internationally.



Quoc Huy

Quoc Huy has a family history of *son mai* paintings, which he traced as far back as 1989. Huy attended the University of Hanoi to receive formal training and sees himself as a traditional *son mai* artist; that is, he uses natural lacquer and is interested in traditional paintings that involve nature and architecture. What distinguishes him from other artists is that he uses only two colors, white and gold (real gold), but in high contrast, unlike other artists who use many colors but with low contrast. One of his paintings incorporated the use of over an ounce of gold and took him about three years to complete. Childhood memories often inspire his paintings, and when he draws, he does what impresses him at the time rather than what a prospective buyer may want, which sometimes profoundly fascinates his buyer.



Thomas G. Giglione is the Founder and Managing Director of Guaranteed Original, which he started in early 2019. Thomas from Toronto, Canada and holds a quality assurance certificate. During the company's first year, Thomas acted as the sole designer and support representative for the entire Guaranteed Original platform.

Tran Tuan Long

I was mesmerized by Tran Tuan Long's *son mai* mystical paintings. He draws in layers that he sketches in three steps, and takes an average of one month to complete a layer, depending on the message he's trying to communicate. He views himself as more of a traditional *son mai* artist than a modernist.

He was first inspired by his father who was also an artist, so he developed a strong bond with the craft at an early age. The lacquer, the smell of oil and paint, the texture of the paintings all acted as a catalyst for him to bring out what he terms his "mystic talent."

The first layer of the painting involves the development of the portrait or sketch, followed by extensive polishing and then applying lacquer and colors. The finest artwork requires many months of project management and preparation, from ordering the right size of wooden boards, sketching and lacquers, and everything has to be applied at a specific time along the process.

Most of his paintings have a soul of tradition that includes ethnic minorities, culture, and philosophical and mystical themes. He feels that his art inspires one to seek knowledge and experience and hopes to promote a fading culture of traditional value associated with hard work. He wants his art to communicate Vietnamese passion and thus preserving rituals to inspire and "pass the torch to the young generation to instill pride in their culture".

Hung Khuynh

I also had the pleasure of meeting Hung Khuynh and his daughter Dieu Huong Pham at their home for lunch where we discussed collaborating on hosting workshops and seminars.

As a child, Hung had a dream of becoming a writer, but instead took an interest in drawing and became an artist as an adult. He sees his artwork as a mix of both traditional and modern styles. Although he has been a very private artist for most of his life, he has been able to strike a balance painting for public exhibits and is now focusing on his new private workshop to secure an income from his craft. He prefers to follow different styles of paintings and usually draws based on his emotions and this is the reason why most of his paintings look abstract.

His passion for the abstract has influenced his *son mai* art, with the portrayal of traditional customs, generic ritual theme upon which the artist works. As in the contemporary world, where most of the artists are deviating from the use of modern techniques and skills,



including the use of artificial lacquers, he believes in adhering to tradition. His life philosophy is that everybody has an ultimate goal in life and he personally aspires to his own goal through the exploration of the self through art. He does not believe that artwork requires recognition to justify itself to the public. He is private with his art and was reluctant for me to interview him because he explained that the art speaks for itself

and the art lover will know the intrinsic value by simply observing it—there is no need to interpret or explain his art. He also thinks that by registering his art on the blockchain, he can focus on promoting and highlighting the Vietnamese fine art tradition globally and perhaps this new technology could perhaps allow him to create a legacy of art royalties for his family.

Saeko Ando

Saeko Ando is a Japanese artist who has painted *son mai* in Vietnam since 1996. Saeko studied *son mai* lacquer painting under the tutelage of artist Trinh Tuan, lacquer master Doan Chi Trung and lacquer craftsman Lam Huu Chinh.

Not only does she share a passion for *son mai* lacquer paintings but also has a great interest in the medium she uses, *son ta*, and the way it is harvested. She is currently trying to establish a movement to revitalize the whole natural lacquer industry. By showcasing the natural lacquer artworks and high-end products using modern technology and social media, she wants to let the audience realize the value and potential of Vietnamese natural lacquer in modern-day. She wants others to follow her path and start using more natural lacquer instead of a chemical alternative. As the demand for high-quality natural lacquer rises, lacquer farmers will earn a more stable income through their lacquer harvest and this competition might help them focus more on quality rather than quantity.

For her artistry, she has been developing a very new and different approach to the art of *son mai*, and that is to use an acrylic board instead of a conventional substrate of plywood for the lacquer base in an attempt to maximize the best characteristic of Vietnamese natural lacquer, which is its high transparency.

She stated that in Vietnam, artistic creativity is highly respected while craftsmanship is often ignored. In Japan, both craftsmanship and artistry are seen as equal. In Japan, craftsmanship is also considered as "art" and highly



respected. But in Vietnam, those skills and experiences are considered as "craftsmanship" which belong to "*tho*" or "*nghe nhan*" who are not as respected or successful as "*hoa sy*" or "*nghe sy*".

She incorporates vibrant colors because she takes her time to make the right choice of natural lacquers and mixes the pigment very well until it all blends, which is a secret she learned from her apprenticeship in Vietnam.

"*Utsuroi*" in Japanese means "the beauty in things change with the environment and time." Based on this, she prefers natural lacquer, which continues its transformation thanks to the chemical reaction between an enzyme in natural lacquer and oxygen, which continues up to 4 to 5 years. Lacquer gains more transparency through this process, making the color pigment mixed in brightening up. And toughness and glossiness will also improve if the paintings are created with



good care and skill.

She plans to launch a gallery "Lacquer Tree" in Saigon later this year with her partner who has become fascinated after visiting her studio in Hoi An. She wants the gallery to be a place where people learn, appreciate and get excited about what is behind the exhibits they see. ■

Pet of the Month

Images by **Sawano Newell**



IN WHAT NOW FEELS LIKE

years ago given the Covid-19 pandemic but was in fact only early March, ARC had the opportunity to work with several other local rescues to save some cats stuck in an apartment. The ARC team had received an email from a woman who recently left Vietnam, temporarily leaving her cats with a friend. Sadly, the woman could no longer get in touch with the absent friend, and her landlord needed to clear out the apartment and move the cats. When asked about the location, the woman said the cats were in an apartment in District 7. Since ARC doesn't typically go as far as District 7 (being based in Thao Dien), we coordinated with RAD7 Saigon, the rescue for District 7, to remove the cats from the apartment and find them homes.

Well, what we thought would be two or three cats turned out to be 21 cats! The cats had been abandoned in a studio apartment in squalid conditions. There was no way to contact the person who was left in charge of the cats, and with the landlord saying he had to remove all the cats but had no way to do that other than to put them out on the streets, the ARC and RAD7 teams knew they had to act fast. It quickly became obvious that more volunteers would be needed for such a large rescue project, so calls went out for further assistance.

Fortunately, CJ from AWASome Animal Welfare Awareness and Cat Sanctuary and the team from Cứu Hộ Chó Mèo Sài Gòn Time Rescue were willing and able to jump in and help. Working together, the four groups of animal rescuers were able to capture all of the cats. It is difficult to describe the conditions in which this rescue took place. The time constraints and filthy apartment, not to mention that the cats were terrified, meant this rescue was a huge endeavor over several days. It was difficult work, but the dedication of the rescuers to willingly return day after day meant that all the cats were eventually trapped and transported to vet clinics in District 7 and District 2 for evaluation. The cats were treated for any medical conditions, vaccinated, and spayed or neutered then were transferred back to the rescuers for rehoming.

While Sài Gòn Time Rescue took the majority of the cats, AWASome also took in some of the cats as did RAD7. ARC took in two of the cats, Demi and Nico, and they are featured here. Both



Demi



Demi



Nico



Nico

are females and seem young, perhaps only a little over one year old. While some of the rescued cats willingly approached their rescuers, **Demi** and **Nico** were both quite frightened during the rescue and have remained somewhat shy in foster care. Demi and Nico are

now ready to go to their forever homes. They are being fostered separately and can be adopted separately, preferably to experienced cat adopters who could help the two get over their fears to become lovable furry companions. ■

If you would like to meet Demi or Nico or would like to know more about volunteering with ARC, please send an email to arcpets@gmail.com. And if you are not able to adopt or volunteer at this time, please consider donating via the ARC gofundme page to help with our ongoing animal rescue efforts: <https://www.gofundme.com/f/arcpets>

Deep Rejuvenation

A visit to Thao Dien's traditional Thai spa Leelawadee provides an array of therapeutic treatments sure to leave you feeling revitalized

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

Leelawadee Thai Therapy Thao Dien was opened a few years ago at 5/19 Duong 64 in Thao Dien by Mimi Noita, a native of Thailand with a desire to bring traditional Thai massage therapy to Ho Chi Minh City. In an effort to maintain authenticity, she imported the treatment products, from oils and balms to herbs and teas, from the Land of Smiles.

