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VIETNAM

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the
SUN



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NHIỀU TÁC GIẢ, TẬP 04/2018



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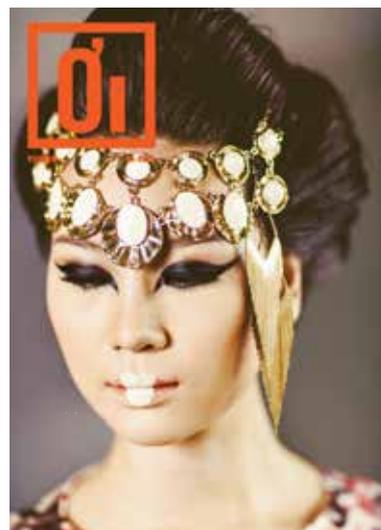
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Datebook

What's on this month...

JUNE 14

What: Modern Airports Asia Events 2018

Where: GEM Center (8 Nguyen Binh Khiem, D1), 9am

About: Asia Modern Airports was initiated in Australia in 2014 and was praised as "One of the Asia's top 10 Airport Focused Events." It combines conference and small-scale exhibitions, one-on-one private meetings. It assembles government officials, airport authorities, airport groups, investors, developers, consulting firms, designers, associations, integrators and suppliers, to discuss the rapid growth of the Asia-Pacific civil aviation market and the surge in demand for the new generation of airports. Spearheaded by China and Southeast Asia, air transportation in Asia grows phenomenally, passenger growth surpassed 10 percent per year. Countries including China, Indonesia, the Philippines, Vietnam, and Thailand are confronted with the challenge of inadequate airport infrastructures and aging facilities. Asia Modern Airports had been to Jakarta, Melbourne, Hanoi, Manila in the past few years and served more than 1,200 airport professionals, 80+ exhibitors, and delivered nearly 100 presentations and panel discussions, dozens of governments endorsed our previous events.

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JUNE 19

What: A Night of Dvorak

Where: Saigon Opera House, 8pm, tickets start at VND650,000

About: Antonin Dvorak wrote his cello concerto while



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living in the US, where he had been appointed Director of the New York Conservatory of Music. This concerto, and the New World Symphony, is the main product of his three-year stay in the country. The cellist in the Saigon Opera House will be Ngo Hoang Quan. He was born into a family of musicians and was taught the cello by his father, the composer Hoang Duong, at the age of five. After five years studying in Russia, he worked with the Vietnam National Symphony Orchestra. Special guest conductor on this occasion will be Honna Tetsuji. Music Director and Principal Conductor of the Vietnam National Symphony Orchestra, he has made many CD recordings with Japanese and other orchestras.



Contact: Visit www.hbso.org.vn for more info

JUNE 29 & 30

What: Café Saigon Dance Performance

Where: Saigon Opera House, 8pm, tickets start at VND650,000

About: June sees the first performances of Café Saigon by HBSO Ballet, in collaboration with the Netherlands dance company Gotra. The subject of the new work is a closely guarded secret. The name of the Dutch group, Gotra, is derived from Sanskrit and means “clan.” Members of a “gotra” are believed to share a common destiny, in this case that of making modern dance. One of the two Gotra choreographers working on Café Saigon is Maite Guerin. Both a dancer and choreographer, she has worked in many places including Nice, Lausanne and Maastricht. She was also artistic director of a program, Care to Dance?, for people suffering from Parkinson’s Disease.

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THE BULLETIN

Promotions and news in HCMC and beyond...

Future Park

Crescent Mall (crescentmall.com) welcomes a new concept in kid's activity as it opens its doors to Future Park—a digital playground where kids and kids-at-heart can engage with technology to enhance and innovate artistic experiences. One of Future Park's aims is to introduce the digital world to the young in a proper context. There are conflicting sides to technology wherein children can be drawn into the isolation of a tablet, phone, or game console. Future Park believes that the younger generation should be encouraged to embrace the digital evolution but not at the cost of human interaction. With the correct guidance, children will be able to learn about the endless possibilities that technology has to offer at the same time developing their kinaesthetic and social skills. There will be seven different interactive and educational attractions featured: Sketch Forest, Butterfly Sky, Gravity Balls, Save the Reef, Virtual Sandbox and World of Zodiac. These attractions were carefully designed to trigger children's imaginations and to show them what their thoughts look like in real life. By creating this hybrid education through play, kids will exercise their creativity more in the real world.



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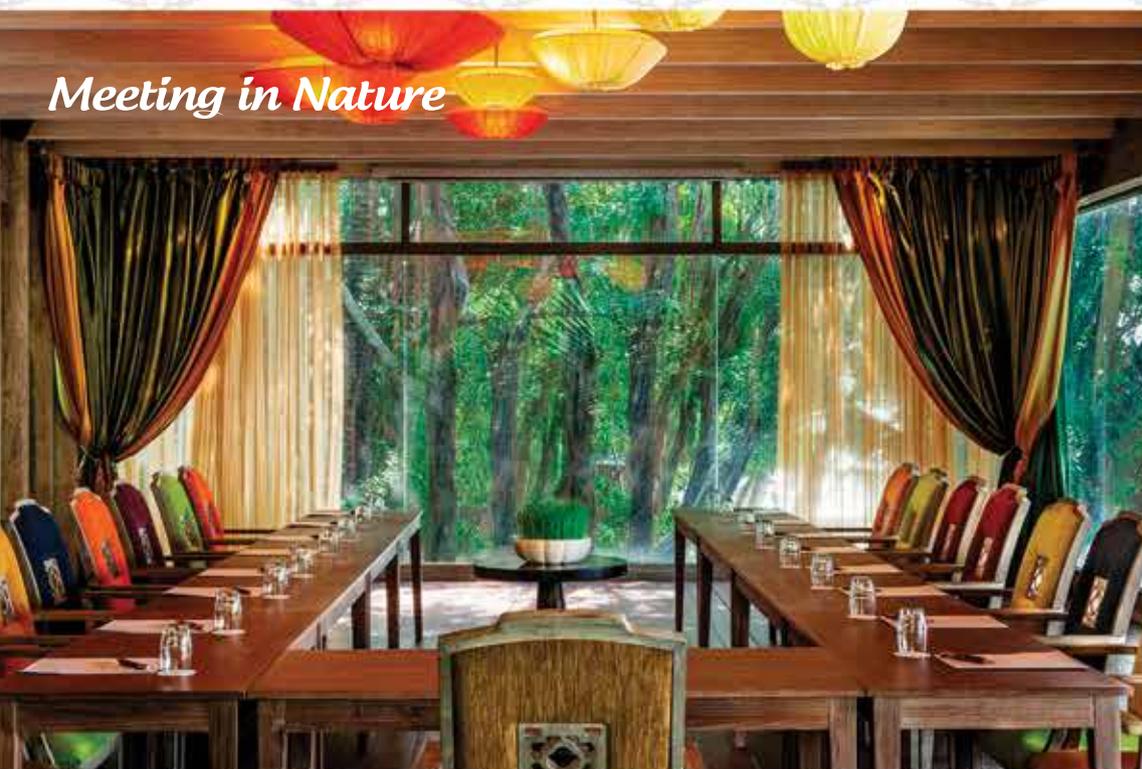
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TROI OI!

The country in numbers



90% OF VIETNAM'S URBAN HOUSEHOLD WASTEWATER IS DUMPED directly into the environment, according to a report compiled by the state-funded Center for Environment and Community Research (CECR), highlighting the alarming state of water pollution across all 63 provinces and municipalities in the country. The annual production of household wastewater, which makes up over 30 percent of all wastewater discharged into the environment in Vietnam, rises annually as a result of the country's rapid urbanization. Household wastewater remains a primary cause of pollution in rivers, canals, and lakes within urban areas in Vietnam, destroying the landscape and deteriorating the quality of life.



28,000 HIGH SCHOOL TEACHERS AROUND THE COUNTRY are set to benefit from a program meant for continuous professional development of teachers and principals to improve their capacity to teach a new curriculum. Duong Thi Hong Hieu, head of the HCM City University of Education's training division, said with funding of USD100 million, including USD95 million from the World Bank, the five-year program has been implemented from 2017 to 2021. Every high school in the country will choose one teacher for training while disadvantaged regions and schools offering multiple levels of education will send two. The program will also train the 70,000 school managers around the country.



8% OF COUPLES FACE INFERTILITY, EXPERTS SAY, INDICATING that infertility is a major task for the obstetrics and gynecology sector in Vietnam. Some provinces and city have high rates of infertility, such as Hanoi (13 percent) and the central coastal province of Khanh Hoa (14 percent). In addition, the rate of abortion among adolescents in Vietnam is high, and many teenagers are desperate to keep their pregnancies secret from family and friends. This increases the risk that they will turn to unsafe or unlicensed practitioners, where one of the complications they may face is infertility. The latest statistics from the World Health Organization show that Vietnam has one of the lowest fertility rates in the Asia-Pacific region. In the 2017-2020 period, the fertility rate of the region as a whole, including Vietnam, is predicted to drop. Again, WHO predicts that infertility is the third most dangerous health problem for the world in the 21st century, following cancer and cardiovascular disease. Infertility is becoming more prevalent in Asian nations, including Vietnam.



~80,000 FOREIGNERS ARE CURRENTLY WORKING IN VIETNAM, according to the Department of Employment under the Ministry of Labor, Invalids and Social Affairs (MOLISA). They come from over 100 countries and territories and work as managers, managing directors, experts and technical workers. Ninety-five percent of eligible foreign workers in Vietnam have been granted work permits, adding that they provide a significant contingent of skilled, experienced and professional workers for Vietnam. The 2014 Law on Social Insurance requires compulsory enrollment of foreign workers in the social insurance scheme, starting in 2018, to ensure their equality and welfare. However, to date, it has not yet been realized due to lack of guiding documents. A MoLISA draft decree also proposed requiring foreign workers to take part in all five social insurance programs – pension and insurance for sickness, maternity, vocational injuries, disease and death.

USD2 BILLION FOR ONE COMMUNE, ONE PRODUCT PROGRAM.

The Vietnamese Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD) launched the One Commune, One Product (OCOP) program last month. OCOP is an economic development program in rural areas focusing on increasing internal power and values, contributing to the implementation of the National Target Program on New Rural Development for 2016-2020. It aims to produce and offer quality products and services that are competitive at home and abroad, with priority given to cooperatives and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). According to the MARD, nearly 6,010 enterprises, cooperatives, working groups and registered business households are producing 4,823 products in six commodity groups. Specifically, there are 2,584 products in food, 1,041 in beverages, 231 in herbals, 186 in fabric and garment, 580 in souvenirs-interior décor, 201 in rural tourism services. However, only 1,086 products register for quality standards and 695 products register for intellectual property protection.



3 TONS OF PLANT PROTECTION PRODUCTS SMUGGLED

from China were destroyed last month. The entire stock of smuggled plant protection products was transported by a carriage for hazardous waste to a cement kiln in Hai Duong Province and disposed of by being burnt at a high temperature. The stock included fruit ripening substances, plant growth stimulators and other hazardous substances such as mouse poison, snail poison and herbicides. The products were prohibited from being used in Vietnam. Meanwhile, mouse poison, snail poison and herbicides feature on the list of group 1 substances, which are also known as "very toxic." Traders usually divide the stock into smaller packs and hire porters to traffic products into Vietnam. These products are then illegally distributed and sold in small markets to avoid government confiscation.

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Air Pet

Relocating can be confusing and scary—for you and for your pets—but it doesn't have to be if you're well prepared



Serene works as a pet relocation specialist for Animal Doctors International, the only IPATA accredited veterinary hospital in Vietnam, helping pet parents to internationally relocate their furry four-legged friends.

THERE ARE MANY THINGS TO consider when you begin to plan for the relocation of your pet, with the animal's comfort being the top priority for many of our pet parents. With this in mind we always recommend that owners choose to fly their animal as cargo with a pet-friendly airline. This option is not only the safest but it is the least stressful option as it allows for reduced time spent on the aircraft, travel in a climate-controlled cargo hold and processing completed by trained staff experienced in handling animals.

One thing pet parents often forget about is the importance of crate training their furry friend. Once you have selected an IATA compliant crate we recommend giving your pet as much time as possible to adjust to their temporary home. While it might seem like a good idea to sedate your pet, we strongly advise against any form of sedative being used for air travel. This can be dangerous to the welfare of the animal as it can increase the risk of heart and respiratory problems and many airlines will not allow a sedated animal to fly. We find that a slow and gradual introduction to their new crate is the best option for keeping animals relaxed throughout their journey.

Research And Then Research Some More!

Research your options as soon as you find out about your upcoming move and ensure you are informed about any restrictions on your particular breed because certain airlines will not fly snub-nosed animals or those deemed to be dangerous.

Some countries' regulations are more complicated than others and owners need to ensure they plan well in advance of any relocation. The requirements vary from country to country but the import procedures for many of our popular moves require health certificates, import permits and periods in quarantine. While it might be cost effective to tackle the move by yourself, we always advise our pet parents to seek the assistance of an expert relocater to handle these sometimes-complex procedures.

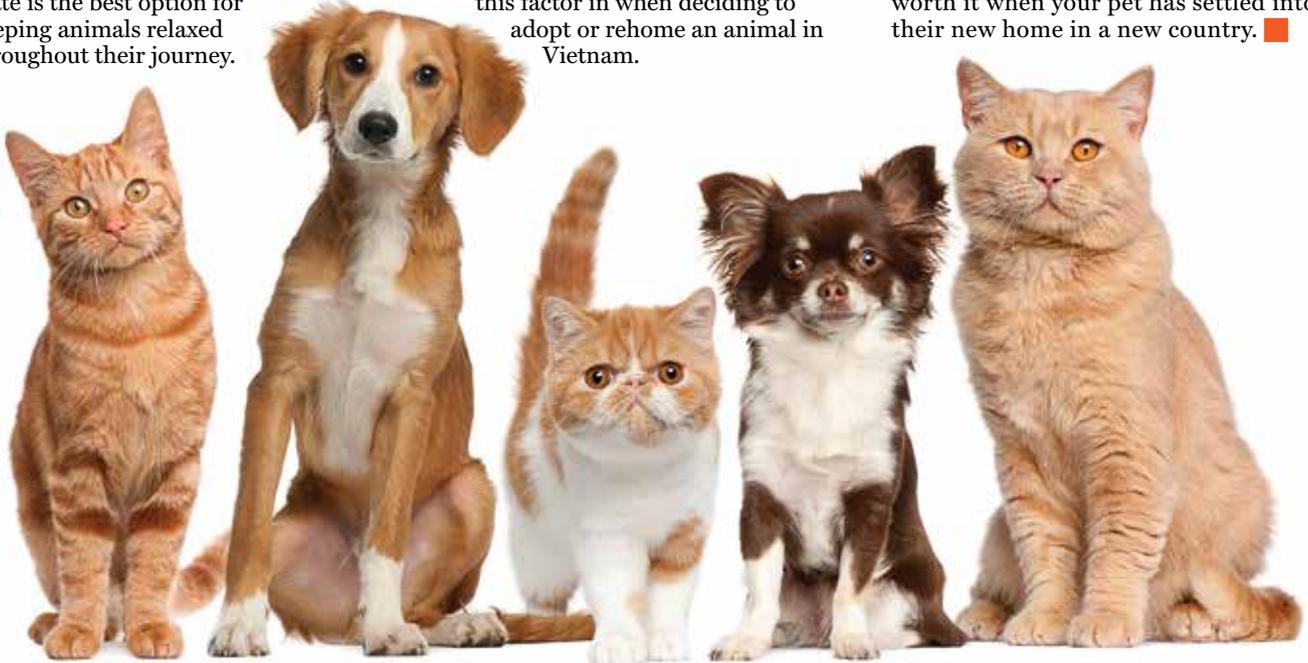
While the import process for Vietnam is fairly straightforward and inexpensive be informed that exporting animals can be slightly costlier depending on the requirements of the destination country. For this reason, we advise researching all options available to you and ensuring you have budgeted this factor in when deciding to adopt or rehome an animal in Vietnam.

Plan In Advance

One piece of advice that I can't emphasise enough is to ensure your pet is up-to-date with their vaccinations. It can be very upsetting for pet parents to realize that they will have to leave their pet behind simply because their destination country requires a longer inoculation period. Always consult your veterinarian in good time so they can advise you on what vaccinations may be required for your chosen destination.

We advise all owners to at least have the basics covered when it comes to their animal's vaccinations and recommend booking an appointment with their veterinarian to have their animal microchipped and vaccinated against rabies.