I headed to Mimi's new Leelawadee location on the other side of Thao Dien, on the ground floor of the THT Apartment Building at 215A6 Nguyen Van Huong, D2. Opened in January of this year, this second Leelawadee Spa location brings all the charm and comfort of the original. Enter into a room of inviting tapestries adorning the walls and soothing atmospheric music in the background. In the immersive tranquility of this Thai spa, patrons of Leelawadee can choose from a variety of treatments. There's the traditional Thai massage (VND350,000 for 60 minutes or VND500,000 for 90), deep tissue massage (VND500,000 for 60 minutes or VND700,000 for 90), Thai herbal hot pack massage (VND950,000 for 120 minutes), aroma therapy with hot stones (VND400,000 for 60 minutes or VND550,000 for 90), foot reflexology (VND300,000 for 60 minutes or VND450,000 for 90) a body scrub



(VND500,000 for 75 minutes), or still more treatments to choose from, like a head and shoulder massage, back therapy or a relaxing facial. For pesky hairs in unsightly places they offer waxing treatments as well.

After choosing my 90-minute deep tissue massage (VND700,00), I was brought by the massage therapist to a room with low lighting and a few massage tables adorned in fabrics of customary Thai patterns (also imported). She directed me toward an immaculate bathroom, handing me traditional Thai fisherman pants and a top to change into. I did and when I emerged she directed me toward a table where she washed my feet with a hand towel and warm water before telling me to lie face down. She then provided a simple caveat before commencing, "Deep tissue massage deep, okay?"

"Okay," I replied, a lover of immense pressure, especially after all the time I'd spent in front of my computer recently because of the pandemic. Well, quickly, I became aware that I should have taken her warning a little more seriously. As she began working the legs it was clear she meant business. By the time she'd worked

up to my hips she was kneading into flesh and reaching muscles I never knew could be reached in an intense plundering of tension from these hard to reach places.

There I was under low atmospheric lighting, the pacifying scent of jasmine and lemongrass in the air and a long and winding Thai zither ballad serving as a soundscape, as the masseuse continued up my back, shoulders and neck, administering excruciating pleasure. I actually cried out at one

point. She asked if I wanted her to ease up, but it was too good, too freeing of the tightness and toxins within, so I peeped back meekly, "I'm okay."

After a while she asked if I wanted to take off the shirt for the use of oil, which I did. This lovely small-statured masseuse with the hands of an ironworker then continued with well-oiled acupressure. I've never had a deep tissue massage that managed to get that deep and feel that restorative. At times I saw stars, and it was simply incredible.

When the massage was over it took me a few minutes to get up off the table and change back into my clothes. There's a shower for anyone who wants it and a steam room as well, but instead I wandered outside to retrieve my motorbike in a euphoric daze. That night I slept like a baby for 10 straight hours, waking the next morning loose and limber. While I may relish the intensity of my deep tissue massage experience at Leelawadee Spa, not to worry, they'll gladly tailor any treatment to your level of pressure or comfort. ■

Leelawadee Spa's two locations in Thao Dien are open 7 days a week from 9am to 9pm. For more information or to make a reservation give them a call at 0899342956 or check out their Facebook page at www.facebook.com/LeelawadeeThailand.



Stay Well







SAVING FACE

Images by Juancarlos Duran Solorzano
(www.facebook.com/Juancaphotography)







A Tale of Two Traditions

The origin and evolution of Vietnamese traditional medicine

Text by Jesus Lopez-Gomez
Images by Vy Lam

THE CURRENT HISTORICAL

(and hysterical?) moment has brought into sharp focus Vietnam's northern neighbor, specifically a practice that feels almost occultish: the eating of exotic animals. It's a custom that deserves context: Vietnam's northern neighbor consumes animals reportedly for their healing or medicinal properties. Similarly, the Fito Museum in Ho Chi Minh City's District 10 explains that traditional Vietnamese medicine uses around 40 animals also for their healing properties.

But while the 14-room medicine museum and historical record show there are some similarities, the exhibitions construct a narrative that makes a compelling case for seeing Vietnamese and Chinese traditional medicines as wholly different, the former having its own scholars, practices and traditions explained in the exhibits held there.

Two Physicians Argue for Vietnamization

The story of traditional Vietnamese medicine being told at the Fito Museum is that it's a story of two key physicians, Tue Tinh and Hai Thuong Lan Ong. Among 14-century Vietnamese physician Tinh's numerous contributions to traditional medicine—*Thuoc Nam*, as it's known in Vietnamese—were two volumes considered seminal to the field and effectively created the discipline. They both explained the broad principles of the practice and also established a firm Vietnamese identity to the craft, according

to researcher David Craig. He pointed out that the physician used traditional Vietnamese “*nom*” characters as opposed to Chinese, for example, and that the recipes emphasized the use of Vietnamese ingredients, which he argued were stronger than Chinese ingredients. This contribution was surely critical to Tinh's being elevated in the history of traditional Vietnamese medicine and, consequently, his place in the museum as one of the practice's two primary founders.

Hai Thuong Lan Ong was active

nearly 300 years later, a fact that looks perhaps less odd unless you consider that Tinh published his work almost 1,500 after traditional medicine first appeared in Vietnamese culture. The Culture Trip documents Ong's rise in the field placing the azimuth of his career with the publication of a 66-volume encyclopedia that, like Tinh's twin tomes, is also considered foundational to the practice.

Traditional Vietnamese medicine dates back to the second century B.C., around the close of the Hung kings' rule in





Vietnam. But some of the medicinal cures described are still in use today, like the chewing of betel leaf to prevent tooth decay or eating ginger as a cold or flu treatment.

A Break with Tradition

Officially, there are some 1,800 plants in Vietnam used for medicinal purposes, according to the country's Ministry of Health. Unofficially, there may be more as animals have for the past few years continued to be illegally trafficked. For example, between 2009 and 2016 466 kilograms of Vietnam-bound rhino horn were seized despite a ban on trade of this endangered animal. The illegal wildlife market is worth an estimated USD1 billion, according to *The Guardian*. In traditional medicine, rhino horn reportedly has a number of uses, including curing hangovers, cancer and male impotence (all of this is untrue).

The cursory frowning and half hearted attempts to halt this specific piece of traditional Vietnamese medicine may get some actual teeth in response to the current global ailment, which was said to have originated from wildlife being consumed by Vietnam's northern neighbor. Wildlife protection groups petitioned the Vietnamese government to halt the trade of animals for their safety as well as ours; the Vietnamese government



will reportedly issue new regulations this year on the matter.

If Vietnam is able to pass the regulations, it will once again make its traditional medicine practice distinct from its northern neighbor, which continues to struggle with wildlife trade. Like the two scholars who pushed the traditional medicine practice to a more nationalistic direction centuries ago, it would be a move worth regaling, a change that would be remembered and lauded by posterity for years to come. ■



To Enlightenment

Discovering conscious clarity and peace through
Sivananda yoga



MY FIRST EXPOSURE TO YOGA

was, if I'm honest, through Madonna. I was 14 when the American pop icon relaunched herself as an earth mother with her *Ray of Light* album, attributing her new impressive, toned physique to the "Ashtanga" form of the practice. In pursuit of a similar set of triceps, I tried yoga in a handful of different gym classes at home in London, and like most Westerners I understood it purely as a form of exercise—and an unsatisfactory one at that.

It wasn't until I started taking classes with a teacher that had trained in India that I truly began to comprehend what yoga is. Unlike the gym classes I had taken before, these began with 30 minutes of breathing ("*pranayama*") and relaxation, while throughout the instructor talked about visualizing our past, present and future through postures, or "*asanas*." Soon I learned that yoga is not about getting ripped arms at all, but a holistic practice designed to bring body, mind and spirit into harmony.

Originally practiced by holy men in

India thousands of years ago, at its core yoga practitioners seek to connect with God through discipline and religious devotion. The spiritual element is often lost on foreigners, however it is something that Hanh Nguyen, a Saigon native, connected with strongly on her visit to India. "A few years ago I visited Mayapur in north-east India and I stayed in The International Society for Krishna Consciousness. There I learned a lot about Krishna Consciousness, mainly about the existence of God, and I learned how to practice by chanting the Maha mantra."