While it might seem like a daunting process, early preparation is key to a successful move. Once you have researched your options, speak with a specialist to ensure the time frame you have in mind is suitable for the requirements of your destination. Don't forget the time spent researching and planning will be worth it when your pet has settled into their new home in a new country. ■



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Where Time Stands Still

Text by Pierre Semere and Kieu Giang
Images by Pierre Semere

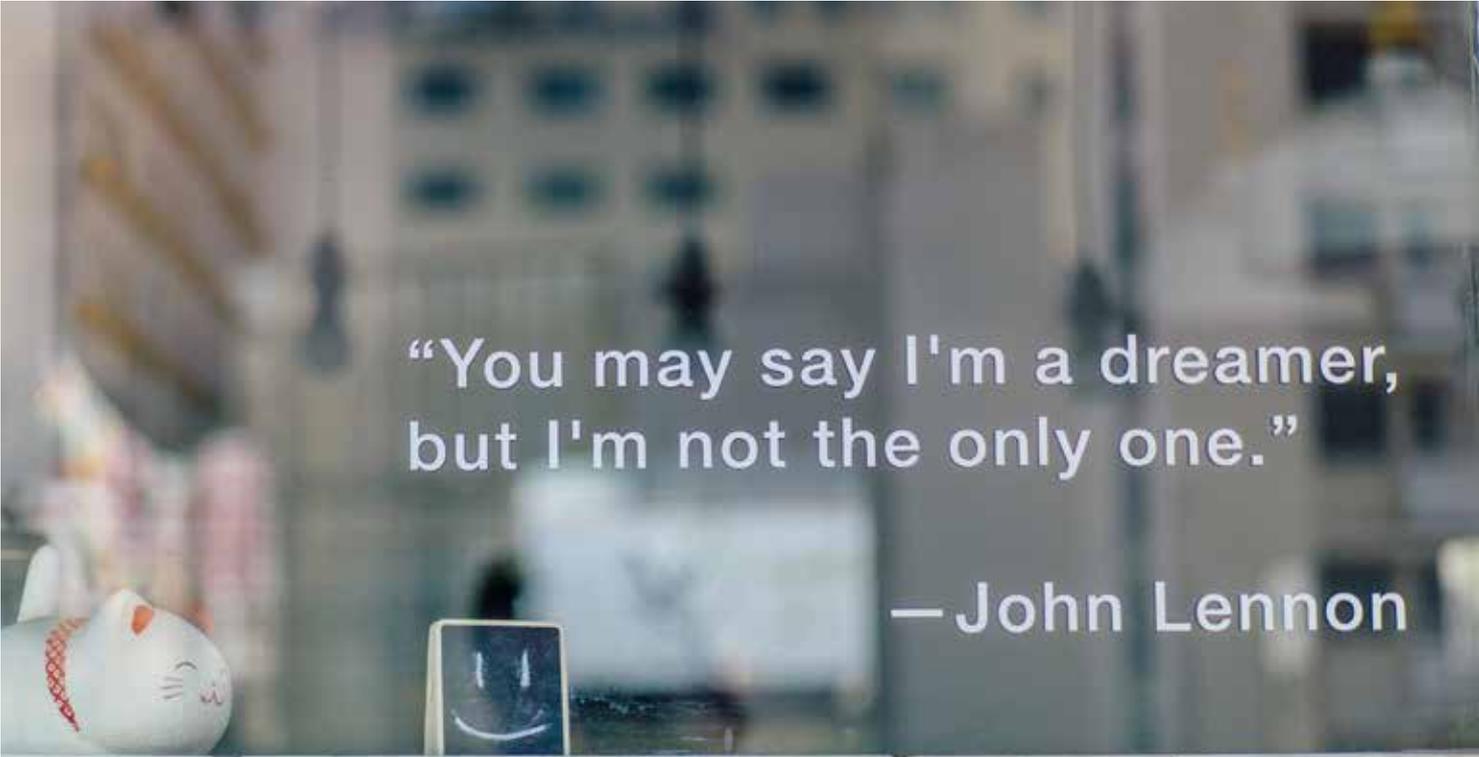
SAIGON, THE WORLD'S SECOND most dynamic city according to the World Economic Forum, isn't just full of skyscrapers and construction sites. What fascinates and attracts tourists, both local and international, are the city's hidden heritage buildings, witnesses of history's turmoil and triumphs. French photographer Pierre Semere, who has called Saigon his second home and has made the city's historic buildings his focus, wants to give his audience a better understanding and new admiration for these timeless pieces in hopes of protecting them from demolition.

26 Ly Tu Trong, D1

This popular art deco apartment building, also known as the Catinat Building, is located at the corner of Dong Khoi and Ly Tu Trong (opposite Vincom Center). It was built between 1926-1927 for the Société Urbaine Foncière Indochinoise (SUFIC), and during the past 90 years it has been known mainly for its upmarket apartments. This place was also home to numerous companies and foreign missions, including the US Consulate during the 1930s and early 1940s. Now, the building is home to trendy cafés, fashion shops and restaurants.

As soon as I entered the building I felt the intensity of French heritage intertwined with the uniqueness of Saigon. The building's history and timeless beauty have mingled with the fresh spirit of these new chic boutiques and restaurants. Yes, the place has been given a second life, but in a proper way. Local residents, and especially young entrepreneurs, have shown their respect to the building's historic value by bringing preserving the integrity of the building's soul, like the stairs, stones floor and the old French elevator. It was a great feeling for me as a French person to enter many of the stores and be reminded of an old French Haussmanian-style apartment.





“You may say I'm a dreamer,
but I'm not the only one.”

—John Lennon

42 Nguyen Hue Pedestrian Street, D1

The iconic construction on the pedestrian walkway was built in the 1960s and was home to many high-ranking government officials before 1975 and also served as residences for US advisors and naval officers. The 9-storey building is currently full of cafés, eateries, co-working offices

and clothing boutiques.

This building has strong characteristics, especially because it is one of the only heritage buildings in town that always attracts people's attention. It's hard not to stop and stare at all the colorful shop banners hanging up and down its façade, and let's not forget to mention

the authentic balcony views of the stores. Once again, it's proof that a good use of a heritage building can help promote new businesses in a unique and aesthetically pleasing way, while also respecting the architecture. As soon as I stepped into the building I was able to feel the vibes of the old apartments and its former inhabitants.

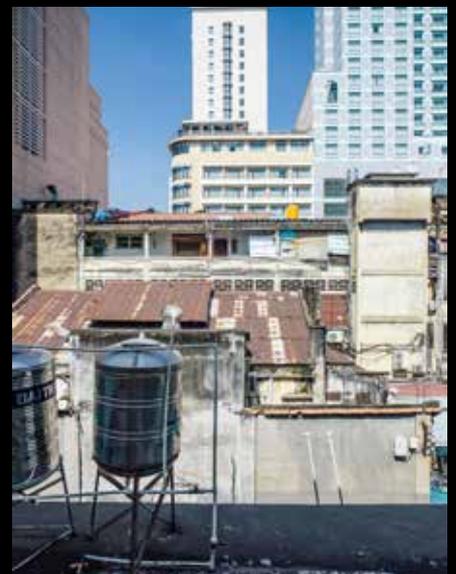


14 Ton That Dam, D1

Built in 1886 by Brossard et Maupin, the French company that built Ben Thanh Market in 1921, the edifice has a unique architecture with many alleys, stairs and windows. It has housed multigenerational families with its four walls, and will continue to do so. The building has witnessed Saigon's transformation, beginning with the opening of the iconic Bitexco Financial Tower, Saigon's highest building... for now. Local entrepreneurs have also come to set up businesses here.

This place represents exactly what I call "the aesthetic mess of Saigon"—a strong mix of heritage stones and mosaics all along hundreds of alleys and labyrinthine stairs. From the stairs, depending on which floor, you can see a typical Vietnamese building, a construction site and the Bitexco tower in one line of vision. From any window or balcony, people can admire the beauty of the lotus-shaped tower from different angles.

On the top floor, the ceiling and the walls have been washed by time and corrosion, which has resulted in beautiful patterns of colors, like strokes from a painter's brush. This has left me feeling both beauty and sadness at the same time.



151 Dong Khoi, D1

According to historian Tim Doling, a scholar of Saigon's history and heritage structures, this building would appear to be an early 20th century reconstruction of the former Grand Hôtel de France (1870s). By the end of the colonial period, its upper floors were rented apartments, while shops occupied its ground floor. People rarely know that the building's arcade

was a remnant of a small film theatre known as the Catinat-Cine installed in the 1930s. The unusual mosaic wall decorations of this cinema has survived to this day and may still be seen at l'Usine, which is located on the first floor of the building.

This building is certainly the guardian of Saigon. It's a peculiar heritage place because we can access it on both sides of the building. One

on Dong Khoi, where we can observe the Saigon Opera House and also the Continental Hotel, both built in the late 18th century. The other side is linked with the Nguyen Hue Pedestrian Street. These two paths are linked by a long alley that was turned into a mobile gallery surrounded by many painters and artists of all kinds of styles. I felt the colors, liveliness and artistically inspired here. ■

Between
Fragmentation
and
Wholeness

An exhibition of new work by Truong Cong Tung, the first comprehensive show of his work in almost a decade

Images and Text Courtesy of **Galerie Quynh and Truong Cong Tung**



Video Still

Between Fragmentation and Wholeness refers to *The Wholeness and the Implicate Order*, a book authored by David Bohm, a distinguished physicist in the field of quantum theory. Influential beyond his own discipline, notably in philosophy and art, Bohm was recognized for his application of physics on the rationale of human consciousness and the universe. According to Bohm, the universe has an implicate order in which it enfolds and unfolds to extend into infinite dimensionality. Everything is connected within this unbroken wholeness and any individual element can reveal detailed information about every other element in the universe.

Truong's exhibition is an analogy to Bohm's concept. It is his consciousness of the wholeness of his inner self and his surroundings that unfolds fragmented elements of the self, family, region, country and extensively the world. Truong makes sense of the nonsense, connecting the non-aligned, and entwines it through time and space to create a nonlinear wholeness.

Between Fragmentation and Wholeness invites viewers to enter Truong Cong Tung's multidimensional reality through three main axes in the gallery space: vertically—with the ruptures in urban planning and propagated doctrine; horizontally—with mystical human-altered landscapes in agrarian territories; and diagonally—with a mirage of blazing images extracted from the virtual domain. The bodies of works appear in various mediums from collaged sculptures of natural and manmade objects to video installations and layered drawings in light boxes. All contribute to a powerful language of semiotics—of self-indicated signs—which moves beyond the mimesis of nature. Departing from his own personal context of the Central Highlands and Saigon, Truong proposes an understanding of the totality of humanity where our linear modernization unfolds, mimics, adjusts and then disrupts nature—not just the natural world but also the human desire for collectivism and harmony.

The Artist

Born in Dak Lak, Central Highlands in 1986 into a Vietnamese agricultural family residing among various ethnic minority groups, Truong later moved to Saigon in his late teens. Truong has witnessed the country's rapid changes in economics, politics and society and the impact on the environment in both rural and urban areas during its modernization process—one that pivots on the morphing of nature in the interests of human desire and demand. His artistic practice is an explication of the absurdity of human reasoning and treatment of our natural surroundings based both on his personal experience and through his research in the fields of science, cosmology and philosophy. Truong's bodies of works are often multilayered and consist of material manipulations of both natural and human origins. They appear as coherent narratives, yet are tacitly perplexing with their individual parts of maneuvered images, information, fiction and facts.

Truong began his career working with some of Vietnam's most important not-for-profit spaces supporting critical and experimental practice such as San Art (Ho Chi Minh City), Himiko Visual Salon (Ho Chi Minh City) and Nha San Collective (Hanoi). He is also a member of Art Labor (founded in 2012), a collective working between the visual arts, social and life sciences in order to produce alternative non-formal knowledge via artistic and cultural activities in various public contexts and locales.

Between Fragmentation and Wholeness will be exhibited at Galerie Quynh (118 Nguyen Van Thu, D1; galeriequynh.com) until June 30, 2018. ■



When a virtual



Traces of Infinity

ngày 13 tháng 3 năm 2018

nhân và xã hội

Room For Education

An NGO that aims to break the cycle of poverty one school at a time

Text by **Oi Vietnam**
Images by **Dario Tormaseo**



IT WAS AT THE BEGINNING OF 2016 when Thomas Farthofer, after many years in asset management and investment banking, decided to leave Vienna, Austria for Hanoi to help as a volunteer. While teaching at different universities and a secondary school, he fell in love with the country and its people. Their honest hospitality, openness, friendliness and their positive spirit left a strong impact on him. On his flight back to Europe he decided he wanted to return and provide more sustainable help.

Thomas' vision was to build schools, access to basic education, in some of the poorest and most remote villages in Vietnam that were not receiving the support they needed. These remote areas are mostly populated by ethnic minorities and access to education seemed like the most efficient way to break the cycle of poverty, which many of the local children are caught in.

Back in Europe, he founded the Austrian-registered non-profit organization Sao Bien. Room for Education and started the first fund raising initiatives. "When I spoke about my idea to create an organization that builds schools in Vietnam, many told me that in a country with some 90 million people 20 schools would not make any difference. Then I remembered an old story that I have read many years ago. It's a story of a man that threw a starfish that have washed up onto the beach back into the sea. When he was told that there were too many starfish to make a difference, he pointed to the starfish that he has just saved: 'I made a big difference to this one,'" Thomas recalls. "And this is what we do. With each school we make a huge difference to around 40 children. By building schools we want to create new opportunities and a better future for some of the children that need our help the most. The organization's name 'sao bien' is the Vietnamese word for 'starfish.'"

Two months later he returned to Hanoi to look for local partner organizations whose support Sao Bien considers as one of the cornerstones of their concept.

"It's the cross-border cooperation with local partner organizations that allows us to leverage on our own strengths in project management and fund raising, while benefiting from the local expertise and network of Vietnamese organizations," explains Rüdiger Rucker, Sao Bien's President. Rüdiger is one of three Vienna-based board members, overlooking administrative and legal aspects, while Thomas, who is based in Hanoi, oversees daily operations.

During many exhausting field trips Thomas was able to better understand the challenges the ethnic minorities in the mountainous areas faced. All the school sites were close to the border with China or Laos, and governmental security rules require pre-registration with the local authorities. And because of its remote



location and a lack of infrastructure, the sites themselves can usually only be reached by motorbike and then walking the last few kilometers. Thus, transportation is very challenging and could not be done without the help of the locals who carried construction materials to the site. The involvement of the locals was an important element, not only to solve the transportation issue but also to raise their identification with the project.

"We get local authorities and local people involved from the very beginning," says Thomas. Sao Bien's innovative approach has helped it win the Audience Award of Sozialmarie 2017, Europe's oldest prize for social innovation. The close coordination with the local authorities also ensures that each school matches exactly the specific needs of the village in terms of facility size and layout. Furthermore, agreements with the local authorities ensure proper use of the schools after completion, including teacher recruitment.

So far, Sao Bien has completed seven schools. This year's project pipeline includes another seven schools in the provinces of Dien Bien, Ha Giang, Thanh Hoa, Nghe An, Tuyen Quang and Lao Cai.

A typical school has two or three classrooms, a teachers' room (this is

often essential because the teachers have to stay in the village during the week) and toilets. It usually grants access to quality education for around 40 children, and the expected lifetime of the structure is 20 years or more. The total project costs approximately ~10,000. In their latest projects, Sao Bien started to install solar panels in villages that often have no electricity. Aspects of sustainability will play an even bigger role in their projects in the future, says Rüdiger.

A wide variety of funding sources are tapped to realize these ambitious plans. A large portion of donations come from Austrian citizens, with corporates and social enterprises in France, Canada, Switzerland, Austria and Vietnam also providing steady support.

Recently, for the first time, the organization applied for funds at a unit of the United Nations to build a primary school in Ha Giang Province. While all their school projects are currently located in northern Vietnam, Sao Bien's goal is to help in central and southern Vietnam, as well. "We have only just started," says Thomas. "We are in talks with some very interesting partners and we feel that now, with more and more people knowing about us, things are getting a bit easier." ■

For more info about Sao Bien and their upcoming projects, visit their Facebook Page www.facebook.com/saobienroomforeducation.



Ms.
Saigon

Designer: **Thuy Design House**
(www.thuydesignhouse.com)

Photographer: **Chanh**

Model: **Phi Phuong Anh**

Make up: **Xi Quan Le**

Location: **Hem Quan, District 6**

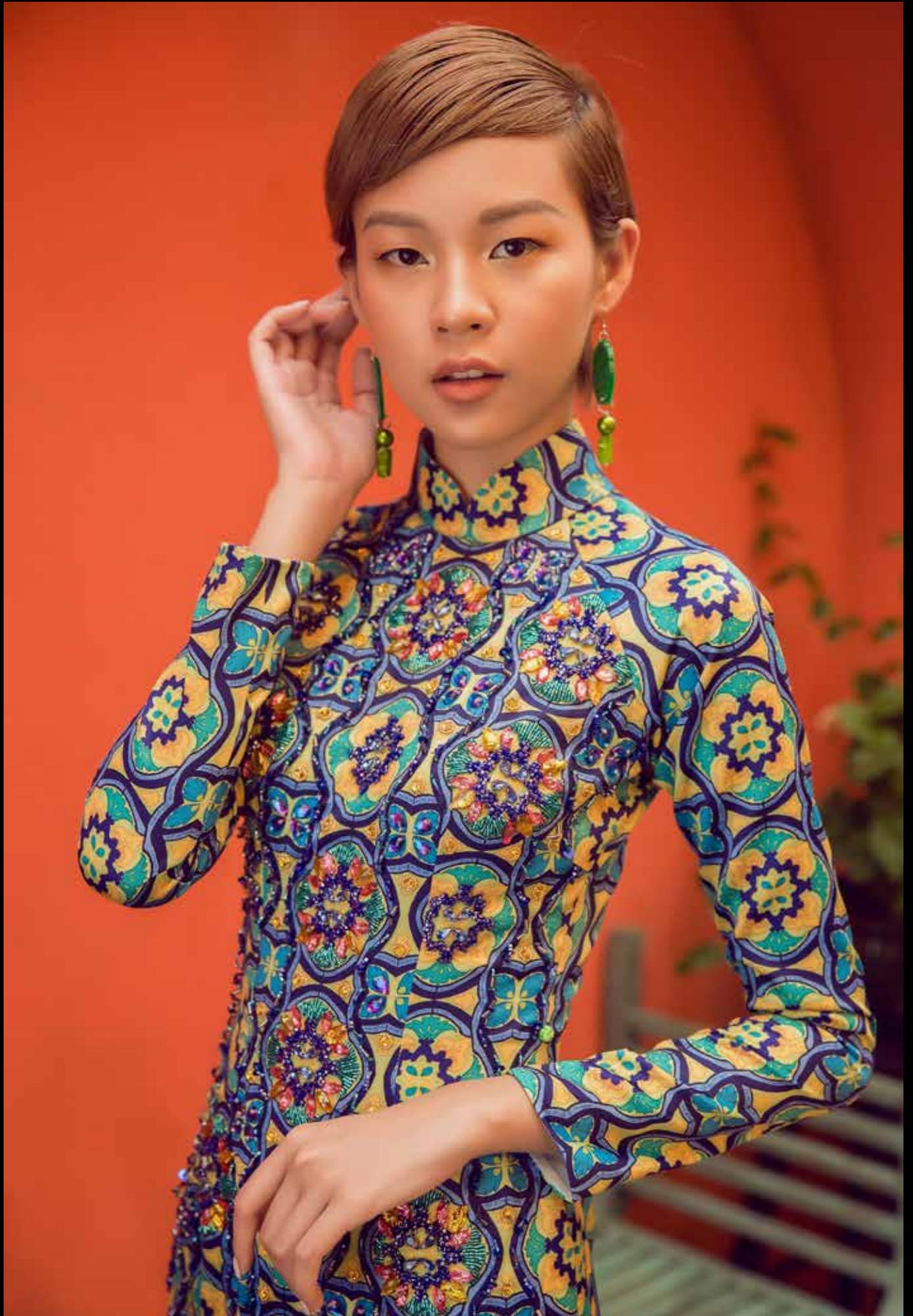


Taking the traditional Vietnamese silk brocade well into the modern age is Thuy Design House. Dubbed “the woman of brocade,” designer and painter Thuy Nguyen experiments with traditional materials and shapes to arrive at her signature bold and resplendent designs. By reinventing traditional forms of dress such as the ao dai, Thuy liberates women to find freedom in their fashion choices and beyond.









Stories From Rising the SUN

Although more than 3,500km apart, Japan and the Vietnam share a long history and friendship. There is a thriving Japanese community here, and with a stable business climate, diverse talent pool, entrepreneurial mindset and a work-life balance, Vietnam makes for an ideal home away from home.







The
Rising Sun
Meets **The Pearl
Of The Orient**

Interview by **Daniel Spero**
Image by **Vy Lam**

How long have you been in Vietnam?

This is my fourth term here in Vietnam, and the previous three terms were in Hanoi, so I spent almost 11 years in Hanoi. I was transferred to Ho Chi Minh City in February of last year.

How was the relationship between Vietnam and Japan established?

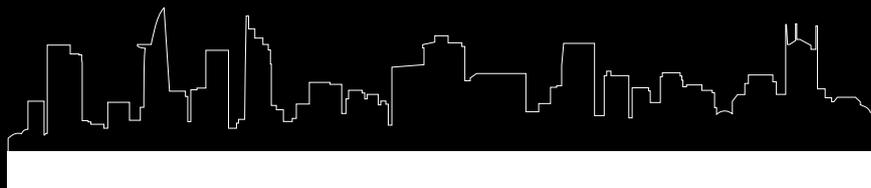
It was 45 years ago, in 1972, there was a Paris conference where the peace treaty was signed. Many countries started to form relationships with Vietnam at that time, and Japan was one of them. We mark our 45th anniversary this year, but actually many countries also mark their 45th anniversary. It was a decision with the war ending in the near future that it was time to establish diplomatic relations with northern half of Vietnam, so we negotiated in Paris and then on September 21, 1972 we signed the agreement to establish diplomatic ties.

Since then, what have the two countries done to foster that relationship?

When we started our relationship, the American War continued until 1975. We waited for one more year for the establishment of a unified Vietnam in 1976. Our relationship with Vietnam stayed in a lower profile until 1992 when Japan resumed ODA (official development assistance) to Vietnam. And at the same time, that was the end of the cold war, when Vietnam participated in another Paris conference, which we also participated in. After Vietnam signed a peace agreement with Cambodia we resumed ODA. After that relations were quite normal and developed step-by-step. Japan is now the largest ODA provider to Vietnam and we have such a presence here, of Japanese companies and Japanese people living here.

What are some of the biggest imports and exports between the countries?

Many Japanese companies, instead of importing, they make products here. This is our new tendency. I have statistics from Vietnamese customs from 2015 which reports that for exports to Japan, almost 20 percent are textiles. Transporting machinery, vehicles and spare parts is 13.7 percent, and another 10 percent is other machinery. Sea products imported from Vietnam are big as well. Many Japanese companies invest in it here and export it to Japan. As far as Vietnamese imports, meaning Japanese exports, 30 percent are machines and spare parts, and 15 percent are computer related, like electronics. Once we imported



From economic and social development to cultural exchanges, the relationship between Vietnam and Japan has grown phenomenally over the last few decades. Having spent his 35-year career as a diplomat, *Oi* sat down with Mr. Jun-ichi Kawaue, the Consul General of Japan in Ho Chi Minh City to discuss the many ways the connection between the two nations has been strengthened.

more crude oil. In 2014 almost 10 percent was imported (from Vietnam), but it was reduced because the cost is a bit high here, so we now import our crude oil from the Middle East.

As far as investment is concerned, before Japanese companies established factories here to make products to re-export again, but now many Japanese companies are taking into account this country's 90 million population, which is a very big consuming market, so Japanese manufacturers make products here and they sell them within Vietnam. It's a newer trend that has been successful, like Acecook noodles. Everyday consuming products and food processing is quite a prospective here in Vietnam; it's a new tendency, as well as retail. You may know about the many convenience stores here, like Family Mart and Mini Stop, as well as department stores like Takashimaya, which opened near Ben Thanh Market in the center of the city, and also Aeon Mall. Three Aeon Malls opened here two or three years ago, and they started to develop other malls in Hanoi last year.

How much of a role does Japan play in public works projects, like the metro?

After we resumed our ODA projects, since 1992 our budget has been concentrated on infrastructure projects. For example, the Can Tho Bridge was constructed by a Japanese ODA loan. Vo Van Kiet highway was also built using a Japanese ODA loan. The new airport terminal at Tan Son

Nhat Airport was built using Japanese ODA. If we speak about the whole country, there are so many Japanese ODA projects. In the center we had the Hai Van Tunnel project, done by Japanese ODA. In Hanoi, there is the Hong (Red) River there, and there are now six bridges, and two out of the six were built by Japanese ODA.

In regards to the metro, we are now under construction of Metro line 1. It's now in the final stage, the underground part between Ben Thanh Market and the Opera House, and then it will go out to Suoi Tien Park. So hopefully it will be operating in 2020.

What does the consulate in Ho Chi Minh City do to promote the relationship between countries?

Not the consulate, but NGOs and private Japanese organizations had a Japanese festival here at the end of January at September 23 Park. Maybe next year we'll have the same kind of festival. And Vietnamese people are getting more interested in Japanese culture.

Is there anything else you'd like to share about the relationship between the two nations?

In my 35-year career as a diplomat, although there are so many waves, of high tide and low tide, I think I am quite lucky to witness the growth of the relationship between Vietnam and Japan. ■

Golf Talk

Taking its name from the golf term, Birdie Club is scoring under par

Text by **Kaitlan Spencer**
Images by **Vy Lam**

YUSUKE NAKAJIMA MOVED TO Saigon from Japan two years ago in search of business opportunities in Vietnam's fast growing economy. A bit of homesickness landed him at The First Bar, a Japanese owned bar and restaurant in District 1, where he quickly became a regular there and became friends with the owner Hajime Tadano. The two shared common interests in business and especially for the love of golf, however, golf courses were usually located long drives outside the city and the local driving range did not offer the same amenities like in Japan. "There was only a small table there, for maybe one or two beers," says Yusuke of his idea to create a space for golfers where they could gather and work on their skills together. "It's very easy for golfers to bond. They are all working their swing and their put. They all have ideas about how to improve."

Together, Yusuke and Hajime opened **Birdie Club** (7A Le Cong Kieu, D1), an indoor virtual reality golf simulator, bar and restaurant. The former, who has been playing golf for eight years, took the lead on golf related elements





and the fourth floor has a swing analysis room, plus more putting practice on the roof. Eighty percent of their customers and 90 percent of their members (members of Birdie Club enjoy a variety of perks; annual fee of VND5.4 million or a monthly fee of VND450,000) are Japanese.

Whisky a Go Go

And, of course, a sports bar wouldn't be complete with the requisite food and drinks to feed its hungry players. Among the most popular dishes on their menu are the Gyutan Stew (Japanese beef tongue stew) and the Katsu Sando (Japanese pork cutlet sandwich). The Gyutan Stew is tender and flavorful with a variety of hearty vegetables. While Japanese beef tongue, known as "gyutan," isn't considered to be a traditional ingredient in Japanese cuisine, it has found well-deserved notoriety in the Sendai region of Tohoku as a meibutsu, or famous local product. The Katsu Sando is rich and filling with perfectly breaded pork and soft bread. Tonkatsu is a Japanese dish of a pork cutlet that has been coated in flaky panko breadcrumbs then deep-fried. Similar to a German schnitzel, tonkatsu was first served in Japan around the



including swing simulators and two putting areas while Hajime designed a menu reminiscent of a Japanese country club. Eight months after opening, the restaurant has 70 members, runs tournaments, and rents out the simulator rooms every day.

Birdie has five floors, each offering different experiences. The first floor bar is warm and cozy while the second floor is a full dining area with a projector screen, which is available for private parties. The third floor houses the popular golf training room called "the lesson room." The Foresight Sports golf simulator system makes it possible for golfers to practice their swing, record it and analyze the data all inside the lesson room. And taking it from virtual into reality, Birdie also offers training sessions with PGA Teaching Professional Matt Burley. Other rooms include a putting room with Japanese turf



Yusuke (right), Hajime (left)



turn of the 20th century when Japanese restaurants began to offer more western-style food, known as "yoshoku." Over time, tonkatsu has become one of Japan's most commonly eaten dishes. Pasta and curry dishes are also popular. The phenomenal lunch salad bar is the standout topic of online reviews. A lunch set includes the salad bar, main course and a delicious hand drip coffee. The bar boasts a large selection of whiskies including hard-to-find Japanese brands. Over the past few months, Birdie has seen an increase in local Vietnamese patrons largely due to word of mouth.

Birdie Club also runs golf tournaments. The Birdie Cup (formally the First Cup) has run for the last two years. The previous tournament had 44 golfers and the next one, on July 1st, already has 64 golfers registered. To register, go to their Facebook page and join the club. ■





The Tokyo Blues

In conversation with Shun Sakai, a talented jazz singer who has truly followed her heart musically

Text by **Kaitlan Spencer**

Image by **Vy Lam**

WHEN SHUN SAKAI WAS A YOUNG woman, jazz music was popular across the world; however, in her home country of Japan there weren't many opportunities to listen to it. She had only heard traditional Japanese songs until after the war when American army bases around the suburbs of Tokyo and across the countryside brought jazz music to Japan.

In her early 20s, Shun was short on money and started singing at a nightclub. She earned 6000 yen (VND1.25 million) for 12 songs. It was good money and she continued to sing. It was during a visit to a famous jazz club called Misty in Roppongi that Shun fell in love with the genre hearing it performed live. Her dream was to be part of that group of musicians and she made it happen three months later with her first gig at Misty. A year later she recorded and released her first self-titled jazz album, *Shun*, with Trio Records. Her debut album was successful, and Shun Sakai became popular in Japan's jazz scene. At the time, jazz vocalists in Japan were only singing in English, Japanese lyrics for jazz music didn't exist.

Despite her success, Shun felt insecure about her knowledge of music in general and jazz in particular so at 25 years old, she decided to leave Japan and spend time in the US. After two years in New York City, Shun returned to Japan determined to write and perform jazz in Japanese. Many club owners shut out the idea, demanding English, but she persisted. "First I played only a couple of Japanese songs. If I was singing 12 songs that night, maybe three were in Japanese." Over time, her jazz in Japanese grew in popularity and would become Shun Sakai's legacy.

Throughout her career, Shun has performed throughout the world. She's also written Japanese lyrics for musicians from other countries and musical scores for movies and animations. Over the past 35 years, she has carved a place for Japanese lyrics in the world of jazz and developed a style all her own.

Today, Shun calls Vietnam home. She moved to Ho Chi Minh City four years ago to be near her son who works here in the city. After 16 years of living apart from her son, who moved to the US at age 16 for school, she felt it was time to

reconnect and get to know him better. "I thought, 'what is more important to me? My career in Japan or getting to know my son in Vietnam?' I decided that I would regret not being closer to my son before I pass away." Shun returns to Japan twice a year to rehearse with her band, perform and record. "I have so many ideas. We are always trying new things."

In her new home, Shun is eager for opportunities to pass down her experience to a younger generation of jazz vocalists and performers here in Vietnam. She speaks passionately about a young Vietnamese pianist named Dat whose talent excites and moves her. When asked if she would teach music here, she waves her hand, "Not like teaching really, but playing together. To give my experiences to them because playing is teaching." She talks about the necessity of performance for young musicians. "Playing one gig is like playing 20 rehearsals or 30 rehearsals. It's so important."

She laments at the hardships of being a professional musician today in Japan and Vietnam. "For young people, it's very difficult to live and make money as a jazz musician."

Today, jazz vocalists in Japan sing in many languages, not only English and Japanese. "Some people who love jazz still don't like Japanese, but the vocal scene has changed," she shares. "I pioneered this change." Her personal favorite musicians include Nina Simone and Billie Holiday. "When you listen to Billie Holiday in the morning, you can't listen to other music all day. America used to have so much talent. I don't know what happened," she laughs.

As Shun continues to innovate, record and perform in Japan, Vietnam and internationally she has hopes that other musicians like her will continue to write and sing in Japanese. "It's important for Japanese people born all around the world sing in Japanese."

Although her performances in HCMC are limited, she occasionally sings at Lu Bu Mediterranean restaurant in Thao Dien. Shun Sakai (*shunsakai.net*) also tours internationally. On June 5th she leaves on a six-week tour with performances in Paris, London, Oxford, Norwich and Amsterdam. ■

The Armor Man

Costume designer turns play into work

Text by **NPD Khanh**
Images by **Ngoc Tran**

IN THE COSPLAY COMMUNITY, Han Phi Tuyet (also known as “The Armor Man”) is the go-to designer for bespoke one-of-a-kind anime or sci-fi inspired costumes. At 28, Tuyet has created sets and props for movies, celebrities and online gaming companies. In Vietnam, he is one among the only two artists who specialize in historical costumes.

“I started hanging around the IDECAF Nu Cuoi puppetry company when I was 12, mostly as a hobby and for fun,” shares Tuyet. “I used to run straight from school to the theater, eager to jump in and help out. Once I finished high school, I became a fulltime staff. I didn’t have the money or the time for college, and I already knew what I want to do for the rest of my life.”

It was during those years at the theater that Tuyet fostered his passion and skill for costume design. He was responsible for designing the puppets and their movements. From there he graduated to making weapons and armors for Vietnamese opera shows.

“When I started out, I claimed I could make full, functional sets of wearable armors and costumes. Nobody believed me. Some even called me a liar,” he says. “At that time, nobody had the knowhow and there were few suitable crafting materials. We used to make boxy suits out of hard plastic or foam. Of course, those are hardly wearable let alone durable enough for filming or realistic enough to viewers. Once I made the first set and showed them the proof, though, then they started believing.”

In early 2013, Tuyet left IDECAF to open his own business when he was commissioned by a Hanoi-based PR company to fabricate a pair of

Victoria Secret inspired wings. The piece comprised of thousands of white feathers hand-glued onto a lightweight metal frame, and cost VND9 million. Vietnamese lingerie supermodel Ngoc Trinh wore it to a gaming event. The project helped launched his solo career. Since then, his works have appeared in marketing campaigns, game conventions, cosplay contest and historical television dramas.

Tuyet’s work is difficult to describe in steps. A costume usually begins with drawing a design and then giving it realistic, wearable elements. “I deal with a lot of fantasy designs in my work. Game companies would come in with an armor suit that, you know, you will have to weld it shut around a model in real life, and then maybe saw it open when the job is done. It’s up to me to make their ideas work.”

Each piece is labor intensive, and sometimes dangerous, taking a minimum of two to three weeks to finish. “We use whole barrels of glue each day. We can’t do it outside since the neighbors can’t stand the fumes or the stink. We do use protective equipments but when you are working 12 hours a day in a tiny room filled with gas from chemical paints and glue, there’s only so much a mask and gloves can do,” says Tuyet. “The demand is great and if you are good you won’t be starving for a gig, but this is not something for people who are lazy. This is what I do. I’ve known this since I was a kid. I probably will pay for this when I’m older, inhaling all the fumes. But, you know, the feeling of completing a suit of armor and then putting it on and seeing yourself in the skin of some larger than life fantasy character. Priceless!” ■





A Pleasure *Doing Business* With You

A Japanese perspective on living
and working in Vietnam

Text by **Rebecca Jones**
Image by **Vy Lam**

Dan Takehiko, a 43-year-old businessman from Tokyo, is part of this new wave of Japanese investment. As sales manager for legal consultancy &D Management and Partners, Dan advises Japanese firms setting up in Vietnam: from scoping-out the market to establishing operations and contracts.

Since he began at the firm six years ago, Takehiko has helped launch a number of successful Japanese companies in Ho Chi Minh City, including Ramen Bar Suzuki, Tru Nail and Beauty Japan and Agata Japan Cafe, and says there is strong growth potential for Japanese businesses here:

“Vietnam has almost 100 million people and will soon be as populated as Japan. So many Japanese companies are looking at marketing to Vietnam and some are having success. In our ramen bar, which is quite expensive by Vietnamese standards, more than 50 percent of customers are Vietnamese.”

As the above suggests, price points remain an issue for some companies and the most successful are those that appeal to the broader Vietnamese market. These include Yakult and artificial flavoring manufacturer Ajinomoto—who’s MSG is in almost every packet of instant noodles in the country.

JAPANESE BUSINESSES ARE SOME

of the best known in the world. From technology leaders Sony and Panasonic, to automotive giants Honda and Toyota, to consumer staples like Yakult; there are few countries that Japanese firms do not reach.

In Vietnam, Japan’s influence is perhaps felt most strongly on the roads: Honda being the national motorbike brand of choice. However, many other Japanese brands are just starting to make an entry into the Vietnamese market—one of the fastest growing in the world—making this an exciting time for new investors.



As Vietnam's middle class begins to grow, Takehiko says that more brands will enter the market. He points to Sukiya as already enjoying success at this level, a fast food restaurant where locals can buy a bowl of beef Gyudon (Tokyo's favorite dish) for VND35,000, which he says is "reasonable" for most Vietnamese.