Yoga For The Masses: Sivananda Yoga

Chanting forms a central part of any holistic yoga practice, whether it be just the simple "om" mantra (thought to be the universal sound of existence) or full verses of Sanskrit devotions. I practiced both during my visit to the Sivananda Ashram in Neyyar Dam, South India this year, which is part of a network founded by one of India's foremost yoga gurus, Swami Sivananda. In the 1960s he and his disciple Swami Vishnudevananda sought to spread the word of yoga throughout the world, and Sivananda Yoga is now practiced in nearly 40 venues globally.

Set among tropical forest at the mouth of a breathtaking lake, at the Neyyar Dam ashram I took part in three hours of meditation and chanting ("*satsang*"), four hours of asana practice and one hour of "karma yoga," or community service, every day. I also attended regular lectures on the Swami's and the finer points of yoga philosophy. Indeed, far from the place of idol rumination and gentle stretching I had formerly imagined an ashram to be, here I was absorbed in activity from 5:30am—summoned by a shrill morning bell—until lights out at 10:30pm.

This was a gruelling schedule and one that I yo-yoed between love and hatred for on an almost hourly basis. However, through the fatigue I felt a connection with myself that Hang—a yoga practitioner as well as a spiritual enquirer—describes as a "smooth flow that runs from top to toe—a

wonderful feeling." Intent on capturing this indescribable flow and mental clarity once again, upon returning to Ho Chi Minh City I joined the Sivananda Vedanta Center in Tan Dinh.

India To Vietnam: Yoga In Translation

The format of the asana classes at the Sivananda Ho Chi Minh City center are similar to those in India; each 90-minute session beginning with relaxation, chanting and *pranayama* before moving into *asanas* and finishing with a well earned period of lying very still on the floor. Unlike their new venue in Dalat, though, the HCMC center is not an ashram. Members can attend *satsang* on Wednesday and Sunday evenings, but they are free to come and go as they please, slotting the practice into their daily lives.

Seeking to get a sense of the work that the Sivananda community does here I spoke to Ganga Chaitanya, director of the center. Born in Saigon, Ganga (her yogic name) discovered Sivananda yoga while living and studying in the US and has been involved with the Ho Chi Minh City house since its establishment in 2011. She is a strong believer in the benefits of Sivananda yoga for Vietnamese people—who accounts for 70 percent of the center's visitors—especially those that live in hectic Ho Chi Minh City:

"Vietnamese, especially women, are strong, and we are very busy and active people. Our ambition at the Sivananda center is to try to bring people to have more awareness of their health and happiness and how they can get more peaceful, while still living their lives. We teach what we can: from yoga for children to pain management to singing. People can change the way they feel through yoga, especially how they respond to stress and anger."

As a case in point, Ganga gives an example of a local woman who arrived at the center raging that the trial class wasn't starting at the time she wanted. However, so inspired was she by the calm way in which the staff responded to her screaming and shouting that she came back at the right time anyway. She is now a regular attendee and, apparently, a changed woman. This, says Ganga, is the goal for the staff at the center—all of which volunteer to manage the household and provide classes while deepening their own practice and understanding.

This, perhaps, neatly encapsulates the true spirit of yoga: service, dedicated practice and devotion to a higher form of consciousness. According to Ganga, it is only through living in harmony with the people and the natural world around us that we can truly come to understand where we fit into it. And it is only through communing with our own minds and bodies that we can come to see our path and walk it as we strive towards the ultimate goal of yoga, if not all religions: self-realization. ■

To find out more about the Sivananda Vedanta Centre in Ho Chi Minh City, or the Sivananda Ashram in Dalat, visit: sivanandayogavietnam.org. And for information on Sivananda centers in India, visit: sivananda.org.in.

The Nowness

STUDIOHANLE (www.facebook.com/studiohanle) is a Hanoi-based, contemporary fashion brand built upon a philosophy that explores dressing as an everyday phenomenon for women. The designs are based on a modern interpretation of masculinity and femininity, creating a modern silhouette. STUDIOHANLE's designs are founded on construction, art, creativity and the combination of masculine tailoring with a feminine sensibility. The brand's core value is to incorporate individual identity in each and every piece, yet offer something unique, understated and intellectual. The brand's mission is to bring all the classic theory into the moment, the nowness.

Han Kim Bao Le, the brand's founder, was born and raised in Hanoi. She graduated from the Academy of Art University in San Francisco in 2019, where she majored in womenswear design and acquired an in-depth knowledge of tailoring techniques with a great eye for detail.









Wine & Dine

LOTUS ROOT SALAD / IMAGE BY OI VIETNAM





Eat More Vegetables

Exploring Vietnam's best vegetarian ingredients

Text and Images by Oi Vietnam



Sweet potato - air fried chips

FOR MANY, VIETNAM IS A paradise for vegetarians of all kinds. Restaurants roll out a vegetarian menu for the first and 15th of every month for those looking for a bit of soul purification. Home cooks revel in a huge assortment of fruits and vegetables, changing with the season. And foodies rejoice with all the new vegetarian-as-health-food places that are springing up around the city like mushrooms.

Kim Fay, author of *Communion: A Culinary Journey Through Vietnam*, recalls what she saw of the country's love affair with fruits and vegetables. "Vietnam is a country for vegetarians. Not only are salads plentiful, there is a strong tradition of vegetarian cuisine in the Buddhist communities. I love that meals in Vietnam are often followed by cold fresh fruit, rather than dessert. I also love that when I lived in Vietnam, you knew the season by the fruit in the market. As for veggies, I think about the herbs that are used to garnish everything from salads to soups to spring rolls. Even if a dish is deep-fried, it will usually come with some fresh greens to lighten it. I find now that a meal is not complete for me if it isn't accompanied by some type of fresh greens."

While the majority of Vietnam's vegetarians do it for religious reasons, it's becoming a more vegetarian-friendly culture for expats and travelers. "In my experience, people are not offended if you tell them, 'I can't eat this' or 'I can't eat that,'" says Kim. "My sister does not eat beef or pork and the people we met along the way - in private homes and in restaurants - were happy to accommodate that. The one issue vegans might have is with fish sauce, which is essential to the cuisine. But many Buddhist dishes use soy sauce rather than fish sauce, so you're sure to find something you can eat. And when you're in a pinch, head for a *banh mi* stand and buy a baguette - you can never go wrong with that. Bottom line: Vietnamese food is very flexible!"

Oi met some of the city's top chefs to ask them about their favorite vegetarian ingredients and how to prepare them.

Lotus (Stems, seeds, roots and leaves)

Vietnamese: Sen (*ngo, hat, cu, la*)

Nutritional value: According to Auburn University (USA), lotus seeds can be ground and used as flour, the roots cooked like sweet potatoes and the leaves used as spinach. The stems have

antioxidant properties and are a rich source of calcium, iron and fiber.

Uses: Almost every part of the lotus can be used in cooking. In Vietnam, the seeds can be eaten as a snack, straight from the flower or steeped in a sugar syrup and then dried, or are cooked into desserts or glutinous rice. The stems can be found raw in salads or stir-fried or pickled. The leaves can be used to infuse flavor into fried rice. Even lotus root can be used for stocks and salads.

Tuan, owner of Tuan and Tu's restaurant, recommends using lotus seeds in stews, as they need time to soften. And Nguyen, formerly at New World Saigon Hotel's Parkview Restaurant, says preparing the stems for the restaurant's Lotus Stem Salad is simple (with crispy tofu replacing the more traditional boiled shrimp and pork). "Just cut off both ends of the stalks and rinse. Use your fingers or a knife to peel off the outer skin before soaking in a diluted salt water bath for 15-20 minutes. Most people throw away the part closer to the root and just use the stem, but you can keep it for a stir-fry because that part is actually a bit sweeter. For lotus roots, instead of salt water, soak them in ice water with a few



Paneer (cheese)



Prem Vegetarian

drops of lemon juice to keep them fresh, crunchy and tasty.”

Purple Eggplant (*Ca tim*)

Nutritional value: Eggplants and other purple plant foods, such as blueberries and grapes, provide phytochemicals found in the skin of the eggplant, and have been linked to protecting fats found in brain cell membranes. They are also low in calories and contain other compounds that promote good health, possibly even helping to prevent cancer and lowering cholesterol.