Takehiko says that another area seeing strong growth is technology. One of his clients is Japanese IT consultancy Grateful Days, which now has two branches in Ho Chi Minh City, and he says that many more Japanese IT firms are interested in launching into the

Vietnamese market.

"There is more opportunity for many companies in Vietnam than in Japan. In Japan the competition is very tight and it's hard to take market share. Outsourcing IT companies are big entrants into the market, as well as developers and programmers working on apps for iOS and Android," he explains.

One of the challenges for firms like this is hiring staff. Takehiko says that in Japan, most young people are naturally very good with IT as they are exposed to it from a young age, whereas here in Vietnam most competent programmers are university graduates.

This makes the average level of applicant for IT jobs quite high, but the supply low, which in-fact means that Vietnamese programmers command similar salaries to their Japanese counterparts.

Work Culture Collides

Another challenge of doing business in Vietnam is the difference in business practices and work life culture.

"Vietnamese people are not used to reporting, communicating and asking for suggestions, which is normal for us. Often they want to work by themselves to find the solution. Sometimes that's good, but other times not," Takehiko explains.

Overall, however, he says that doing business in Vietnam is easier than in Japan, or even the US, with deals often made and projects completed much faster.

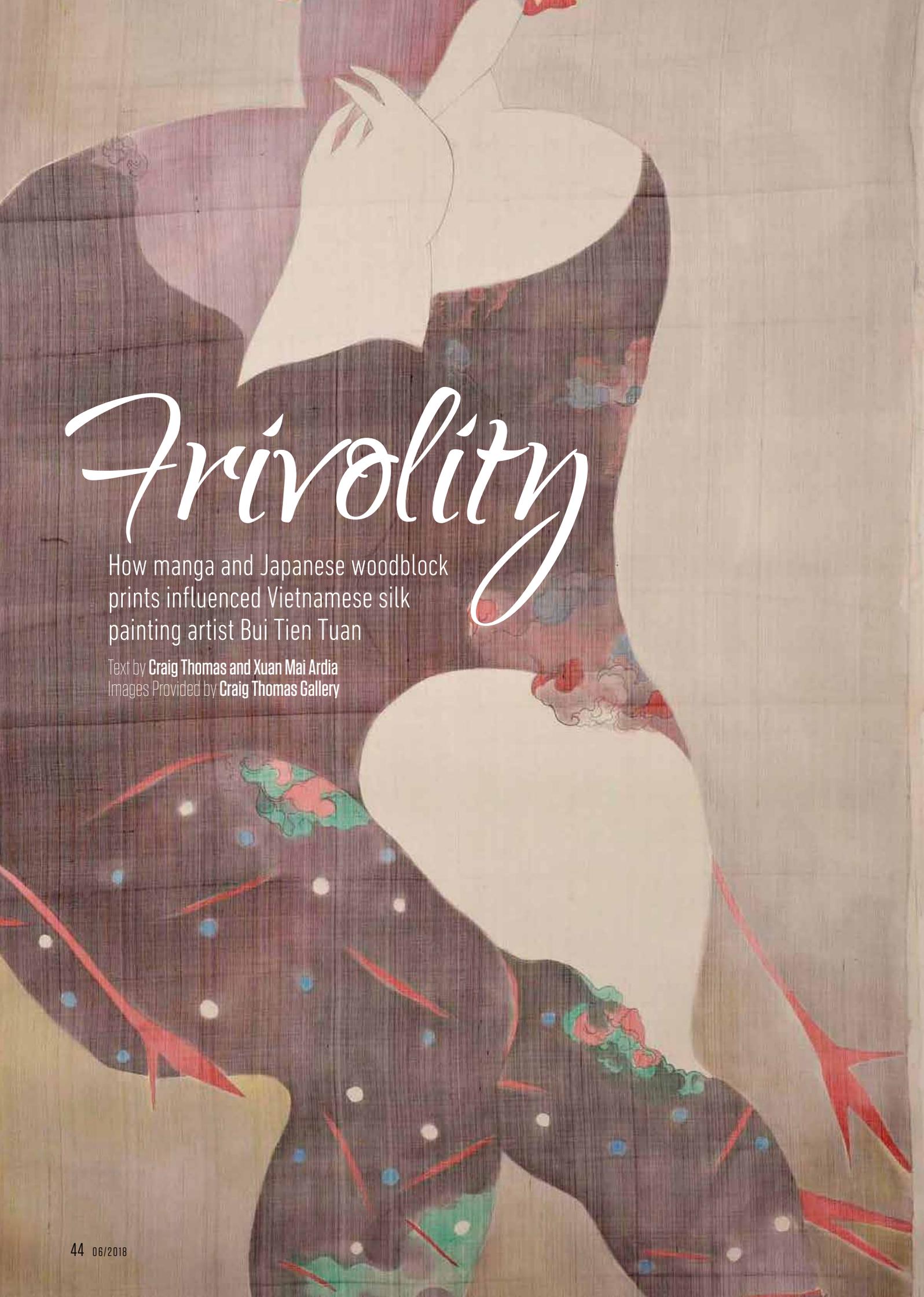
On a personal level he adds that his work life in Vietnam is also far less stressful than in Japan—where the demands on workers are so strenuous that there is a common term for working yourself to death: "*karoshi*."

"In Tokyo it is expensive to live in the city so most people live in the outskirts and you have to commute on packed trains. Station staff will push people into the train. And if the train is late for more than three minutes they will issue a late certificate you can give to your employer: it's a weird culture," he says.

He adds that there are also more opportunities to mix work and family life here in Vietnam, where it is common for him to invite his wife along to business dinners with new clients. In Tokyo he says this is unheard of, with a heavy drinking "boys only" culture encouraged.

"In Vietnam people try to get together more often and it's easier to maintain a good relationship with your partner than it is in Japan. I think it's easier to live here than in Tokyo: less stressful and happier."

Takehiko says he may retire to Japan, perhaps the Tako mountain range just outside of Tokyo. However, in the meantime he is focussed on growing his company and being part of the new wave of Japanese investment here in Ho Chi Minh City. ■



Frivolity

How manga and Japanese woodblock prints influenced Vietnamese silk painting artist Bui Tien Tuan

Text by **Craig Thomas and Xuan Mai Ardia**
Images Provided by **Craig Thomas Gallery**

ONE OF THE NEGATIVE SIDES

of development is the propensity for a society's treasured cultural traditions and customs to be diluted and even abandoned in the headlong rush to embrace the new, the modern. This phenomenon often manifests in the arts where new ways of thinking often engender a re-evaluation of traditional forms of artistic expression. Contemporary artists in these changing societies encounter potent incentives to embrace the dominant (read Western) contemporary art forms and to eschew traditional mediums that lack obvious mass-market appeal.

With a history that dates back centuries, Vietnamese silk painting enjoyed its "golden age" during the relatively short existence of the colonial Ecole des Beaux Arts d'Indochine (1925–1945). During this time, artists like Nguyen Phan Chanh (1892–1984) transformed what had been regarded as simply an indigenous craft form into an internationally recognized medium of fine art, winning prizes at the Paris Salon of 1946. This heyday was short-lived, however, and in the succeeding decades Vietnamese silk painting has in large part returned to its essentially decorative roots.

After studying silk painting at the Ho Chi Minh City Fine Arts University, Bui Tien Tuan spent ten years after his graduation working primarily with oils on canvas—a medium considered by the prevailing orthodoxy as more modern and commercially viable. Tuan's decision several years ago to return to painting on silk sprang from his love of the medium and his sense that it was starting to fade into a solely decorative form focused on mass-produced pieces. Tuan wished to preserve what he regarded as an important part of Vietnam's cultural heritage and to play a part in its transition into a form that could once again be regarded on an equal footing with other contemporary art styles. Portraying mainly idealized rural landscapes, village life, pagodas and historical events, there is an inherently conservative and homogenous character to much of traditional Vietnamese silk painting. In his *Phu Phiem* series, Tuan introduces a more contemporary language of expression to the medium through an evolution of subject matter and the introduction of a vibrant new color palette. In the artist's words: "The way that I am different from other artists is the way that I look at color, the way I dye the silk, and the modern urban quality of Saigon that comes into my paintings."

Tuan's choice to represent women in the paintings of his *Phu Phiem* series has a strict affinity to the medium. Silk has a delicacy that is feminine in essence and in Tuan's view the female form comes to life through silk; it is perceived through the thin veil of silk as mysterious, sensual, transparent. Tuan's women are mostly portrayed nude with the skin not painted or colored but left without tincture, emphasizing his belief in the intimate and symbiotic relationship



between silk and skin.

Tuan professes an admiration for the Japanese artistic sensibility and his work can at times be seen as influenced by the *ukiyo-e* genre of Japanese woodblock prints of the 17th–20th centuries. Literally translated into English as "floating world," *ukiyo-e* refers to a conception of an evanescent plane, impermanent, of fleeting entertainments divorced from the responsibilities of the mundane, everyday world. Like the courtesans and geishas of the *ukiyo-e*, Tuan's women are placed in what he calls "*noi phu phiem*" (places of frivolity) where they can proudly flaunt their beauty, their fashion, their naked form.

In paintings like *Dreamy* and *Dreamy 2* they live in a land devoid of time and space, existing in a world apart. Many of the paintings in the *Phu Phiem* series evoke the art nouveau poster art of the 1890s, also influenced by *ukiyo-e*, produced by devotees of Japonisme such as Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec. Paintings like *Smooth as Silk* call to mind a Toulouse-Lautrec styled world of

burlesque dancers in vivacious colors and can-can dancers with their legs spilling enticingly out of their multi-layered skirts. The *Phu Phiem* paintings are in many cases festooned with scattered confetti that confers a festive carnival feel to the boudoir-like depictions, reinforcing the reference to the "*noi phu phiem*" ambience. The monochrome backgrounds set the subjects off as if they were floating in space. Tuan's women are attractive, sensual, mysterious. They could be anyone we want them to be, anywhere we desire them to be. They become a part of our fantasy, a door into Bui Tien Tuan's world. ■

Tuan was born in the city of Hoi An in Quang Nam Province in 1971, and currently resides in Ho Chi Minh City. Tuan is a 1998 graduate of the Ho Chi Minh City Fine Arts University where he now works as a lecturer. Phu Phiem is Tuan's second solo exhibition of silk paintings in Vietnam and is represented by Craig Thomas Gallery (cthomasgallery.com).

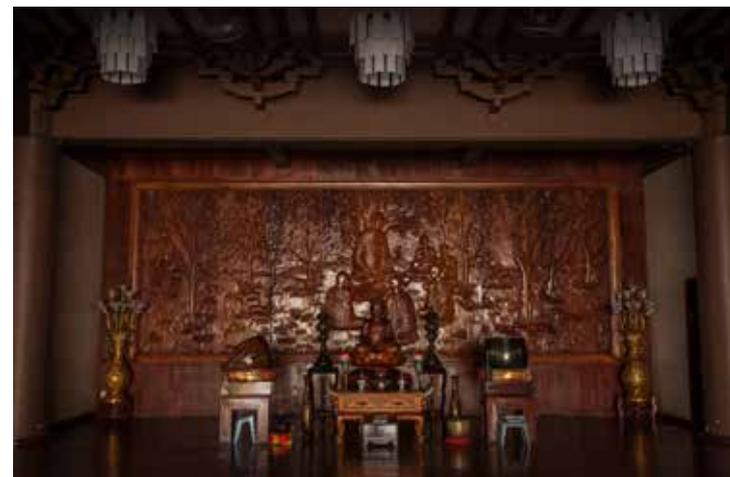


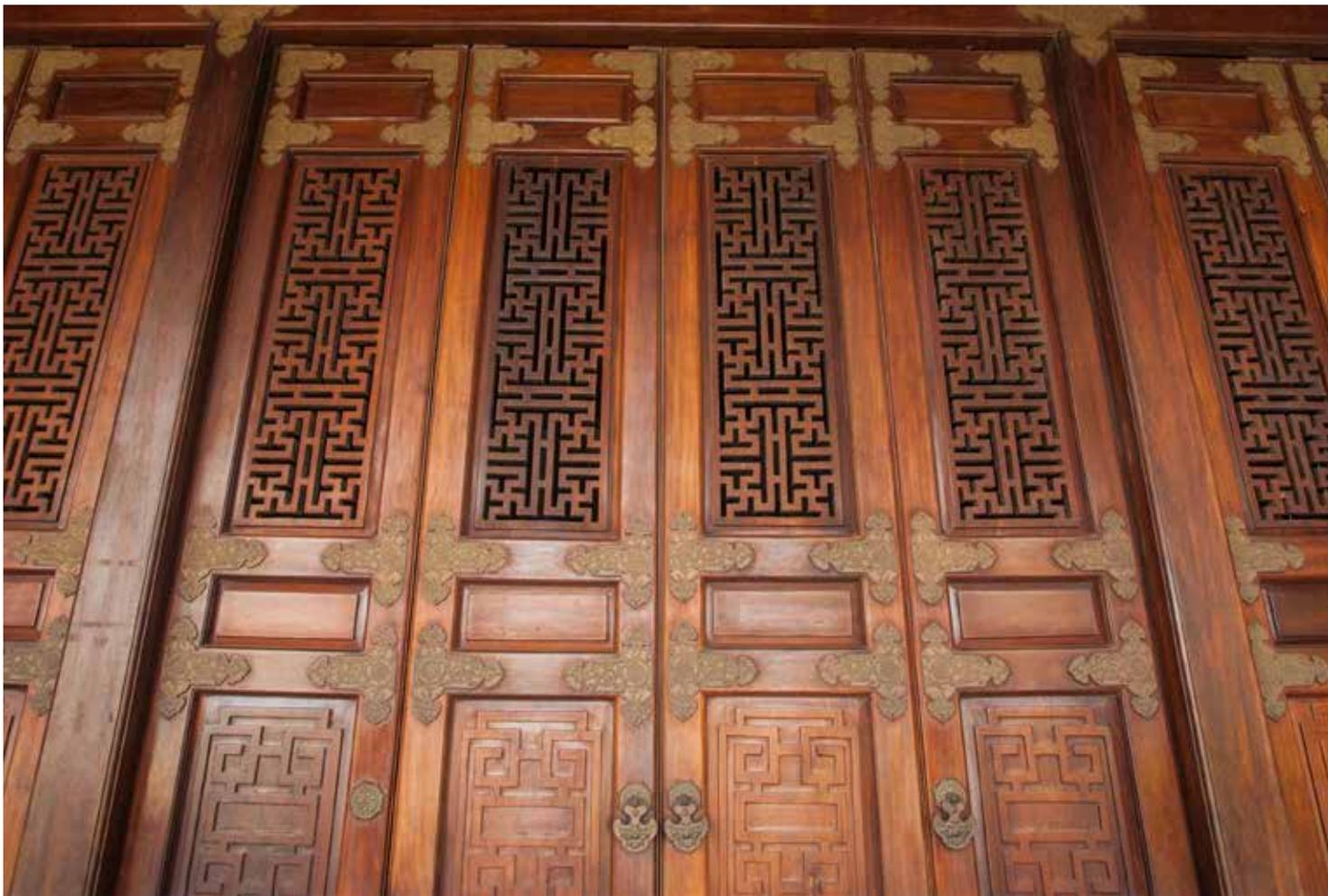
Finding Zen

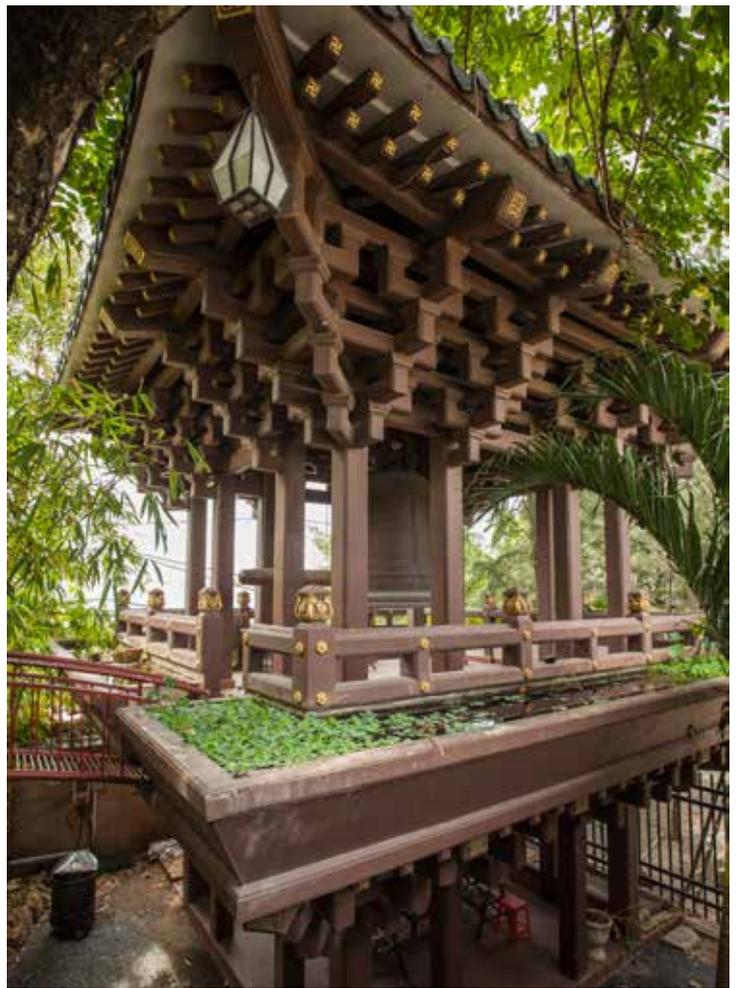
Images by Vy Lam

Khanh An Monastery (1055/3D, Quoc Lo 1, D12) began as a humble pagoda erected by Buddhist monk Tri Hien in 1905. A wealthy family later donated six hectares of land for its expansion. During the French occupation, the pagoda was used by Vietnamese revolutionists to hold protests and was therefore vandalized by the French on multiple occasions. In 2006, the pagoda underwent a 10-year renovation, resulting in a beautiful Japanese-inspired monastery made almost entirely of wood.









Wine & Dine

PHO ONG TAY / IMAGE BY VY LAM







Xin Ciao!

Two classic cuisines—Italian and Vietnamese—come together beautifully at this charming eatery in District 2

Text by Daniel Spero
Images by Vy Lam

WE HEADED OVER TO

Pho Ong Tay (39 Vo Truong Toan, Thao Dien, D2; 090 246 2934), for a late lunch. I knew little about Pho Ong Tay, only that they specialized in Italian and Vietnamese food—*pho* and *spaghetti*. Pulling up outside the first thing we noticed was how much vegetation cascaded over the brick exterior. Once inside, plants are placed all around the small, but airy room, adding to the welcoming setting for the eight mosaic-tiled tables and bar-style seating in front of the windows.

Inside were touches of Italian brickwork, with the open wall space covered in the day's specials and drink lists written in chalk. The décor offers a homey, relaxed atmosphere.

Before we ordered Italian chef Manuel greeted us. He works alongside the owner and his future wife, Trang. Affable and enthusiastic, Manuel was proud to tell us

the ingredients he uses are all natural—no chemicals, no MSG and no emulsifiers—and how he makes everything from scratch, from the breads, cakes and pastries to the pastas and sauces. As he put it, “I’m Italian, we don’t compromise with food.” Trang proudly added that Manuel is a trained five-star chef, but he humbly shrugged off the mention.

When it was time to eat we started with one of their fusion dishes, *pho* topped with Italian sausages (VND85,000). It’s just like it sounds, a traditional bowl of *pho*, with the usual leafy greens and sauces, with an Italian sausage, which Manuel said is the only thing he doesn’t make. The sausages are sourced from an Italian chef who hand makes them here in Saigon. The unexpected flavor of the sausage complemented the *pho* and broth. This first dish whetted our appetite and we were excited to sample more of Manuel’s





Berico Pork Loin With Black Pudding

quirky *pho* pairings, like the *pho samurai* with tempura shrimp and zucchini, the *pho luc lac* and *pho tom yum* (VND85-VND95,000) at our next visit.

The piadina sandwich was next to leave the kitchen and arrive at our table. Piadina is a thin Italian flatbread, and I had the Ducati, which has parma ham, fresh mozzarella, tomato, lettuce and mayo and fries (VND150,000)—a delicious meal in its own right. After that came a crescendo of traditional Italian dishes. First, pasta pappardelle with fried eggplant and spicy sausage in tomato sauce with a dollop of fresh ricotta cheese on top (VND140,000). This was something special, eliciting some audible oohs and aahs. For the pasta dishes at Pho Ong Tay, diners can choose the type of pasta, and then separately the toppings and sauce. They typically have at least eight housemade pastas available (VND45-VND60,000), and a variety of sauces and toppings (VND70-VND95,000), like the duck ragout and vegetables in red wine sauce, or the stewed octopus in tomato sauce with garlic and basil.

Next we had a plate of eggplant parmigiana (VND180,000). The tangy housemade tomato sauce really stood out, and I finished this despite how full I already felt because it was too good too delicious to leave behind. For dessert, we tried the cheesecake on biscuit butter crumble with blueberry sauce (VND55,000). It was incredibly rich and sweet, similar to the texture of a pudding, and I was running the fork over the plate for the last remnants of crumble and blueberry sauce.

Pho Ong Tay also has a large drink selection, which includes imported Italian wines and grappa. Don't let the name fool you, Pho Ong Tay is clearly more of a gastronomic experience than just a *pho* and spaghetti joint.

For dinner on Friday through Monday nights, reservations are recommended. For more info, check out their Facebook page: [phoongtayphospaghatticakes](#).



Pasta Pappardelle with fried eggplant



Cheesecake With Blueberry Sauce



Eggplant Parmigiana





Let's Go For Dim Sum

Gather a hungry crew to feast on dumplings, steam buns, egg tarts and more

Text by Michael Arnold
Images by Vy Lam



the complex had been largely vacant for over a decade following some colossal *feng shui* errors on the part of its developers—the towers not only lacked crucial water features and proper geomantic shielding at the rear, but they also far too closely resembled three sticks of incense, a formation that spooked superstitious local Chinese communities.

Following its acquisition by new owners last year, Thuan Kieu Plaza has undergone an extraordinary transformation. Repainted in bright greens and completely enclosed by a golden bamboo motif to restrain its “negative spiritual elements,” the newly-launched Garden Mall has almost inexplicably become Chinatown’s most visible and successful commercial and recreational complex.

While the musty old dim sum banquet hall dating from Cooper’s time in Cholon was vacated years ago, those who arrive at the new Garden Mall today hungry for tasty yum char dining need not look elsewhere: one of the mall’s highest-profile F&B tenants is **Yau Hau Fook** (Level 1, Garden Mall, 190 Hong Bang, D5), the first location in what promises to be a franchise bringing a new wave of dim sum to venues throughout the city and beyond. The large dining area takes up prime space on the first floor upstairs to the far right of the building, and is lightly sprinkled with flourishes of traditional Chinese décor, lending a gentle and spacious

IN HER 2010 ARTICLE FOR THE *Wall Street Journal*, Samantha Cooper wrote of exploring Saigon’s Chinatown, a part of the city that even today is rarely ventured into by fine diners for its culinary offerings—even though it’s widely (and correctly) presumed that some of the best Chinese food in the city

lies hidden in its labyrinthine alleyways. Cooper’s wonderfully observant walking tour culminates in a lavish dim sum banquet hall located in the salmon-pink towers of Thuan Kieu Plaza, an architectural oddity that she encountered standing on one of the district’s main thoroughfares, Hong Bang. Even then,

tenor to the room that quickly swells with local patrons on weekend mornings—exactly the boisterous atmosphere that makes up part of the appeal of this cuisine.

The dim sum style itself is ubiquitous and needs little introduction, but Yau Hau Fook stands out from the crowd for two striking reasons. The first is that the dim sum on offer are not merely the standard Hong Kong variety that most such restaurants limit themselves to. In fact, there's a purist trend among big-name yum char venues holding that only Hong Kong dishes define the cuisine—by contrast, Yau Hau Fook experiments with Malaysian and Indonesian Chinese dim sum offerings (tending towards the crunchy, salty and spicy) that broaden the range and include more pronounced flavors and denser bites. The second feature is the restaurant's predilection for cartoon dim sum, with dumplings colorfully decorated like Japanese anime creatures. Not only does this give the restaurant itself a playful point of distinction, but it also serves to please the younger patrons and make Yau Hau Fook more of a winner for family dining.

These two elements are both inspired by the Indonesian Duck King dim sum chain, where Malaysian manager & branch chef Sky Tai worked for 12 years before coming to Vietnam and pooling with five other investors to start up this venue. "We're different from other restaurants," explains Sky. "In Vietnam, we're now doing even more than we were in Indonesia. It's more five-star." Duck King still represents a model for the future of Yau Hau Fook in Vietnam: "It started in 2003 and now has 40 franchises," says Sky, "so we'll do it



Steamed Chicken Feet With Black Pepper

similar to how we developed it there. Yau Hau Fook is just the first stage."

As is customary, we selected a range of dim sum dishes to share at a table of several diners. Some of the classic dishes had great character here: the steamed pork & mushroom dumplings and steamed shrimp dumplings (both VND58,000) as well as the colorful steamed scallop dumplings (VND68,000) had pleasing, contrasting textures and a warm, earthy umami. Our beancurd skin rolls with abalone sauce (VND58,000) were a surprise—these are often served soft and chewy, but Yau Hau Fook's are crispy and tightly packed for prime density. We also ventured into chicken foot territory: the steamed chicken feet with black pepper (VND39,000) were hardly fear factor material; the skin was taught and slipped

easily off the bone, and came soaked in a salty, mildly spicy sauce.

We took a break from dim sum proper to enjoy a couple of side dishes—the more luxurious of these being the braised whole abalone with oyster sauce (VND328,000) which had a vibrant density and tasty brine. The restaurant's cereal seafood fried rice (VND138,000) served as a crunchy and refreshing palate cleanser.

The meal wouldn't have been complete without sampling the signature cartoon steamed buns, and Yau Hau Fook makes this easy by serving a mini dim sum combo (VND108,000) featuring a selection of these. The pig and **Despicable Me** minion buns were filled with a golden custard center; the brown hedgehog bun (selling at VND58,000 for a tray of three) was a little more radical with a sweet, syrupy filling of delicious chocolate and red bean paste. Other eye-catching bites included a goldfish and a swan, with the combo served in a fun bento box—something the kids will love.

If the Hong Bang location is a tad far away, hang around for the grand opening of Yau Hau Fook's second location on Tran Hung Dao, which is set to open within a couple of months. A master chef has already been recruited for the leading role—Mr. Ali from Malaysia, formerly the Duck King executive chef—and the menu will extend into more duck and seafood specialties, with VIP rooms and events space set upstairs from the main à la carte floor on ground level. In any case, if you have a penchant at all for dim sum, keep an eye on this brand, as the Garden Mall location it has inherited from the bones of Thuan Kieu Plaza may well be the stirrings of an important emerging local chain in years to come. ■



Beancurd Skin Rolls



Eating History

Rewriting the rule book at Caravelle's Reflections Restaurant

Text by James Pham
Images by Vy Lam

Alaska King Crab

TRADITIONS ARE GREAT.

They create structure and stability, and give us a sense of familiarity and safety. That applies to everything from centuries-old institutions, say the British monarchy, to your favorite restaurant where you can always count on your usual table being available, service just the way you like it, and your go-to meal tasting exactly the way it always has. After all, there's a certain comfort in the familiar, safe from the inherent (and inevitable?) disappointment that comes from ordering something new.

Every now and then, though, traditions need some shaking up. Last month, millions were glued to the royal wedding where the world's most eligible ginger married an American celebrity divorcee (gasp!) and a woman of color (double gasp!). Not since Princess Diana herself had tradition been so turned on its head.

A couple of days later, I found myself at **Reflections Restaurant** at the **Caravelle Hotel** (Level 3, 19 Lam Son Square, D1), itself a venerable

institution. Opened in 1959, the Caravelle was the tallest, most luxurious and modern hotel that Saigon had ever seen. Through the years, the hotel famously hosted journalists, war correspondents, Russian ambassadors and Hollywood actors. That kind of tradition tends to be cherished, like a precious artefact forever suspended in a climate-controlled glass case. Sometimes, though, tradition can be subtly updated without being upended – a bare, stocking-less leg here or a dropped “promise to obey” there.

Reflections has recently been doing something similar, quietly dropping the “Fine Dining” from its name. While a tucked away corner near the bar still oozes an old-timey feel with leather club chairs, framed photos of Old Saigon and plenty of dark wood, the main dining room is bright and contemporary, sumptuous without being stuffy. The million dollar views over the Opera House through oversized windows are still there, of course, but Reflections now feels like a place one can go anytime for a refined

meal without having to wait for a life-altering special occasion.

While the main menu features Asian-inspired favorites, it's really in the Taste of the Month menu where Executive Chef Darren Watson's creativity is given wings. Despite its name, the seasonal, product-driven menu regularly changes every 6-8 weeks, allowing it to keep abreast of the latest culinary trends and to feature newly available products.

Case in point was the Alaskan king crab appetizer (VND650,000). While frozen king crab legs are nothing new, the availability of live Alaskan king crab here in Saigon is. The delicately sweet picked crab meat was the ideal vehicle to carry the accompanying ginger parsnip creme, a delightfully earthy roast red capsicum chutney and a light-as-angel's-wings bergamot bisque espuma (foam). While the distinct flavors and creamy textures are appealing, Chef Darren's light hand ensures they're delicate enough not to overpower the star of the dish which



Wagyu Sirloin



Parsnip White Chocolate Mousse

remains the succulent king crab. While I usually don't go for froufrou garnishes, the edible flowers and herbs served a real purpose of adding drama to this very colorful dish, especially when served against a black plate with a trail of orange lobster dust.

We ordered another premium product as a main, the Japanese Hitachi A5 full-blood wagyu sirloin (VND1,890,000 for 200g). When it comes to great beef (as well as the royal throne), sometimes bloodlines do matter. Here, "Hitachi" refers to a brand of wagyu cattle hand-raised in Japan's Ibaraki prefecture, "full-blood" indicates that its pedigree is pure, and "A5" is the highest possible grade awarded to Japanese wagyu. We ordered the steak medium to cook through the deliciously marbled fat while keeping the meat juicy and tender. The accompanying forest mushroom cream sauce was excellent, as was the set of 12 flavored salts, including my personal favorites of citrus, cardamom and masala.

The Iberico pork loin (VND529,000) was also stellar, a more traditional dish but with some of the more traditional components swapped out for a modern take, including a fermented pear gel and piquant grapes. Rather than being spicy, the peeled spheres were infused with aromatic spices like cinnamon and star anise. While sides (VND89,000-VND120,000) weren't absolutely necessary, the Asian-inspired Roast spicy eggplant caviar proved as intriguing as its name suggested. Eggplant is notoriously hard to work with, often either too dry or unpalatably slimy, but here, Chef Darren creates a dish of surprisingly complex flavors.

Like with the newest royal couple, dessert was a deliciously odd pairing. The White chocolate mousse with milk ice cream (VND189,000) was demure, with parsnips lending their tenderness and subtle sweetness to the mousse, while a roast banana compote and a crunchy homemade honeycomb added a contrast of textures. On the other hand, the Chocolate and salted caramel tart with salted caramel ice cream (VND189,000) was brash, and in-your-

face good, with its chocolatey richness and play on sweet and salty, a final confirmation that this was definitely not your grandfather's Caravelle.

After dinner, we headed up to the Saigon Saigon Bar, the Caravelle's iconic rooftop drinking hole where journalists gathered to report on the front lines from their bar stools. The bar shamelessly plays to its history with a history wall on the way up and menu items named after notable events. There's even a Caravelle Terrace Draft, a signature craft beer similar to what journalists drank back in the day, made specifically for and only available at Saigon Saigon Bar. While you may come for the history, definitely stay for the live music as we did, with the five-member "Living Cuba" band providing the entertainment. If you're swaying your hips even slightly (and you will be), you'll likely get dragged onto the dance floor by the very engaging band members. As the band pumped out a rousing rendition of Camila Cabello's *Havana*, I closed my eyes and swayed to the rhythm. With the plantation doors thrown open to the cool breezes, this Saigon summer night could very well have been another era, or perhaps history in the making. ■



Iberico Pork Loin With Black Pudding





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.

How Green Are Green Wines?

Clearing the confusion and mystery around what makes a wine environmentally friendly and qualify as "green"

OVER THE PAST FEW

decades we have had an explosion of what I like to call "green wines," which, depending on the country where they are produced, may be labeled as organic, biodynamic, natural, vegan or all of the above. But which ones should we buy? Well, that depends entirely on what you are looking for when you buy a bottle of wine. Personally, my main requirement is taste, I want to enjoy wines that make my eyes go wide open because they taste amazing. My next criterion is value for money, however, that does not mean cheap, but rather that I get more wow for each buck I spend on a bottle.

Most people looking for green wines are looking for something on top of taste (and sometimes value because green wines do not need to be more expensive). So, what does all those terms mean?

First of all, almost all wines have added sulfites otherwise the wine would go bad within weeks, so forget about the ones made without sulfites because they would not survive the trip to Vietnam, and if they did they would not last long here. However, many of the wineries making green wines will tend to use much less sulfites and avoid most, if not all, of the chemicals.

So let's start with organic wines, which are made from fruit and processes where chemicals have not been used unless there is no

chemical alternative (as is the case with the sulfites). Organic wines nowadays are able to maintain their good flavor and they don't use almost any chemicals, hence forget about headaches or allergies.

Biodynamic wines usually follow everything that organic wines do, plus they use more natural ways to make wine, like using gravity for pressing rather than mechanical pressing (resulting in much nicer wines). They follow the cycles of the moon for planting and harvesting and that, in theory, result in better growth and better fruit.

Vegan wines can also additionally be labeled organic but not always. Vegan wines are processed with no animal products during the wine production. So, why aren't all wines vegan? That's because during the wine making process it is usually filtered and the most common practice for filtering is the use of eggs. Also, some wineries use animal fats in wine production, yuck!

Finally, are "natural wines" mostly from France? This is a rather gray area because as there is no definition or regulation of what "natural" really means. It seems to be the approach of some wineries that don't want to follow the strict regulations for organic certification, but still want to appear as healthy, so this is a hit and miss labeling.

So, here is your single page guide to green wines: If you are vegan, go for certified wines. ■

Wine & Dine

ROOFTOP BARS



Liquid Sky Bar

A casual destination to escape and unwind in the sun. In the evening, the space transforms into a rooftop lounge where guests and locals will come to socialize, dance or just let loose. On the mezzanine level, comfortable lounges and a flow of cocktails create a casual and fun atmosphere. It is the perfect spot to watch the sunset over the horizon.

21F - Renaissance Riverside Hotel Saigon
8-15 Ton Duc Thang, D1 / 028 3822 0033



Rex Hotel Rooftop Bar

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

141 Nguyen Hue, D1



Social Club Rooftop Bar

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

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

SUNDAY BRUNCHES



Indulgent Sundays @ Nineteen

A legendary buffet in the Heart of Saigon. Sensational cooking and an intimate, lively atmosphere are guaranteed. Authentic cuisine from around the globe, prepared by award-winning chefs, with fresh seafood as the highlight of the brunch. From noon to 3pm, with options from VND 890,000++ without drinks to VND 1,490,000++ with a free flow of Champagne, cocktails, house wine, and beer.

19-23 Lam Son Square, D1
hotel@caravellehotel.com / 028 3823 4999



Le Meridien

Centered around three distinctive dining venues - Latest Recipe, Bamboo Chic and Latitude 10 - Le Meridien offers three brunch packages, prices range from VND1,500,000 to VND2,500,000 and include Oriental and International cuisine.