Uses: “Eggplants are extremely versatile as they can be used in Asian and Western dishes and they’re easy to find cheaply here in Vietnam,” says Thanh Yen, co-owner of Prem Bistro & Café, a vegetarian restaurant. Spongy, with a pleasantly bitter taste, purple eggplants find their way into Vietnamese stews, soups and stir-fries, or are simply grilled and topped with scallion oil. Prem’s uses eggplant slices (lengthwise), salted and pan-fried with olive oil to wrap around a filling of onion, spinach and ground cashew nuts, topped with a lightly seasoned tomato puree. “For Vietnamese, the word ‘vegetarian’ has a negative connotation. Vegetarian dishes

typically include a lot of chemicals, or are made from flour and molded into fake meat. Because Vietnamese are vegetarian mostly for religious reasons, they don’t really care whether what they’re eating is good for them or not. But we’re seeing many younger Vietnamese take on vegetarianism as a lifestyle, to be more healthy,” says co-owner Ha Le.

Sweet Potato (*Khoai lang nuong*)

Nutritional value: Known as one of the healthiest vegetables around, a medium sized sweet potato contains more than your daily requirement of vitamin A, nearly a third the vitamin C you need, almost 15 percent of your daily dietary fiber intake and 10 percent of the necessary potassium. Sweet potatoes also contain antioxidants and have anti-inflammatory properties.

Uses: The Vietnamese use both the leaves and tubers in cooking. Leaves can be stir-fried and the tuber is often seen deep-fried as a snack sold in small glass cases on the side of the road or stewed in curries and even in desserts. Bodybuilder

and restaurateur Ben Dell, who owns Ben Style, says sweet potatoes are an excellent source of carbohydrates and are slow burning so they don’t raise your blood sugar, important when you’re looking to lose fat. He also makes a healthy version of sweet potato chips. “They’re a little bit tougher [than regular white potatoes], but are great for people who want to stay healthy. Because they’re tough and hard, soak them in water for 24 hours to soften them up. That also keeps them from drying out when cooking. Cut them into wedges and brush them with olive oil or a non-fat spray before putting them in a convection oven. Just add a bit of allspice for flavor. No need to go to McDonald’s!”

Yogurt and Cheese (*yaourt or sua chua and pho-mai*)

Nutritional value: Not a carbohydrate, protein or fat, natural yogurt is nonetheless plentiful in lactose, protein-rich and abundant in healthy fatty acids. Vitamins and minerals naturally found in milk are better assimilated in the form of yogurt, and the healthy bacteria aid in the production of vitamins and help the bloodstream better absorb calcium. Cheese is a source of many essential nutrients, including high-quality protein, and can be part of a healthy diet, especially when paired with lower-calorie foods.

Uses: The Vietnamese tend to eat sweetened yogurt more as a snack than in cooking. Yogurt frozen in small containers or little bags are a popular after-school treat. It can also be made at home easily and cheaply, using one can of sweetened condensed milk, mixed with two cans of hot water and one can of lukewarm water. A starter culture (for instance, a small container of store-bought yogurt) is added, stirred and then refrigerated. For thicker yogurt, use fresh milk instead of water.

Robin Deepu, owner of Baba’s Kitchen, says in his native India, yogurt isn’t a breakfast food but is mainly used in cooking, as a base for spices used in marinades, or used in lassi, a refreshing yogurt drink. The key to good yogurt is boiling the milk over a longer period of time, as high heat will shorten the process and make the yogurt watery. His restaurant also makes *paneer*, a chewy, milky, fresh cheese (no aging required) and one of the easiest cheeses to make at home. “You just take fresh milk and boil it, then add a little vinegar. Once it thickens, tie it up with a cloth [to strain] and then press it with a weight on top,” says Robin. Because *paneer* doesn’t melt the way cheddar or mozzarella does, it keeps a tofu-like consistency in soups or curry, like Robin’s Palak Paneer, cubes of *paneer* simmered in a puree of spinach, tomatoes, garlic and onions and flavored with ginger, *garam masala*, turmeric, chili and coriander power and fenugreek. ■

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



Also Try...

Air 360 Sky Lounge - Events

This rooftop bar combines vibrant music, fancy designs and 360 degree view of Saigon's skyline to make it one of the best spots for drinks, lounging and events.
0974 58 77 88
136-138 Le Thi Hong Gam, D1
www.air360skybar.com

Broma Saigon Bar

Famously known for 'not being a bar' Broma is one of Ho Chi Minh City's most popular hangouts with prices ranging from VND30,000 – VND500,000. Broma is a more upscale option for those wishing to escape the cheap drinks in The Pham.
41 Nguyen Hue, D1

Chill Skybar - Dining

A modern lounge, bar and dining space that is considered the first "skybar" concept in Vietnam. It is perched on top of AB Tower, exclusively on the 26th and 27th floor with views of the city's skyline
0938 822 838
Level 26, AB Tower, 76A Le Lai, D1
www.chillsaigon.com

Eon Helibar

This cosmopolitan nightspot is an ideal venue for a vibrant night out with live acoustic performances and DJ's spinning nightly, EON Helibar has a non-smoking section. Rental of the entire restaurant for larger functions is also available.
Level 52, 2 Hai Trieu, Ward Ben Nghe, District 1

Shri Rooftop Bar & Restaurant

Shri Rooftop Bar & Restaurant at Centec Tower overlooks some of Ho Chi Minh's top attractions, including Reunification Palace, Notre Dame Cathedral, Kumho Plaza, and Lotus Building, as well as the Phu My Suspension Bridge over Saigon River. Open all day, you can savour modern European and Vietnamese fare at the indoor dining area before enjoying the rest of the night at the rooftop bar and lounge.
Centec Tower, 72-74 Nguyen Thi Minh Khai

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

Saigon Saigon Bar

This iconic bar is a great place to watch the sun go down over the lights of the city and relax with friends. Live entertainment nightly, including their resident Cuban band, Q'vans from 9pm Wednesday to Monday.
19-23 Lam Son Square, D1
(028) 3823 4999
www.caravellehotel.com
11am till late

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

MICROBREWERIES & CRAFT BEER BARS



Pasteur Street Brewing

Pasteur Street Brewing incorporates American brewing techniques with fresh and exotic Vietnamese ingredients to create amazing craft beers. Named after the first Taproom's location, the company has since expanded into one of the largest craft beer brands in the country.
The Original Taproom: 144-144/3 Pasteur Street, Ben Nghe, Dist 1
Le Thanh Ton Taproom: 26A Le Thanh Ton, Ben Nghe, Dist 1
Thao Dien Taproom: 120 Xuan Thuy, Thao Dien, Dist 2
Hoi An Ancient Town Taproom: 100 Bach Dang, Hoi An
Hoan Kiem Taproom: 1 Au Trieu, Hoan Kiem, Hanoi.

Also Try...

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

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: Lelabarpage

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/

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

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

Café RuNam

No disappointments from this earnest local cafe consistently serving exceptional international standard coffee. Beautifully-styled and focussed on an attention to quality, Cafe 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 Buoi, D1
www.caferunam.com

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

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

FRENCH

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

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

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



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, D1
028 3822 3329
tonyfox56@hotmail.com
www.ciaobellavietnam.com

Ciao Bella

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, D1
028 3824 4286

Carpaccio

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

79 Hai Ba Trung street, D1
+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

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 3823 3333
www.lottehotel.com/saigon

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 Heath Gordon 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, D1

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 spurned 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, D1
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, D1
012 0789 4444
www.pizza4ps.com

INTERNATIONAL



Kiba Saigon

In one of Saigon's trendiest areas, the area south of Ben Thanh Market in District 1, sits fusion tapas restaurant Kiba. Occupying two floors and a large terrace above a street-level wine shop, Kiba serves marvelous, original cuisine with Spanish and Asian influences, in a stylish and comfortable space.

31 Pho Duc Chinh, Nguyen Thai Binh Ward, District 1, HCMC
www.facebook.com/kibasaigon/
038 407 2893



L'Adresse Bistro

L'Adresse Bistro, a multi themed bistro, a place where traditions & culture meet, is announcing most unique live entertainment for unforgettable interactive experience as we bring you fresh musical arrangements from Live band, to DJ, to Sax and Dance. Join us on Tuesday for our happy hour and Wednesday where ladies get their first (selected) drink free.