3C Ton Duc Thang, D1
028 6263 6688 - ext. 6930
www.lemeridienhanoi.com



MICROBREWERIES & CRAFT BEER BARS



BiaCraft

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

90 Xuan Thuy, D2



East West Brewery

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

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



Rehab Station

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

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

CAFÉS



Bach Dang

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

26-28 Le Loi, D1



Café RuNam

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

96 Mac Thi Bui, D1
www.caferunam.com



Chat

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

85 Nguyen Truong To, D4



K.Coffee

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

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



La Rotonde Saigon

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

77B Ham Nghi, 1st Floor, D1



The Workshop

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

27 Ngo Duc Ke, D1



Le Bacoulos is a French brasserie located in the heart of Thao Dien. Following the brasserie tradition, Bacoulos serves typical French food at affordable prices.



French Restaurant

Daily Set Lunch
at **VND180.000**

2 courses + 1 soft drink
Le Bacoulos french bistro,
13 Tong Huu Dinh
Thao Dien, Q2, HCMC
02835194058



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

FRENCH



Le Bacoulos

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

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



Le Jardin

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

31 Thai Van Lung, D1



Ty Coz

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

178/4 Pasteur, D1
www.tycozsaigon.com



Also Try...

La Cuisine

A cosy restaurant just outside the main eating strip on Le Thanh Ton, La Cuisine offers quality French food in an upmarket but not overly expensive setting. Suitable for special occasions or business dinners to impress. Regular diners recommend the filet of beef.

48 Le Thanh Ton
028 2229 8882

La Nicoise

A traditional 'neighbourhood' French restaurant, La Nicoise serves simple, filling French fare at exceptional value in the shadow of the Bitexco tower. Most popular for its steak dishes, the restaurant has an extensive menu which belies its compact size.

56 Ngo Duc Ke, D1
028 3821 3056

La Villa

Housed in a stunning white French villa that was originally built as a private house, La Villa features outdoor tables dotted around a swimming pool and a more formal dining room inside. Superb cuisine, with staff trained as they would be in France. Bookings are advised, especially on Friday and Saturday evenings.

14 Ngo Quang Huy, D2
028 3898 2082
www.lavilla-restaurant.com.vn

Trois Gourmands

Opened in 2004 and regarded as one of the finest French restaurants in town. Owner Gils, a French native, makes his own cheeses as well.

39 Tran Ngoc Dien, D2
028 3744 4585



ITALIAN



Carpaccio

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

79 Hai Ba Trung street, D1
+84 90 338 78 38



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



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



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

Opera

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

2 Lam Son Square, D1

Pendolasco

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

87 Nguyen Hue, 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



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



Lee Cho

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

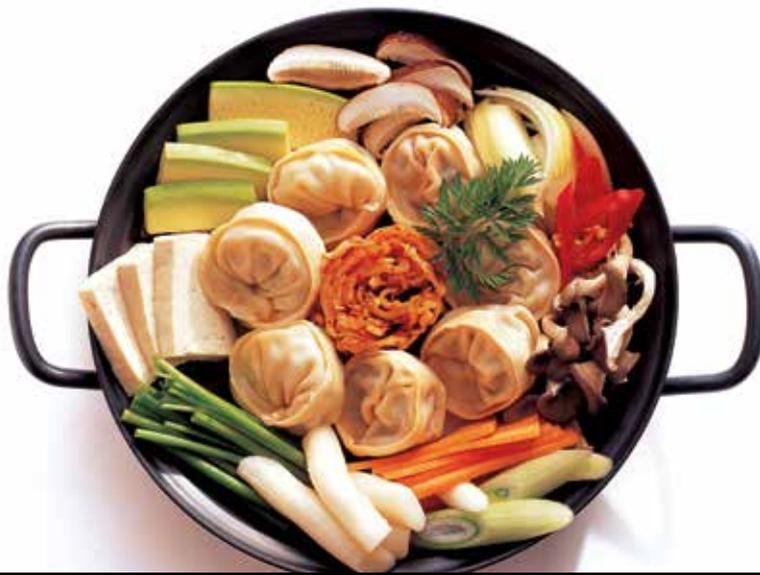
48 Hung Phuoc 2, D7
5410 1086



Seoul House

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

33 Mac Thi Bui, 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 Linh, 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 Bui St. D1
028 3823 7506

Thai Street

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

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

The Racha Room

Brand new fine & funlry Thai venue with rooky 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 Bui, 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



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Image Square Giang Vo: 130 Giang Vo, Ba Dinh District, Hanoi / Tel: (84) 04 3722 6666

Image Square Hai Phong: 69 Tran Nguyen Han, Le Chan District, Hai Phong / Tel: (84) 31 371 8119

VIETNAMESE



Five Oysters

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



234 Bui Vien, D1



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



Ngoc Chau Garden

Generally, Ngoc Chau Garden is genuine authentic Vietnamese Restaurant with simply beautiful food. They concentrate on traditional food of South Viet Nam, especially home-cooked, value for money. There for, the food, drink and the atmosphere make you comfortable during family's meal time. It's a really nice blend as you're setting into Ho Chi Minh City and Viet Nam.

116 Ho Tung Mau, phuong Ben Nghe, quan 1, Tp.HCM.
028 6687 3838

<https://facebook.com/ngocchaugarden.hotungmau>



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



River Restaurant

Tasty Vietnamese food by Saigon River side. The River Restaurant has its' own vegetable garden and a play area for kids. There is a pool table and a futsal table.

199bis Nguyen Van Huong, Thao Dien Ward, D2, HCMC
Tel: 0907 65 66 67



The Hue House

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



Rooftop Master Building

41-43 Tran Cao Van, D3

Opening time 10am-10pm.
0909 246 156 / 0906 870 102

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 décor, making this a nicely atmospheric restaurant and a great place to dine with international friends new to the cuisine. The menu features a number of local favorites.

Top Floor, 29 Ton That Hiep, D1
028 3821 1631

Banh Xeo 46A

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

46A Dinh Cong Trang, D1

Cha Ca La Vong

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

36 Ton That Thiep, D1

Com Nieu

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

59 Ho Xuan Huong, D3
028 3932 6363
connieusaigon27@yahoo.com
connieusaigon.com.vn

Cuc Gach Quan

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

10 Dang Tat, D1
028 3848 0144

Hum

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

2 Thi Sach, D1
028 3823 8920
www.hum-vegetarian.vn

May

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

19-21 Dong Khoi, D1
028 3910 1277

Nha Hang Ngon

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

160 Pasteur, D1
028 3827 7131
www.quananngon.com.vn
8am - 10pm

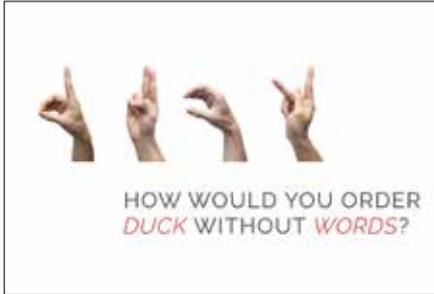
Temple Club

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

29-31 Ton That Thiep, D1
028 3829 9244
templeclub.com.vn

 For full review, please visit: www.oivietnam.com

INTERNATIONAL



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, DI
02862663535
www.blancrestaurant.vn



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, DI 028 3823 3597
info@forksaigon.com www.forksaigon.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 offer – sourced locally and created fresh every day.

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



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, DI
02862632525
www.noirdininginthedark.com



Tomatito Saigon

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.

171 Calmette, Dist 1, Ho Chi Minh City
www.crhcmc.com/tomatito
www.facebook.com/crhcmc
+84 (0) 2862 88177



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



Travel & Wellness

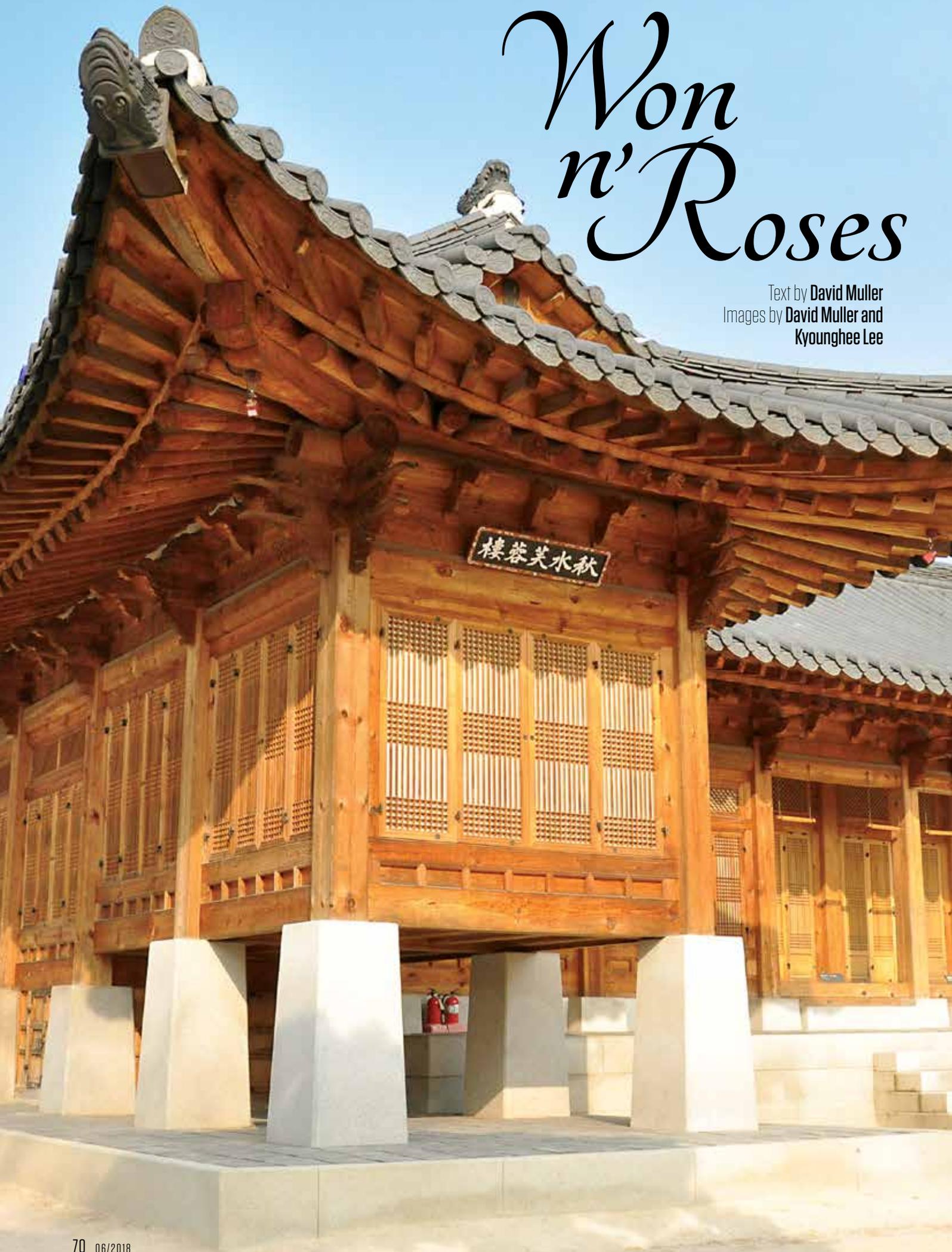
KOREA/IMAGE BY DAVID MULLER





Won n' Roses

Text by David Muller
Images by David Muller and
Kyounghee Lee



From flowery spring landscapes to spicy food and quietly stunning historic sites, time to put South Korea on your new travel bucket list



AFTER FINISHING MY EXCHANGE semester in Hong Kong I spent many weeks that summer traveling by train through China. Ascending the hewn granite stairs of Tai Shan Mountain in the pre-dawn morning light, a local bedraggled man approached me with a wad of bills he had just found and excitedly asked me whether I knew what currency was in his calloused hands. Looking down I saw three faces of Yi Hwang and one of Yi I who—I would later learn visiting the Bank of Korea Museum—were both Confucius literates of the Joseon Dynasty in present day South Korea.

I told him I'm pretty sure his 8,000 worth of notes were South Korean Won. "How much is it worth?" he asked with eagerness. Not knowing or able to hazard a guess I replied, "I'm not really sure but I suppose you can exchange it fairly at a money changer in the town below."

He thanked me and hurriedly continued on his way down the mountain. I forged on up the mountain and when I reached the peak, which was shrouded in mist, I reflected on this unusual exchange as somewhat of an omen as my next planned destination was to take a 14-hour ferry ride from Qingdao to Incheon port then journey onwards to Seoul.

In the height of summer I experienced Sambok the hottest days of the year. At this time Koreans believe you should eat hot dishes, such as Samgyetang (ginseng chicken), to fight off the weariness and fatigue of the summer heat. That summer of 2005 there were many festival events, such as traditional dancing and tightrope walking, and for liberation day Seoul City Hall was covered in thousands of Taegukgi, South Korea's national flag. The flag is made up of three parts: a white background, a red and blue yin and yang center representing balance and harmony in the universe, surrounded by the trigrams (four classical elements of



heaven, fire, earth and water).

In front of Seoul City Hall were also placed many Korean roses (Hibiscus Syracuse) the national flower of South Korea with its Korean name meaning "inexhaustible abundance." That's exactly what one feels when visiting Seoul, an inexhaustible abundance of culture, food and art that seems to attract so many overseas visitors to this hidden Asian gem.

Miracle on the Han River

That was my first experience of the wonders of warm summer Seoul days. Fast forward 13 years later and I am heading back, this time to Incheon airport on T'way Airways to experience the first burst of colors from the cherry blossoms and magnolia flowers that cover the city in spring. This being the Facebook age, for a week prior I had been seeing posts that warmer days had arrived and the cherry blossoms had started to bloom. Unfortunately, when we jettisoned the aircraft the weather was inexplicably cold and for the next



few days there were bleak skies and cold sleety rain.

My Korean friend explained, “Here we have a saying that the winter gets jealous at the first sight of spring’s beautiful flowers and in revenge throws one last cold spell to stem the floral display.”

This is exactly what had happened this year! Finally a break in the weather allowed for a crisp clear, yet still cold day where my wife and I could take the cable car up to the wooded park of Namsan Mountain. At the peak sits Seoul’s iconic Namsan tower, where we could see an endless view to the horizon of skyscrapers sprawled out in every direction, dotted with flowering cherry blossoms around the slopes of this park in Seoul’s city center.

Korean restaurants are made for group meals of four or more so if you enter solo or as a couple the server will often look at you funny if you propose to get one dish and share it among two people. The reason is the ban chan, the accompanying small side dishes such as kim chi, thin pancakes, tofu, steamed egg, dried fish and seaweed one receives when ordering any meal. Although these accompanying dishes are free they are obviously factored into the meal’s price. Korean food is murderously spicy and the first time I tried jjimdak, a hotplate of chicken pieces and clear starch noodles marinated with potato carrots and masses of chilies, I got halfway through and had to run across the street to the convenience store to purchase a carton of milk to neutralize the numbing fire burning my mouth and lips. Maybe because of the harsh cold weather, Koreans have developed a taste for anything spicy to warm them up.

The Korean national dish kim chi is fermented cabbage marinated in salt,



spices and chili paste. In the dead of winter it used to be buried in earthenware jars in the outside back garden. Today Korean homes have dedicated kim chi fridges to separate the delicacy from other foods otherwise the strong smell will permeate into every other foodstuff in the household’s regular refrigerator.

Five grand palaces of Seoul stand throughout the city, transporting the visitor to the classical romanticism of the Joseon Dynasty. Although many of the original buildings were destroyed by Japanese invasions and early 20th century occupation, the palaces have been painstakingly reconstructed by skilled artisans in the traditional style of interlocking wooden beams and ornamental ceramic roof tiles.

In the East of the city, in the grounds of Changdeokgung Palace, is a 78-acre garden affectionately known by the locals as the “secret garden” (biwon). Previously, it was reserved solely for the royal family and even high officials were forbidden to go there without permission from the King. The meticulously manicured gardens contain trees over 300 years old, a lotus pond

and a pavilion as well as kitchens and horse stables. During the Joseon Dynasty archery tournaments and firework displays were held for the royal family. Today large crowds of tourists get guided tours of the gardens in Korean, English, Japanese and Chinese.

Churches adorned with white crosses on their steeples dominate Seoul's urban architecture. Christianity is the second largest religion in Korea and it is estimated there are three times more churches than convenience stores, which equates to one church for every 660 people. Even so, Buddhism and Confucianism still dominate Korean life as one of the major influences shaping its society.

In Gwanghwamun Square stands the formidable figure of Admiral Yi Sun Sin with a cast iron model of his armored warship dubbed the 'turtle ship' that was adorned with a dragon's head covered in spikes and armed to the teeth with an array of canons that he used to defeat the Japanese in over 20 naval confrontations off the coast of Korea. Commanding the center of the square sits the statue of King Sejong, the leader who is credited with developing the Korean writing system way back in 1444 AD. Koreans are extremely proud of their writing system and will often proclaim that it is one of the most scientific and phonetically accurate alphabets ever created. Previously like Vietnam in ancient times, Chinese characters had been used to represent Korean words. King Sejong changed this by creating Hangul, an alphabet of 24 distinctly Korean letters that didn't need years to



memorize and could easily be learned by all his citizens.

Leaving Gwanghwamun Square, Cheonggyecheon stream begins its journey as a modern urban renewal project costing approximately USD281 million dollars to complete. It has revitalized the city of Seoul and brought back to life the natural stream that was cemented over with an elevated expressway during the economic transformation of the city in the second half of the 20th century. The new stretch of stream has added a large public space for locals and tourists to enjoy with a park and walkway along its full 10.9km length.



Seoul has reached a historical zenith, becoming a global city of economic and cultural importance labeled "Miracle on the Han River," which has helped facilitate the export of culture, knowledge and technological transfer to other countries like Vietnam. Some estimates put the number of South Koreans living and working in Vietnam as high as 130,000, the largest expatriate community by far here in Vietnam. One might say a transfer of Korean won n' roses exchanged for Vietnamese dong and lotuses. To understand the economic changes going on these past five to ten years in major cities like Hanoi, Danang and Ho Chi Minh City, I would strongly suggest a trip to Seoul, to get an idea of what the future might hold for Vietnam, the ascending dragon's tail of Asia. ■

After The Quake

In search of Kathmandu's beauty
two years after the earthquake

Text by **Rachel Goodwin**



WE ARRIVED LATE TO

Kathmandu. We left the airport and negotiated with several cabbies before finding a price we were happy with—it's actually best to find a cab outside the airport because those waiting inside need to pay a fee to enter, making the fare higher.

After several unsuccessful attempts at finding our hotel, the cabbie dropped us off somewhere he assumed was the correct area. No street lights were on, which greatly complicated things and we only had landmarks to go by, no exact address. We asked a man walking by for help, which quickly attracted the attention of several other guys and soon we were surrounded by about six men eager to give their opinions. One gentleman used his phone to call the number of the hotel. The hotel owner came and met us and it turned out we weren't too far away. We were shown to our beautiful room, complete with a rooftop balcony. The owner brought us tea and wished us a good night.

We woke up with a job to do. We needed to print papers and make copies to bring with us to the Indian Embassy to apply for our Indian visa (our next destination). We made copies of our documents twice. The first time we paid 5 rupees a page and the second we paid three times that. The reason was because the second time the computer and printer were being run off of a backup generator. We walked to the embassy passing whizzing and honking mopeds, a cow lying in the middle of the street, piles upon piles of trash and several monkeys climbing on walls overhead. Welcome to Nepal! When we arrived at the embassy we learned that we could redo our application and apply for a multiple entry application instead of a single entry. This will make our travel much more flexible so we will have to return to the embassy again!

Our next stop was Thamel road, a busy tourist street lined with shops selling beautiful bright fabrics, Tibetan singing bowls, incense, bootleg hiking gear, Kukri swords and many other



souvenirs. The street was buzzing with people and mopeds driving on the opposite side of the road. It's very difficult to drown out the incessant honking (it literally never stops). Trash covered every surface, discarded carelessly all over the ground. Empty lots were filled with trash while some burn their trash to dispose it, only to contribute to the already monumental levels of air pollution.

We walked further down Thamel toward Durbar Square, mesmerized by the sounds, smells and colors of the city. Well, actually, aside from the brightly colored fabrics and dresses displayed in storefronts, the rest of the city was covered by dust and smog. The sky was a constant white-gray during our stay. To protect from the dust and high level of pollution, many locals have taken to wearing fun fabric-covered masks.

Load Sharing

Upon reaching Durbar Square we were immediately accosted by security

and asked to pay USD20 to enter while locals just strolled right in. (I'm pretty sure they used skin color as the indicator for who pays and who doesn't.) Durbar Square is home to the old Royal Palace and dozens of temples. The Kumari (princess), or Living Goddess, also lives in a building inside the square. She was a young girl believed to be a manifestation of the divine female energy Devi. When she had her first period she was replaced by another, Kumari.

Durbar Square was a depressing sight—a shadow of what it once was—we hadn't realized just how much the earthquake in 2015 had devastated Nepal until witnessing it firsthand. Piles of stones and bricks lay everywhere and temples were held up by wooden supports.

From Durbar Square we found our way to Freak Street, named for the hippies that descended up on the area in the 1960s and 1970s drawn by the cheap government-run hashish shops. Dreadlocked hippies can still be found in this area as well as dealers selling hashish in side alleys.

We wanted to make use of the kitchen in our apartment-style hotel room so we went shopping for food. Not many stores use refrigeration, which limits what they sell. Those that do use refrigerators oftentimes use them for beer and sodas only. The power station cannot generate enough electricity for everyone, so they use 'load sharing' between different districts, allowing several hours of electricity per district during certain times of the day. Almost everyone uses back up generators to get by, even if only for their TVs. Needless to say, none of the meat was refrigerated. But if you're adventurous enough you can find butcher shops with slabs of meat exposed to the sun, air flies. To get some protein we settled for



eggs, which are sold in just about every corner shop (also not refrigerated.) They were not refrigerated in South America either. After collecting fresh carrots, beans, onions and chives for less than a dollar (the majority of the Nepalese live on less than USD2 a day) we headed to a spice store. The smell of the store was intoxicating. We randomly selected two spices to use with dinner.

Last Minute Supplies

Our attraction for the next day was the Boudhanath Temple. Because it was several kilometers outside of the city, we decided to catch a taxi. Traffic on the way to the temple was horrendous in our eyes, but routine according to our driver. Other drivers were constantly honking, cutting others off and squeezing between lanes—it was truly every man for himself.

The temple was under construction because of the earthquake and the top stupa was closed off. This temple, like many others, had its splendor stolen by the earthquake. It was really a sad sight. Nonetheless, the square around the temple was busy with tourists shopping along the souvenir stalls.

We had planned to also visit the Swayambhunath Temple but opted against it. We've read that many of the monkeys that inhabit the temple are infected with rabies. Even though we would likely be safe if we kept our distance we didn't want to put a wrench in our plans by getting rabies.



Instead we walked around getting last minute supplies.

First we picked up a bunch of pens, coloring pencils, stickers and notebooks for the children at an orphanage (more on this below). We bought some suntan

lotion and bug spray. The bug spray was hard to find since the trekking stores in town cater to trips into the mountains, an area where there are no bugs. We were able to locate one small bottle with 20% DEET (this is Nepal's highest legal limit for DEET). Oh, and I can't forget about the port wine we picked up!

At one pharmacy we picked up a couple of weeks supply of Doxycycline (anti-malaria) and four Azithromycin tablets (traveler's diarrhea). We inquired about a certain type of anti-anxiety medication, which is oftentimes used by travelers during long bus/train rides to help sleep through the noise and smells. The first pharmacy said that we needed a prescription, however, we chatted up the second pharmacist we went to and were able to get two-dozen pills, much easier (and cheaper) than in the US.

After a long time shopping for the perfect Tibetan singing bowl, which involved stopping in many stores, comparing prices and trying out bowls for the perfect sound, we ended up at a wholesale store slightly off the main street. We were unimpressed with the bowls on display, so one of the employees took us up several flights of stairs to their back storage room. Up here the shelves were lined with hundreds of them. We used the flashlights on our phones to examine the bowls (the power was out, no surprise there).

After much scrutinizing we narrowed our choices down and finally asked the price. He quoted us USD150 for the first bowl and USD70 for the smaller one. The prices were too high we told and that we had seen them for cheaper elsewhere. He lowered the prices, asking if we were satisfied yet. We were not and





he asked us to name our prices (this is usually what the negotiation process comes down to), we said USD90 for both. There was a long awkward silence. Finally, he said he would give us the bowls but under two conditions, we had to put the bowls in our backpack and leave in another direction not passing the store, and not to come back into the store again. He was afraid his boss would find out. His plan was to pocket the money and never tell his boss about the sale. Despite the shady circumstances we were stoked by the deal and paid. Later we met a hippie on the street who spends five months in India and Nepal every year buying items to sell back home in Canada. He informed us that he gets these medicine bowls for about USD25 a kilo (wholesale).

We also bought a table runner made from scraps of saris. Our next destination was the post office to mail home our goodies. After a long walk there it was closed, open again 2pm the next day, delaying our arrival at the orphanage.

Two days later we left Kathmandu on a public bus towards Pokhara, got off at Mahadevbesi, which is in the Dhading District. Here we helped build an orphanage for children who lost their parents during the 2015 earthquake. Mornings and nights we worked alongside the children but during the days, while the kids were at school, we continued to build.

We stayed with a local family but had our own rooms. There were no showers and we had to bathe in a nearby

river. Also, there was only one outdoor toilet for everyone to use. We returned to Kathmandu after three weeks to extend our tourist visa then we were off to trek the Annapurna Circuit. Nepal is slowly recovering and reconstructing its past glory, the country desperately needs tourism money now more than ever so put it on your travel list this year.

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Berlin Bound

36 intellectual and culturally focused hours in Germany's largest city

Text by Simon and Abby Fischer



IF YOU KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT Berlin, it's that it's hip. A culture capital. There's a mess of reasons why this is the case, but ultimately, we think it boils down to its distinct place through history (including being left untouched by Romans due to fear of Germanic "barbarians," its baroque facelift courtesy of Prussian emperor Friedrich II, and its artistic eminence during the jazz age). A city of immigrants, wrenched apart through war, pieced back together by artists, weirdos, newcomers. While some of those visiting Berlin do so to experience its fascinating—and often horrifying—history, and others try to enmesh themselves in its effortless *je ne sais quoi*, we find the best tack is to do both, as one informs the other in a very immediate way.

Day One

Your itinerary upon arrival depends on a very elemental concern: summer vs. winter. Summer finds Berliners sprawling out in the city's ample green space, sipping beers and soaking up the

balmy summer sun. However, the city gets dark very early in the winter (think, 3:30-4:00 pm), lending itself to a very different type of sightseeing.

If you touch down in winter, walk around the Brandenburg Gate, Reichstag, and Potsdamer Platz in the central sightseeing area, which we think is especially beautifully lit in the evening. Once you've worked up an appetite, sample some local cuisine, either at an upscale eatery on or around Friedrichstrasse. Our current favorites are Crackers, boasting stellar nouveau French fare with weekend DJ sets befitting its previous life as a nightclub, or Nobelhart & Schmutzig, a Michelin starred eatery heavily influenced by contemporary Nordic cuisine like Noma. Alternatively, those looking for a more unassuming experience can eat like a true Berliner at a local Döner stand. Then, finish with a concoction at a cocktail bar or a simple *Pils* (pilsner beer) at a local *Kneipe* (bar)

Meanwhile, if you happen to touch down during summer, stroll through

the Brandenburg Gate and into the Tiergarten. Then, loop back out of the park, get on the train at Potsdamer Platz, and take the U2 line of the underground to Prater Biergarten for a beer and warm pretzel (and German cuisine for dinner if you like) in the grounds of an historic beer garden, famous during the DDR-era.

Day Two

Morning: Walking the Wall

If you'd like to get a better grasp of what makes Berlin tick, we'd suggest taking a Berlin Wall tour first thing in the morning. This period of history is so fundamentally important for the city; few other places in the world have experienced division of this kind, and as such, every time you dig further into the facts and stories surrounding this deeply contentious time in Berlin's history, it becomes more compelling. We think it's impossible to understand contemporary Berlin without first understanding this era.

However, the same cannot be said about the East Side Gallery. If you're



short on time while visiting Berlin, we'd suggest giving it a miss. Lately scaffolding has obscured nearly the entire length of the Wall, so many the murals are blocked. Plus, they've been redone since they were originally painted, and in our opinion, the murals have lost their original spark—something was lost in translation when they were replicated. On top of all of this, the Gallery isn't a clear historical representation of the Wall, having been painted in 1990.

Afternoon: Choose Your Own Adventure

Head down to Kreuzberg for lunch and try some international cuisine. Thanks to a steady stream of immigration over the past 50 years (one of the defining characteristics of the city), Turkish food is top-notch in Berlin. Walk the neighborhood's many canals, seek out the best street art, poke into the locally-owned vintage shops and cafés along the way (or, if you'd prefer a bit more guidance, do so on a Kreuzberg Tour). Then, swing down to the old airfield at Tempelhof and stroll the disused runways, finishing with casual eats in Neukölln and a sundowner at Klunkerkränich, a slap-dash-style open air bar and event space on the roof of a shopping mall.

Or

Head to Charlottenburg for lunch. Kantstrasse is home to excellent Asian food (Lo Men's Noodle House, Dao, Selig, Berlin) and great burgers (emphatically, The Butcher). Pop into the Käthe Kollwitz Museum to see works by one of the definitive Berlin sculptors/artists of the 20th century, then recharge for the rest of the day with coffee at the Literaturhaus. After, saunter down the promenade of the Kurfürstendamm—Berlin's



Neue Synagoge

most famous and popular shopping boulevard—and do some shopping at the grand institution that is the KaDeWe department store or at up-and-comer concept mall Bikini Berlin. Finish with Israeli food at Neni in the 25hours Hotel, followed by a digestif on the balcony of Monkey Bar, a chic spot in the same building from which one can look out across the city (or down into the ape enclosure of the Berlin Zoo).

Day Three

To know Berlin history, sadly, is to know some of the darker points in human history. We suggest spending the morning of your last day taking a Jewish Berlin tour, not just to develop a deeper understanding of the immense suffering that happened here, but to better appreciate the previous centuries of contributions Jews made to Berlin's culture. Stroll around the hidden courtyards of the Scheunenviertel (Barn Quarter), see the shining golden dome of the Neue Synagoge, and pay a visit to the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe.

Then, fill your last hour or two by walking down Unter den Linden, past Museumsinsel and the Dom, spotting the construction site that will soon reveal the rebuilt Prussian palace that was dismantled after WWII, through Bebelplatz and Gendarmenmarkt—what remains of Berlin's historical heart.

While strolling through historic Berlin, one can't help but appreciate the layers coexisting within the city. You can stand in one spot and it will have had significance in multiple periods of history, all there in layers, some destroyed, others recreated, other miraculously survived. That's the identity of Berlin—evolving, more than what appears on the surface, organisms managing to thrive in odd environments. ■



Brandenburg Gate

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Love Connection

Text by **Diana Divecha**

Why attachment parenting
is not the same as
secure attachment

IN THE MONTHS LEADING UP to birth, a pregnant woman begins to read about childrearing, including a book called *Attachment Parenting* by pediatrician William Sears and registered nurse Martha Sears. They advocate for a collection of seven practices they call the Baby Bs: “birth bonding, breastfeeding, baby-wearing, bedding close to the baby, belief in the baby’s cry, balance and boundaries, and beware of baby trainers.”

The pregnant woman finds their ideas compelling, and so decides to embrace this style of “attachment parenting.” But nothing goes according to plan. She begins delivery at home with a midwife, but when the labor doesn’t proceed, she’s taken to the hospital and given a Caesarean section. Influenced by *Attachment Parenting*, she worries that she has missed a critical bonding experience with her baby. Six weeks later, the mother develops a severe breast infection and reluctantly switches to formula. “Make sure you find some other way to bond with your baby,” her pediatrician cautions, adding to her distress. At night, the mother pulls the baby from his crib into her bed—even though it makes the baby cry.

Pretty soon, no one is happy—and the new mother wonders if her child is on the road to insecurity and anxiety.

All of these experiences are real;



In the 1950s, Mary Ainsworth joined Bowlby in England. A decade later, back in the US, she began to diagnose different kinds of relationship patterns between children and their mothers in the second year of life, based on how babies respond to separations and reunions. When babies have a secure attachment, they play and explore freely from the “secure base” of their mother’s presence. When the mother leaves, the baby often becomes distressed, especially when a stranger is nearby. When the mother returns, the baby expresses joy, sometimes from a distance and sometimes reaching to be picked up and held. (Babies vary, depending on their personality and temperament, even within a secure attachment).

Though early researchers studied mothers, current research shows that fathers, co-parents, grandparents, babysitters, and even older siblings can be significant attachment figures. Caregivers who foster a secure attachment are responsive, warm, loving, and emotionally available, and as a result babies grow to be confident in the caregiver’s ability to handle feelings. The babies feel free to express their positive and negative feelings openly and don’t develop defenses against the unpleasant ones.

Why The Confusion About A Secure Attachment?

The Sears’ idea of attachment parenting is not well defined—and certainly has not been scientifically linked to a secure attachment outcome. And this confusion can sow guilt, worry, and misdirection in parents, who (understandably) are not aware of the distinction.

“Attachment [in the scientific sense] is a relationship in the service of a baby’s emotion regulation and exploration,” explains Alan Sroufe, a developmental psychologist at the Institute for Child Development at the University of Minnesota, where he and his colleagues have studied the attachment relationship for over 40 years. “It is the deep, abiding confidence a baby has in the availability and responsiveness of the caregiver.”

A secure attachment has at least three functions:

- 1) Provides a sense of safety and security
- 2) Regulates emotions by soothing distress, creating joy, and supporting calm
- 3) Offers a secure base from which to explore

“Attachment is not a set of tricks,” continues Sroufe. “These [attachment parenting principles] are all fine things, but they’re not the essential things. There is no evidence that they are predictive of a secure attachment.”

Take breastfeeding, for example, touted as key to attachment parenting. Mechanical and insensitive breastfeeding could actually contribute to an insecure attachment, while warm, sensitive, interactive bottle-feeding could help

they’ve happened to mothers I know. And as a developmental psychologist, I know this tension between the ideal and the reality is based on a misunderstanding. Home birth, breastfeeding and co-sleeping all have benefits—but none of them is related to a baby’s secure attachment with her caregiver, nor are they predictive of a baby’s future mental health and development. Simply put, a secure attachment—which *does* lead to positive child outcomes—is not the same thing as the philosophy called attachment parenting.

What Is The Scientific View Of Attachment?

The term “attachment parenting” was coined by Sears and Sears to refer to a parenting approach that emphasizes responding sensitively to the needs of babies and children. Many of their ideas come from parenting their own eight children, as well as from their pediatric practice; some are from anthropologists’ observations of indigenous childrearing practices (thought to be more “natural”); and some (like emotional responsiveness) are consistent with research findings.

Many parents, myself included, have welcomed the Sears’ guidance for creating warm, loving relationships, especially in contrast to earlier parenting

approaches that were more strict, cold, or distant.

The implication, though—liberally strewn throughout the Sears’ writing and the precepts of the related international attachment parenting movement—is that the Baby Bs lead to a secure attachment, which is a specific psychological concept based on 60 years of research. Here we come to the problem: their use of the word “attachment” and the confusion it creates with the scientific notion of attachment theory.

Attachment theory has its roots in the work of an English psychiatrist, John Bowlby, who in the 1930s worked with children with emotional problems. He noticed that the troubled children in his care were deprived of affection and had disturbed or nonexistent caregiving. He came to believe that a primary caregiver served as a kind of “psychic organizer” to the child, and that the child needed this warm, intimate influence to develop successfully.