2 Phan Van Dang, Vista Verde, District 2.
+84906707900 ladressebistro.onuniverse.com
Insta & FB @ladressebistrosgn



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



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 Vodra 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 impaired waiters. Select from one of the three-course set menus from the East, West or Vegetarian. Mystery wine pairing available too. Discover with taste and smell, embark on a culinary journey of the senses.

178/180D Hai Ba Trung, Da Kao, D1
02862632525 www.noirdininginthedark.com

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 offered – sourced locally and created fresh every day.

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

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

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

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

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, D1 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, D1
028 3823 3333

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

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.

32 Tran Ngoc 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



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

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

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

Cuc 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

Five Oysters

Five Oysters serves authentic and excellent Seafood & Vietnamese food with SG 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

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

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

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 centerpiece 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

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



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.

Wine Economics

Should we buy or should we wait?

THE WINE INDUSTRY IS ONE of the many sectors that have been seriously affected by the current pandemic, and there are still many factors that can make it even worse.

With the forced closure of many bars and restaurants, the consumption of wine has substantially decreased; although many people have started ordering wine from shops and distributors to drink at home, the overall consumption has considerably fallen.

Many restaurants will not reopen, many others cannot pay their wine and other overdue bills, and some importers are delaying payment to wineries too, creating a real struggle for small family-run wineries to survive.

You would expect that with less demand, the world of wine would follow normal economics and prices should go down, considerably. However, the current feedback from the industry says the opposite, why is that?

Many wineries have long-term contracts and set prices to buy wine from other producers, hence they have the obligation to continue to buy and produce, even if demand is low; what is more, quality wines like Rioja Crianza, Barolo, Brunello, etc. are produced one to four years ahead of release, so in 2020 we will drink 2018 or earlier wines, therefore many wineries prefer to keep their stock rather than undersell, even worse, some of them that are forecasting low demand have already increased their prices.

Due to the timing difference of the pandemic between China and the West, where most of the wine is produced, there is an imbalance of containers, making the sea transport much more expensive, and remember in countries like Vietnam you pay the same tax on the cost of transport as you do in the cost of wine, so prices are likely to increase.

If that wasn't enough, most, if not all, local importers have been forced to sell certain amounts of wine below cost while restaurants were closed in order to pay bills, salaries and survive, however, this is not sustainable, so it is likely that with restaurants and hotels back to life, even if not at full throttle, most importers will stop the great offers we could benefit from before.

So, if you are a wine lover and have space at home, now is the time to

buy, store and save, as wine prices are likely to go up, while choices are likely to be reduced for quite a few months, as many importers are holding back-ordering to clear current stock. ■



>>The List Business

INSURANCE



OUR OFFICE LOCATIONS

Administration Office - Ho Chi Minh City

10th & 16th Floor | Royal Center Tower B |
235 Nguyen Van Cu | Dist. 1

Sales Office - Ho Chi Minh City

6th Floor | Pax Sky Tower | 159C De Tham | Dist. 1

Sales Office - Hanoi

19th Floor | VCCI Tower | 9 Dao Duy Anh |
Dong Da Dist

Pacific Cross Vietnam

Pacific Cross Vietnam is a specialist provider of global health and travel insurances, designed to provide not just basic cover, but also a wide range of benefits providing peace of mind for you, your family and your employees.

www.pacificcross.com.vn
inquiry@pacificcross.com.vn

Also try ...

ACE Life Insurance

One of the world's largest multiline property and casualty insurers, insurance products include universal life insurance, term life, whole life, riders, and global personal accident.

21st Floor, 115 Nguyen Hue, DI

Baoviet Insurance Corporation

BaoViet is now the leading financial insurance group in Vietnam with more than 145 branches across 63 provinces.

23-25 Thai Van Lung, DI

IF Consulting to Insurance in Asia

IF Consulting has for 20 years provided advice to individuals and businesses in assessing health/accident risk and finding the best suitable solution. The company is independent and Vietnam-based.

90-92 Dinh Tien Hoang DI
www.insuranceinAsia.com
advice@insuranceinAsia.com

Liberty Mutual Insurance

Liberty Mutual is a 100% US-owned general insurer licensed to provide insurance services directly to Vietnamese individuals and state-owned enterprises as well as motor insurance.

15th Floor, Kumho Asiana Plaza,
39 Le Duan, DI
028 3812 5125

McLarens Young International

McLarens Young International is a global claims service provider that helps our clients achieve timely and equitable claims resolution.

9th Floor, Yoco Building
41 Nguyen Thi Minh Khai, DI
028 3821 3316

Prudential Vietnam

Prudential Vietnam is one of the leading life insurers nationwide, also providing a variety of financial solutions, with over 200 customer service centers, branch offices and general agency and business partner offices.

Unit 25F, Saigon Trade Centre
37 Ton Duc Thang, DI

RELOCATION

AGS Four Winds (Vietnam)

Global leader in international removals & relocations, with 128 offices in 78 countries, they can move you to/from any location worldwide.

5th Fl, Lafayette De Saigon, 8A Phung Khac Khoan, DI
028 3521 0071

ags-vietnam@agsfourwinds.com
www.ags-globalsolutions.com

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028 3941 5322
www.logicalmoves.net



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Saigon Express Agency Limited (SEAL) is an experienced and versatile relocations and logistics company. SEAL staff are experts in relocations and pet transportation and can deliver all your logistics requirements to your satisfaction at a competitive price!

+84 28 39432853
sgnexpress@seal.com.vn
www.seal.com.vn



VETS & PET HOTELS

AEC Pet

Opened since 2012, the clinic staffs a team of specialized veterinarians who are committed to offering professional, caring and personalized services to their patients.

A12-A13 Nguyen Huu Tho,
Kim Son Project, D7
028 6298 9203

Animal Doctors International

Offers the very highest levels of compassionate, competent and professional veterinary medicine and surgery to all pets in Ho Chi Minh City with international veterinary surgeons. Upholding international standards, the team works tirelessly to help clients with the support of a dedicated surgical suite, digital X-Ray and comprehensive diagnostic facilities.

1 Tran Ngoc Dien, Thao Dien, Q2
(028) 6260 3980
animaldoctors.vn

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First pet villa brand in Vietnam, offering the best care and amenities to your pet. Our 11,000 sq ft villa was designed with the best comfort in mind and we paid attention to every little detail so that your pet can relax and enjoy their stay. The services we offer: Boarding, Dog daycare, Bathing, Grooming, Dog Walking, Pet shop and more.

14A6 Thao Dien, D2
028.37 444 178 - 0934 080 186
www.bedandpetfirst.com
[Facebook.com/bedandpetfirst](https://www.facebook.com/bedandpetfirst)

Saigon Pet Clinic

Founded in 2008, Saigon Pet Clinic's goal is to open the best animal welfare veterinary clinic in Vietnam. They combine skill and technology to ensure your pet gets the best possible care.

33, 41 street, Thao Dien, D2
www.saigonpethospital.com
028 3519 4182

Sasaki Animal Hospital

The hospital is managed by a team of skilled doctors from Japan and Vietnam. Services include grooming and general care.

38-40-42 Nguyen Thi Thap,
Him Lam, D7
www.sasakihospital.com
028 2253 1179





Travel in a Post-Pandemic World

WHILE THE CORONAVIRUS HAS adversely affected practically every aspect of life around the world, the hospitality and travel industries have been among the hardest hit, putting tens of millions of jobs at risk. According to the UN World Tourism Organization, international travel could decline by up to 80% in 2020 compared to 2019, depending on when countries can get a handle on COVID-19. With lockdowns and travel bans and restrictions in place all around the globe, it's hard to imagine when we'll ever be able to travel as carefree as we did just a few months ago.

Even though Vietnam has been universally praised for not only flattening the curve but smashing it to smithereens, the travel industry here has not been spared. "The Caravelle Hotel Saigon officially completed its renovation at the end of January with both towers back in operation, but unfortunately by that time COVID-19 had entered Vietnam and the country was starting to put restrictions on travel. Within the next



three weeks the hotel had almost had all reservations for the year 2020 cancel and strict restrictions had been put in place for operations,” recalls General Manager Michael Robinson.

“I believe COVID has impacted the entire tourism industry and we are no different,” says Nicholas Wade, General Manager of Khiri Travel Vietnam. “With our main markets being the European Union and North America, we have had to cancel an incredible amount of bookings.”

However, with Vietnam now one of the safest countries on the planet, the outlook is cautiously optimistic, with all eyes trained on our corner of the globe, including China and South Korea, to see what a post-COVID recovery might look like.

Phase 1: Domestic Travel

With international flights still restricted in many parts of the globe, travel pundits agree that it'll be domestic travel that jump starts the industry, at least for the rest of the year. “I do believe that there is a lot of pent-up demand by domestic travelers to get out after weeks of restricted movements,” says Hanno Stamm, General Manager of Victoria Sapa Resort and Spa. That has certainly been true of Vietnam, as crowds flocked to Dalat, Vung Tau, and other nature-based destinations as soon as restrictions were eased across the country.

Tourism authorities have launched campaigns urging ‘Vietnamese to visit Vietnamese destinations’. Government agencies and travel businesses are joining in by eliminating or discounting admission fees, and slashing rates for travel products including hotel stays and tour packages. Halong Bay recently

announced an exemption on entrance fees and port charges in May and on select public holidays throughout the year, and 50% off entrance fees through June and July.

“I think during this time it is important where you can to support local companies, restaurants, and tourist locations. If you are planning on a holiday this year, why not travel within Vietnam and support the local economy, take staycations at local hotels on a Friday or Saturday night to release the cabin fever?” suggests Robinson.

With Vietnam vamping up domestic flights, bus and train services, restaurants, and retail outlets, it's a no-brainer to take advantage of best-ever rates for a much-deserved holiday close to home. Hearteningly, the foundation for domestic travel is already well-established in Vietnam, with locals taking 85 million domestic trips in 2019, led by the country's younger, tech-savvy, and adventure-seeking youth which numbers in the tens of millions.

Phase 2: Regional Bubbles

As more countries successfully contain the spread of coronavirus, experts agree that the next step will be to open up coronavirus-free “corridors” or “bubbles” between countries deemed safe to travel without the need for quarantine, and leaving out those where the disease is still running its course. Several groups of countries are already in talks, including Australia and New Zealand, a natural pairing of countries with strong geographical and economic ties. Several Baltic states, as well as some European and Scandinavian nations with similar COVID-curve characteristics are also said to be tentatively forming travel corridors.



Having visited nearly 70 countries as a travel writer and copywriter, **James Pham** documents his adventures on Instagram at fly.licarus.fly

Asian countries, including Vietnam, China, and South Korea, could very well be next, as this part of the world had a head start in both experiencing and in many cases, containing the virus. If so, this could be a big boost to the Vietnamese travel sector, as China and South Korea traditionally account for a significant portion of international tourists.

“I expect many travelers to first look at their own or neighboring countries when they decide to travel. Nobody likely wants to be stuck at a far-away airport if there is a second wave of travel restrictions,” adds Stamm. And beyond that? When will travel return to pre-COVID levels in both volume and comfort?

“This is the unanswerable question I'm afraid,” notes Wade. “The number of webinars and articles all with different dates is mindblowing. At the moment it could be anywhere between the last quarter of 2021 and the end of 2023. We've never lived through anything like this on a global scale so data is not really available to be accurately considered.”

“I think 2020 will be a tough year and 2021 will start to see the return of pre-COVID numbers,” answers a more optimistic Robinson.

Phase 3: The “New Normal”

However, barring a widely available vaccine, we may have to adapt to traveling in a completely new way.

While there's bound to be an initial slashing in ticket fares and hotel rooms to lure people into traveling again, pundits suggest that travel may never be the same, with travelers more concerned about health and the trustworthiness of hotels and airlines than ever before.

“Sanitization is now an extremely important part of hotel operations, rigorous cleaning and sanitizing of all the areas pre- and post-use is now extremely important. Temperature check stations have been in place for some time for anyone entering the hotel premises and I believe will be in place for the majority





of the year," says Robinson whose historic property was the first hotel in Saigon to implement temperature checks.

The new normal for hotels might also include fewer communal areas like buffets and even reception areas and a reduction of "high-touch" amenities like spa treatments, mini-bars, and bellboy service, along with the addition of state-of-the-art cleaning protocols including ultraviolet light and electrostatic sprayers. Rooms might even stay empty longer between use to further eliminate any possible contamination.

Factors such as health and a return to Nature might also shape future travel trends, with visitors opting for less-crowded destinations surrounded by fresh air and lots of space rather than urban retreats. "We have partners across the region that we think will want to take advantage of the relatively low visitor numbers and as long as we can provide safe products, will have clients wishing to travel," says Wade.

"I think that travel will change somewhat such as in people avoiding airports, train stations, and other transportation hubs for a while with a preference for private transport," posits Stamm. Happily, Vietnam has a host of social distancing-friendly options, including Hai Au Aviation's Cessna planes which can be chartered starting at VND 35,000,000 per hour. Divided among 10 passengers, it's actually fairly reasonable for short-haul travel covering 17 cities and provinces across Vietnam. Imagine you and your family bypassing airport queues and skipping crowded baggage claims on the way to a Con Dao getaway in a private villa, the ultimate in social distancing. In Halong Bay, L'Azalée Premium Cruises and Bhaya Cruises both offer single-cabin cruisers where a dedicated crew looks after the needs of just two guests.

Whatever happens, adventurous travelers willing to put up with a certain level of the unknown can likely take

advantage of the best rates seen in the last two decades, with the bonus of enjoying top destinations like Angkor Wat and Halong Bay with just a fraction of the regular number of tourists.

Even hard-hit travel providers are finding reasons for optimism. "COVID has given us an opportunity to look at our organisation and make changes where needed, to look at markets that we have not traditionally been involved with, to analyse our crisis strategies and streamline our processes. We do believe there is always a silver lining and despite the negative impact COVID has clearly had, we are looking to the future," says Wade.

"We are in this for the long haul," agrees Stamm. "Travel will probably take years to bounce back to previous levels and currently, there are still many uncertainties. However, we are committed to doing our part in keeping this country safe and returning to as normal a life as possible." ■

Enjoy the facilities at the newly renovated Caravelle Hotel Saigon with offers including the Signature Lounge with unlimited service of selected house wines, sparklings, spirits, cocktails and mouthwatering small bites, as well as day use rooms and pool day passes. For more, visit www.caravellehotel.com

Visit www.khiri.com for 4-day, 3-night packages to experience some of Indochina's most iconic destinations like slow-paced Luang Prabang, majestic Angkor Wat, and picturesque Hoi An, all without the crowds, a true once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.

From now through September 30, the 4-star Victoria Sapa Resort & Spa is just VND1,990,000 nett for 2, including breakfast and a 3-course set menu lunch or dinner. Bookings are completely changeable and cancellable when booked at www.summerescape.tmgroupp.vn/en

Bhaya Legend's fleet of ships with 1, 2, or 3 cabins offer the ultimate Halong Bay experience, enabling guests to personalize everything from the menu to the itinerary with six crew members on hand including your very own butler and guide. Find more at www.bhayacruises.com

Hai Au Aviation is Vietnam's only seaplane service, offering scheduled, chartered and scenic flights over some of Vietnam's most iconic destinations including Halong Bay's nearly 2,000 stunning islands and the gorgeous Central coastline between Danang and Hue. Visit www.seaplanes.vn/en

L'Azalée Premium Cruises offers a 100% private and exclusive travel experience, including private transfer from Hanoi as well as a personal chef, butler, and dedicated crew on its luxe single-cabin cruiser for an unprecedented level of personal pampering. Visit www.lazaleecruises.vn

TRAVEL GEAR REVIEW

FOR MANY OF US TRAVELHOLICS, the past few months have been pure torture with dusty suitcases, unopened bottles of suntan lotion, and dog-eared passports waiting to see the light of day. In between binging *The Blacklist* and making enemies out of friends geeking out on *Catan*, I've managed to use some of that unexpected downtime to keep my wanderlust alive by editing a glut of travel photos from previous trips, researching possible destinations that will offer the best bang for my buck when post-pandemic travel opens up again, and trying out some new travel-related gear. Here are some of my favorite finds.

PowerPack and Universal Cable from Nomad

While staying at home means I don't need to worry about running out of juice for my phone and camera, in preparation for going out into the wild, I've been testing out the PowerPack from Nomad (USD120 from www.nomadgoods.com), a 9,000 mAh mobile battery (providing almost three full charges for the latest iPhone) that's as minimalistically beautiful as it is ultimately functional. I've been a Nomad fan for years, drawn to their gorgeous, high-end mix of form and function, creating gadgets from power solutions and iPhone and AirPods cases to cables, straps, and other tech gear, all using the lightest, thinnest, and strongest materials around.

About the size of a portable hard drive, the ultra-rugged PowerPack feels really good to the touch, with a grippy, rubberized exterior giving it an almost military-esque look. The single-panel interface includes two fast-charging 3.0A USB-C ports (so you can passthrough charge the PowerPack while

charging a separate device), a 2.4A USB-A port which accommodates the ubiquitous USB cables used for most smartphones and tablets (and providentially for my Sony A7 camera), and a button to light up the LED

indicator which displays battery levels (complete with the very cool AmbientIQ feature which adjusts the brightness of the LEDs based on your surroundings). The PowerPack also includes another premium feature in Tile, an integrated iPhone-connected tracking technology to help find your PowerPack should it ever get lost. Tile uses both Bluetooth (within 100 feet) and its own community function, anonymously enlisting the help of over 8 million other Tile users in around 200 countries (including hundreds in Ho Chi Minh City), meaning if any of them happen to walk within 100 feet of your lost PowerPack, it'll show up in the app's map.

I've paired Nomad's PowerPack with its Universal Cable (USD40 for the 3-meter version, USD35 for the 1.5-meter version), billed as the "one cable to rule them all". Especially when traveling, every bit of space counts, so having a fast-charging, tangle-proof, nearly indestructible 3-in-1 cable (featuring a robust Kevlar braid and central core and alloy housings on both cable ends, the places that typically are the first to fail) that practically connects to anything, quickly transitioning between USB-A, USB-C, and Micro USB connectors (along with USB 2.0 data transfer) is a no-brainer. It also comes with a 5-year guarantee and an attached rubber tie to keep the cable neatly looped.

Bazaart Photo Collage App

I was in a group chat when a friend fired off a series of hilarious custom stickers with lightning speed. I found out he was using a photo collage app called Bazaart (available for iPhone and iPad for a free one-week trial, and after USD48 per year). On closer inspection, the Bazaart app could do so much more, making it super easy to take individual elements from different photos to combine them into one epic image.

Co-founded by Gili Golander, daughter to a high-tech entrepreneur and a fashion and beauty professional, Bazaart combines Golander's unique background into an extremely user-friendly app that practically rivals what Photoshop can do (beautiful edits, gorgeous photo manipulations, and stunning collages) but in a fraction of the time and conveniently using your mobile device. The beauty of Bazaart is its short learning curve. Understanding and using the wide range of tools is surprisingly simple considering how robust the app is (including erasing the background of an image with literally one touch). For creative minds, the bigger challenge (and a very fun one at that) will be envisioning what combination of tools to use and in



what order to create dreamy collages. Thankfully, the app's YouTube and Instagram accounts are full of inspiring projects with step-by-step instructions. Trust me when I say that thinking up ways to manipulate your already great travel photos into mind-blowing ones is seriously addictive and your Instagram game will never look the same.

Tom Chalky Designs

Another creative I came across during quarantine is Tom Chalky, a font designer from the UK "obsessed with the handwritten, handpainted, and imperfect". While he's probably best known for his gorgeous handcrafted fonts, his website (www.tomchalky.com) is chock-full of textures (think vintage maps, papers, leathers and watercolors) as well as vintage illustrations. There are a ton of bundles to choose from, including botanicals, scientific and nautical equipment, florals, anatomy and animals. Many are drawn or sketched by hand, looking like they came from a medical book from the 1800s while some are actually meticulously edited, restored, and repurposed from vintage books and ephemera. The process of sourcing and editing these little gems straight out of history is a fascinating one and now creators can benefit from Tom's wholesome obsession with all things vintage. You can buy bundles of fonts, illustrations, and textures from his online shop (sign up for his newsletter to receive hundreds of freemium resources) or splurge on an all-access pass for everything on the site (including future releases) starting at USD99 per year. ■



>>The List Travel



Ana Mandara Villas | Dalat

Ana Mandara Villas Dalat comprises 17 restored French-style villas from the 1920s and 1930s, preserving the original design, décor and charm; and set in the cool climate of the rural highlands of Central Vietnam. Striking views of the surrounding town and countryside abound from all areas of the gently sloping hillside property. Some of the villas have been converted into 65 guest accommodations, with each villa comprising between three and five ensuite rooms.

www.anamandara-resort.com



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Kids & Education





Escapist Fiction

How reading science fiction can build resilience in kids

Text by Esther Jones

YOUNG PEOPLE WHO ARE

hooked on watching fantasy or reading science fiction may be on to something. Contrary to a common misperception that reading this genre is an unworthy practice, reading science fiction and fantasy may help young people cope, especially with the stress and anxiety of living through the COVID-19 pandemic.

I am a professor with research interests in the social, ethical and political messages in science fiction. In my book *Medicine and Ethics in Black Women's Speculative Fiction*, I explore the ways science fiction promotes understanding of human differences and ethical thinking.

While many people may not consider science fiction, fantasy, or speculative fiction to be “literary,” research shows that all fiction can generate critical thinking skills and emotional intelligence for young readers. Science fiction may have a power all its own.

Literature as a Moral Mirror

Historically, parents have considered literature “good” for young people if it provides moral guidance that reflects their own values. This belief has been the catalyst for many movements to censor particular books for nearly as long as books have been published. *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, published in 1885, was the first book to be banned in the US. It was thought to corrupt youth by teaching boys to swear, smoke and run away from home.

In the latter part of the 20th century, the book has come under fire for Mark Twain's prolific use of the N-word. Many people are concerned that the original version of the book normalizes an unacceptable racial slur. Who can say the N-word and in what context is an ongoing social and political debate, reflecting wounds in American society that have yet to heal.

The question is, how does literature of any genre—whether popularly perceived as “serious literature” or “escapist nonsense”—perform its educational function. This is central to the conflict

between parents and educators about what kids should read, especially as it pertains to “escapist” fiction.

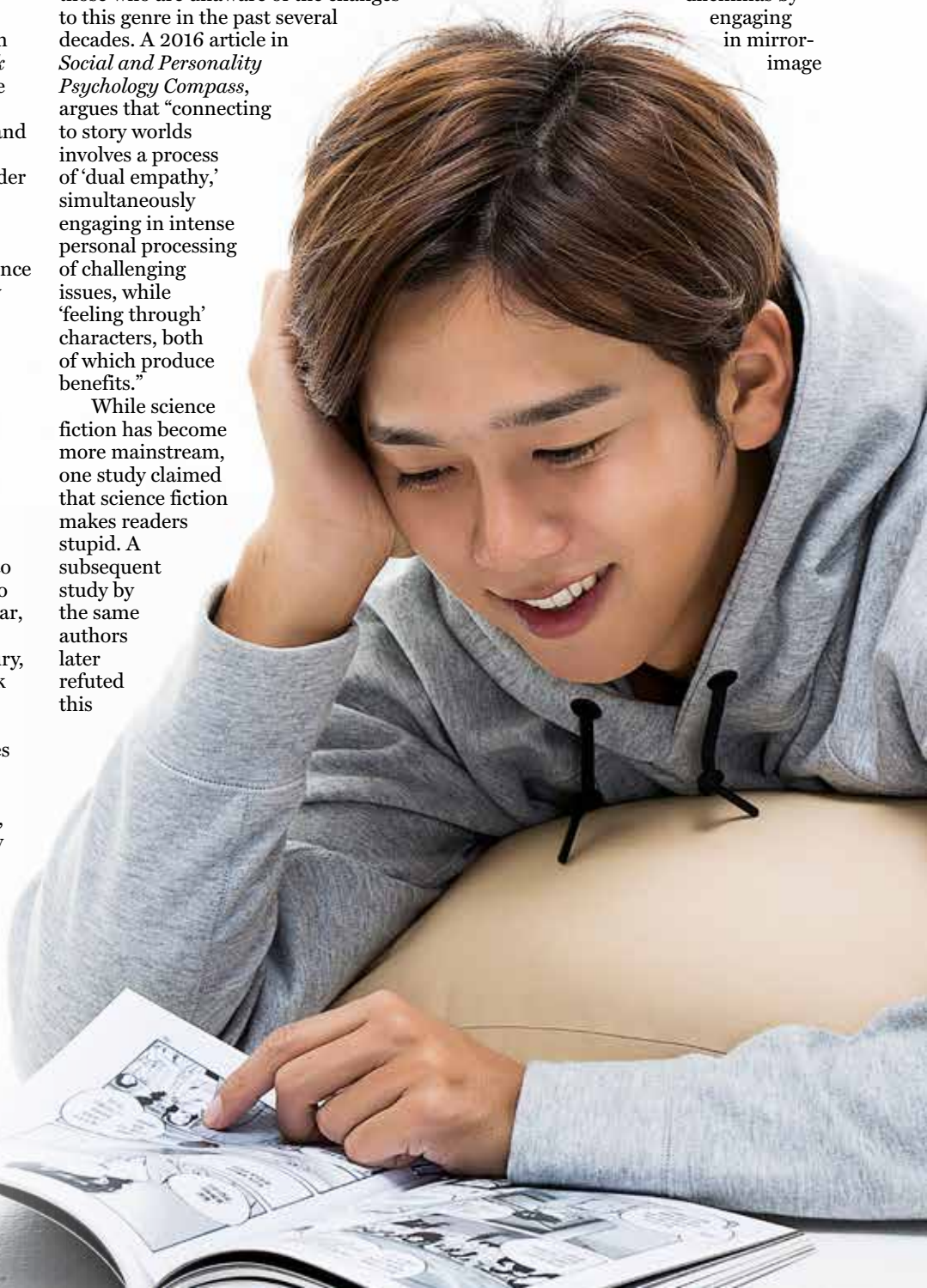
Why Science Fiction Gets a Bad Rap

Historically, those who read science fiction have been stigmatized as geeks who can't cope with reality. This perception persists, particularly for those who are unaware of the changes to this genre in the past several decades. A 2016 article in *Social and Personality Psychology Compass*, argues that “connecting to story worlds involves a process of ‘dual empathy,’ simultaneously engaging in intense personal processing of challenging issues, while ‘feeling through’ characters, both of which produce benefits.”

While science fiction has become more mainstream, one study claimed that science fiction makes readers stupid. A subsequent study by the same authors later refuted this

claim when the quality of writing was taken into account. This ongoing ambivalence towards the genre contributes to the stereotype that such works are of little value because they presumably don't engage real human dilemmas. In actuality, they do. Such stereotypes assume that young people can only learn to cope with human

dilemmas by
engaging
in mirror-
image



reflections of reality including what they read or watch.

The Mental Health of Reading

Reading science fiction and fantasy can help readers make sense of the world. Rather than limiting readers' capacity to deal with reality, exposure to outside-the-box creative stories may expand their ability to engage reality based on science. A 2015 survey of science fiction and fantasy readers found that these readers were also major consumers of a wide range of other types of books and media. In fact, the study noted a connection between respondents' consumption of varied literary forms and an ability to understand science.

With increasing rates of anxiety, depression, and mental health issues for youth in the past two decades, it may be the case that young people, no different from American society generally, are suffering from reality overload. Young people today have unprecedented access to information about which they may have little power to influence or change.

The Powerful World of Science Fiction

Science fiction and fantasy do not need to provide a mirror image of reality in order to offer compelling stories about serious social and political issues. The fact that the setting or characters are extraordinary may be precisely why they are powerful and where their value lies.

My contribution in the forthcoming essay collection, *Raced Bodies, Erased Lives: Race in Young Adult Speculative Fiction*, discusses how

gender and mental health for black girls is portrayed in speculative fiction and fantasy. My essay describes how contemporary writers take an aspect of what is familiar and make it "odd" or "strange" enough to give the reader psychic and emotional distance to understand mental health issues with fresh eyes.

From the Harry Potter and Hunger Games series to novels like Octavia Butler's *Parable of the Sower* and *Parable of the Talents* and Nancy Kress' *Beggars in Spain*, youths see examples of young people grappling with serious social, economic, and political issues that are timely and relevant, but in settings or times that offer critical distance.

This distance gives readers an avenue to grapple with complexity and use their imagination to consider different ways of managing social challenges. What better way to deal with the uncertainty of this time than with forms of fiction that make us comfortable with being uncomfortable, that explore uncertainty and ambiguity, and depict young people as active agents, survivors and shapers of their own destinies?

Let them read science fiction. In it, young people can see themselves—coping, surviving and learning lessons—that may enable

them to create their own strategies for resilience. In this time of COVID-19 and physical distancing, we may be reluctant for kids to embrace creative forms that seem to separate them psychologically from reality.

But the critical thinking and agile habits of mind prompted by this type of literature may actually produce resilience and creativity that everyday life and reality typically do not. ■

Esther L. Jones, Ph.D., is Associate Provost and Dean of the Faculty at Clark University, where she is a tenured professor in the department of English and the E. Franklin Frazier Chair of African American Literature, Theory and Culture. Her research and teaching specializations include race, gender, health and medical ethics as represented in literature, especially science fiction and fantasy. She is the author of Medicine and Ethics in Black Women's Speculative Fiction (2015).

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>>The List Education

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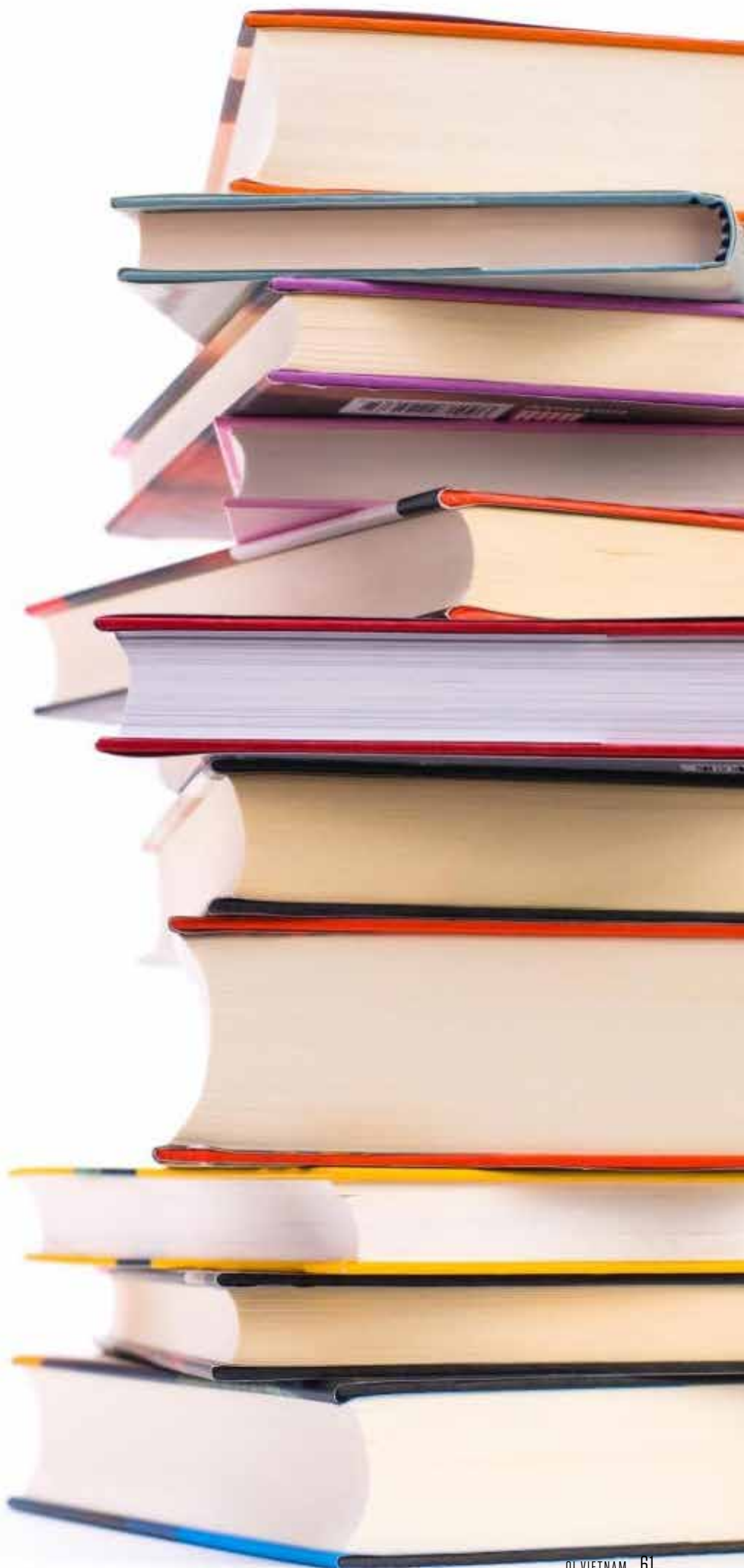
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