According to Bowlby, babies form a “small hierarchy of attachments”: The number has to be small for the baby to learn relevant emotional information, but multiples offer the safety of backups. And it’s a hierarchy for safety, too—in danger, there’s no time to think, so the baby can automatically turn to the person already determined to be the reliable comfort.

create a secure attachment. It's not the method of feeding but the quality of the interaction that matters for attachment, says Sroufe.

Constant contact, too, can be misunderstood. Certainly, skin-to-skin contact, close physical touch, holding, and carrying are good for infants and can even reduce crying. But again, what matters for attachment is the caregiver's attunement. Are they stressed or calm? Checked out or engaged? Are they reading the baby's signals?

Attachment parenting advises emotional responsiveness, and this practice aligns best with scientific attachment theory. Babies grow best when their feelings are taken seriously. But well-meaning parents can overdo it, believing they need to meet the child's every request, which can be exhausting and counterproductive. In contrast, research on secure attachments shows that, in the flow of everyday life, misattunements happen about 70 percent of the time!

What *is* important, researchers say, is that the baby develops a generalized trust that their caregiver will respond and meet their needs, or that when mismatches occur, the caregiver will repair them. This flow of attunements, mismatches, and repairs offers the optimal amount of connection and stress for a baby to develop both confidence and coping skills.

"There's a difference between a 'tight' connection and a secure attachment," Sroufe explains. "A tight attachment—together all the time—might actually be an anxious attachment."

The Neurobiology Of Attachment

"Attachment theory is essentially a theory of regulation," explains Allan Schore, a developmental neuroscientist in the Department of Psychiatry at the UCLA David Geffen School of Medicine.

The areas of the brain that process emotional and social information begin to differentiate in the last trimester in-utero (whereas the more "intellectual" regions pick up in the second year of life). By birth, the amygdala,

hypothalamus, insula, cingulate cortex, and orbitofrontal cortex—regions important for emotion processing—are present, but the connections *among* these areas develop in specific patterns over the first years of life. That's where input from the primary relationship is crucial, organizing the hierarchical circuitry that will process, communicate, and regulate social and emotional information. Synaptic connections are pruned, and epigenetic processes modify the expression of genes that regulate stress, depending on input from the environment.

Parents use their own empathy, perspective taking, inference, and intuition to discern the needs of the baby. And the behaviors that parents are inclined to do naturally, like eye contact and face-to-face interaction, baby-talking and holding, are exactly the ones shown to grow the neural regions in the baby that influence emotional life. It is through a "right-brain-to-right-brain" reading of each other that the parent and child synchronize their energy, emotions, and communication.

"What a primary caregiver is doing, in being with the child," explains Schore, "is allowing the child to feel and identify in his own body these different emotional states. By having a caregiver simply 'be with' him while he feels emotions and has experiences, the baby learns how to be," Schore says.

And it's not just about regulating stress. Supporting positive emotional states is equally important to creating a "background state of well-being." If the caregiver's emotions are too high, the stimulation could be intrusive to the baby, Schore explains. Too low, and the baby's "background state" settles at a low or possibly depressive emotional baseline. Just right, from the baby's point of view, is best.

Even then, there's a lot of leeway. As Schore says: Insecure attachments aren't created just by a caregiver's inattention or missteps. They also come from a failure to repair ruptures. Maybe the caregiver is coming in too fast and needs to back off, or maybe the caregiver hasn't

responded and needs to show the baby that she's there. Either way, repair is possible, and it works. Stress is a part of life, and what we're trying to do here is to set up a system by which the baby can learn how to cope with stress.

How Important Is Attachment?

"Nothing is more important than the attachment relationship," says Sroufe, who, together with colleagues, ran a series of landmark studies to discover the long-term impact of a secure attachment.

Over a 35-year period, the Minnesota Longitudinal Study of Risk and Adaptation (MLSRA) revealed that the quality of the early attachment reverberated well into later childhood, adolescence, and adulthood, even when temperament and social class were accounted for.

One of the most important (and paradoxical) findings was that a secure attachment early in life led to greater independence later, whereas an insecure attachment led children to be more dependent later in life.

The MLSRA studies showed that children with a secure attachment history were more likely to develop:

- A greater sense of self-agency
- Better emotional regulation
- Higher self-esteem
- Better coping under stress
- Closer friendships in middle childhood
- Better coordination of friendships and social groups in adolescence
- More trusting and positive romantic relationships in adulthood
- Greater social competence
- More leadership qualities
- Happier and better relationships with parents and siblings

But attachment is not destiny; it depends on what else comes along. A poor start in life, for example, can be repaired in a subsequent relationship with a good mentor, a healthy romance, or constructive therapy.

As for my new-mother friends, they're bonding successfully with their babies, welcoming and enjoying the moments when connection happens. And if you're concerned about bonding with your own baby, rest assured that you'll have some help—from your baby. Because regardless of their individual personalities—whether they cry a lot or sleep very little, whether they're breastfed or bottle-fed—babies invite adults in with their wide-open gaze, their milky scent, and their tiny fingers that curl around your big ones. They let you know what they need.

Before you know it, they are lighting you up with their full-body smiles and pulling you close with their plump, soft arms. And the sweet elixir of attachment is underway. ■

Diana Divecha, Ph.D., is a developmental psychologist, a research affiliate of the Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence.

What Does Secure Attachment Look Like?

0-3 months:

- In their quiet, alert state, the baby is interested in the faces and voices around them.

4-8 months:

- Attempts to soothe the baby usually work. (Caveat: An inability to soothe might indicate either insecurity or any of a host of other possible issues.)
- The baby and primary caregiver have pleasant

back-and-forth interactions.

- The baby has calm periods of curiosity and explores and experiments as they are physically able.
- The baby begins to discriminate among people and show preferences.

9 months:

- The baby shows a clear preference for a primary caregiver and some wariness toward strangers.
- The baby is easily upset

when separated from their primary caregiver.

- The baby is easily soothed after a separation and can resume exploration or play.

9 months–3 years:

- The child shows a clear emotional bond with a primary person.
- The child stays in close proximity to that person but forms close relationships with other people, too.

Safer Driving



With increasing volumes of traffic coming in to Ho Chi Minh City on a daily basis, Family Medical Practice has recently made efforts to address driver safety on our roads. Last month, as a part of this initiative, International Road Safety Specialist (MPH) Roy Ben Eliezer was invited to give advanced training to all EMR *9999 ambulance drivers. In the following article, Roy discusses why driver safety is already a major focus of international organizations.

IN CASE YOU HADN'T HEARD, we're currently living in the United Nations Decade of Action for Road Safety, 2011–2020. This is a worldwide campaign that was launched to call on all state members to follow the work plan and guidelines that the UN delivers throughout its term.

This UN initiative was set up to address the staggering number of traffic fatalities that occur every year—1.3 million people around the world. This silent epidemic is steadily climbing the ranks of issues causing concern to the point where the W.H.O. now predicts that by 2030, traffic accidents and injury prevention will surpass tuberculosis, malaria and HIV/AIDS as a focus of activity.

The United Nations campaign dictates five pillars that require attention. Pillar number one is road safety management, while pillar number two covers safer roads and mobility—everything that has to do with infrastructure in order to build safer roads, sidewalks, traffic overpasses, and green mobility solutions that are affordable to all people.

Pillar number three discusses safer

vehicles. In 2011, for instance, the people of Myanmar drove a lot of very old cars, hardly any of which had a seatbelt, BS emission standards, or an airbag. The government passed a resolution to offer tax waivers to drivers upgrading their vehicles—so everybody scrapped their cars, bought lots of Toyotas and second-hand cars from Japan, and everyone benefited from having safer vehicles.

Pillar number four talks about safer road users, reaching out to people from kindergarten, to university, to the workplace—training the drivers, teaching the students, and working with vulnerable communities as a whole to improve the awareness and the understanding of road users (including pedestrians, cyclists, drivers and so on).

Pillar number five is most closely related to emergency medicine & trauma services, talking about post-crash care. The goal is to enhance and better respond to emergency and trauma injuries resulting from traffic accidents. In this instance, the focus is what we call the “golden hour,” the first sixty minutes taken to arrive at the scene, stabilize the patient, mobilize him, and transfer him

to the nearest medical facility where somebody, a clinician or doctor, can pay further attention to his injuries.

The Human Factor

When creating a safe driving culture, it's important to focus on the human factor in accident prevention. There are considered to be four factors contributing to accidents—human, infrastructure, environmental, and the vehicles themselves. One prevailing school of thought holds that the human factor accounts for more than ninety percent of the cause of traffic accidents. At the end of the day, it's drivers who use their mobile phone, adjust the radio, look outside, eat and drink, talk to passengers or consume alcohol. All these things serve to affect and distract a driver. The human element is involved in the other factors also—if the vehicle is not well-maintained, it's your responsibility to check the engine oil; if the environmental conditions are rainy or stormy, just don't drive, or otherwise take precautions. If the road is not well-maintained, then slow down! The most critical imperative here is to change



of the success is due to the social marketing that the W.H.O. and all the international agencies put out here in Vietnam, because they found there were difficulties and challenges in reaching young people about wearing their helmet. “It ruins my hair,” they would say, or “it makes me look stupid.” What looks more stupid? To wear a helmet, or to be fed by a spoon for the rest of your life by your mother or grandma? A messed-up hairstyle, or a scalp carved up with ugly operation scars?

Stopping = Braking + Thinking

Of course, practical sessions are still very important in safety training. To teach the basic fundamentals, the prerequisite is vehicle control and emergency braking. Not many drivers here, even professional ones, have ever experienced on their own or within any other framework the techniques of emergency braking. In one-on-one training, an instructor should give students a cue to brake, and they would have to squeeze the brake immediately in order to overcome any fear they have—the message is that “you control the vehicle, not the other way around.”

Second, it’s important to understand that braking distance and stopping distance are not the same thing—because stopping distance involves both braking itself and thinking about braking. Every fraction of a second is important and every meter is important, because if you are distracted, the longer your braking or stopping distance will be.

If you’re drunk or are distracted, then your response time as a driver will slow down, and you may hit someone. The bottom line is always, “When you drive, drive. Don’t do anything else.”

people’s mindsets.

The methodologies used in training drivers are now relatively modern. They include innovative simulations, some defensive driving theory, practice, exercises, and presentations. It’s not really enough to teach people the basics of safe driving and drive them around a training course a few times—sometimes the most effective way to change safety conditions on the road is to change people’s minds.

An excellent case study on this point is actually from Vietnam, which is often held up as an example throughout the region. This concerns the 2007 helmet law. Since this law passed, we have seen a significant reduction not only in fatalities but also in serious injuries during road accidents.

A 2007 report shows that there were close to thirteen thousand people dying on the road every year in Vietnam before the law was implemented. And then, from 2008, the numbers started to go down. Naturally, it’s not all related to the helmet law, which was complemented by education and enforcement. Part

*EMR *9999 is a world-class emergency responder service available in Ho Chi Minh City. In putting safety standards first, *9999 addresses every aspect of emergency response, from delivering immediate medical advice via phone to supporting incidents with state-of-the-art ambulances and on-board equipment manned by a professional medical team. Ambulance drivers are also trained to assist in emergencies, with their most important role being to swiftly deliver patients to a medical facility while staying on top of road safety. For more information, visit www.star9999.vn.*

*Roy Ben Eliezer is the co-founder and COO of the Interdisciplinary Center for Road Safety (ICRS). He recently served to train ambulance drivers in advanced driving techniques for EMR *9999 emergency responders in Saigon. Learn more about the ICRS at www.icroadsafety.com.*

Accidents in Vietnam

- In 2017 there were 20,000 accidents causing 8,300 deaths and 17,000 injuries.
- Vietnam’s traffic fatality rate is 24.5/100,000—SEA’s second highest after Thailand.
- in 2016 there were 62 accidents classified as extremely serious, resulting in a total of 200 deaths. In 2017, that figure rose to 70 cases with 224 deaths.
- Of the 144 most widely-reported accidents between 2013–2017, men were responsible for 98.61%. Women account for one third of the accidents’ victims.

Statistics from Vietnamnews.vn



>> The List Education

INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS



ABC International School (ABCIS)

Inspected and judged an outstanding school by British Government Inspectors (January 2017), the ABCIS is one of the few schools worldwide awarded this Department for Education rating. Progress of students puts the ABCIS among the top 8% of schools in the world. Providing education for 2-18 year olds in a supportive and friendly environment, it delivers a culturally adapted version of the British National Curriculum supported by Cambridge & AQA IGCSE and AS/A levels. Students are prepared for Universities in the UK, USA, Australia, Korea and Canada.



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4, 1E Street, KDC Trung Son, Binh Hung, Binh Chanh, HCMC
Primary & Secondary Campus:
2, 1E Street, KDC Trung Son, Binh Hung, Binh Chanh, HCMC
84 28 5431 1833/34/35/36
office@theabcis.com
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Level 2, Somerset Vista, 628C Hanoi Highway, D.2, HCMC
028 6287 0804/ 0904 938 666
www.etonhouseanphu.com



International School Saigon Pearl (ISSP)

Vietnam's only international school offering a U.S. curriculum for children 18 months to 11 years old within a 100% English language environment. With a library containing over 13,500 English books and more than 60% of students achieving above grade level English, ISSP graduates are well prepared for secondary school at ISHCMC or ISHCMC - American Academy.



92 Nguyen Huu Canh, Binh Thanh
+84 (28) 2222 7788/99
admissions@issp.edu.vn
www.issp.edu.vn



Kinder Academy

Kinder Academy is a Reggio Emilia approach and STEM concept inspired preschool, where you can find the best integration of the above philosophies and practices.



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Our Mission: "Passionate about the development of your child, we provide the right environment to play, learn and grow. Our team is child centric."
24/2 Tran Ngoc Dien, Thao Dien Ward, District 2, HCMC
Hotline: 0961 825 876 - Tel: 028 22536126
www.kinderacademy.edu.vn
kinderacademy.preschool@gmail.com



The International School Ho Chi Minh City - American Academy

ISHCMC - American Academy is a U.S. curriculum secondary school, preparing students aged 11 to 18 years old for success at universities worldwide. Early university credits, through SUPA and AP courses, a 1:1 University Counseling Program, and an extensive EAL program sets our graduates on the road to success with 100% acceptance rate and U.S. \$1 million scholarship fund to overseas universities.



16 Vo Truong Toan, D2
+84 (28) 3898 9100
admissions@aavn.edu.vn
www.aavn.edu.vn



The International School Ho Chi Minh City (ISHCMC)

ISHCMC is a leading school in HCMC with a rich history, yet is always innovating. Students from over 50 nationalities are taught in modern learning environments by trained IB educators specializing in inquiry-led teaching. This, paired with international-standard safeguarding policies ensures that all children are safe and supported to reach their potential. ISHCMC students develop a life-long passion for asking questions and searching beyond what is asked in the classroom, ultimately becoming true 21st century citizens equipped for the future. The 2017/18 academic school year will see the new Secondary Campus open and the continued refurbishment in the Primary Campus.



28 Vo Truong Toan, D2
+84 (28) 3898 9100
admissions@ishcmc.edu.vn
www.ishcmc.com



The American School

The American School (TAS) is an international school that has been accredited by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC), representing 21 nationalities. TAS provides an American-based curriculum with rigorous performance standards and a variety of academic offerings including Advanced Placement courses, university credit courses through our partnership with Missouri State University, and an Intensive ESL Program for English Language Learners. In 2018, The American School will open its new, sprawling mega-campus in District 2's An Phu Neighborhood. This purpose-built facility will house up to 1200 students from pre-nursery through grade 12. This is an exciting time in the growth of the school!

177A, 172-180 Nguyen Van Huong, Thao Dien, D2
028 3519 2223 / 0903 952 223
admissions@tas.edu.vn
www.tas.edu.vn



WONDERKIDS MONTESSORI SCHOOL (WMS)

School ages: 18 months to 9 years old. WMS is a standard international Montessori school offering nursery, kindergarten and lower elementary program by North America Montessori Curriculum covered with 100% English environment (for children from 18 months to 9 years old). Where the best integration of this philosophy and practices happen, we are proudly an active member of American Montessori Society. "Free the child's potential and you will transform him into the world." Maria Montessori

Campus 1:
3A Tong Huu Dinh, Thao Dien, D2, HCMC
0938 909 268 / 028 22534999
montessori-office@wonderkids.edu.vn
www.wonderkidsmontessori.edu.vn

Campus 2:
4-6 Road No.20, My Gia 1, Tan Phu, D7, HCMC
0977299288 / 028 54141416
info@wms.edu.vn
www.wms.edu.vn



Also...

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13 Tran Ngoc Dien, D2
www.aurorareggio.com

Australian International School (AIS)

The Australian International School is an IB World School with three world class campuses in District 2, HCMC, offering an international education from kindergarten to senior school with the IB Primary Years Programme (PYP), Cambridge Secondary Programme (including IGCSE) and IB Diploma Programme (DP).

Xi Campus (Kindergarten)
www.aisvietnam.com

British International School (BIS)

Inspected and approved by the British Government, BIS provides a British style curriculum for an international student body from pre-school to Year 13. The school is staffed by British qualified and trained teachers with recent UK experience. Fully accredited by the Council of International Schools and a member of FOBISIA, BIS is the largest international school in Vietnam.

www.bisvietnam.com

Renaissance International School Saigon

Renaissance is an International British School offering the National Curriculum for England complemented by the International Primary Curriculum (IPC), Cambridge IGCSE and the International Baccalaureate. The school has made a conscious decision to limit numbers and keep class sizes small to ensure each pupil is offered an education tailored to meet their individual learning needs. It's a family school providing first-class facilities including a 350- seats theater, swimming pools, mini-pool, drama rooms, gymnasium, IT labs, music and drama rooms, science labs and an all-weather pitch.

www.renaissance.edu.vn

Saigon South International School

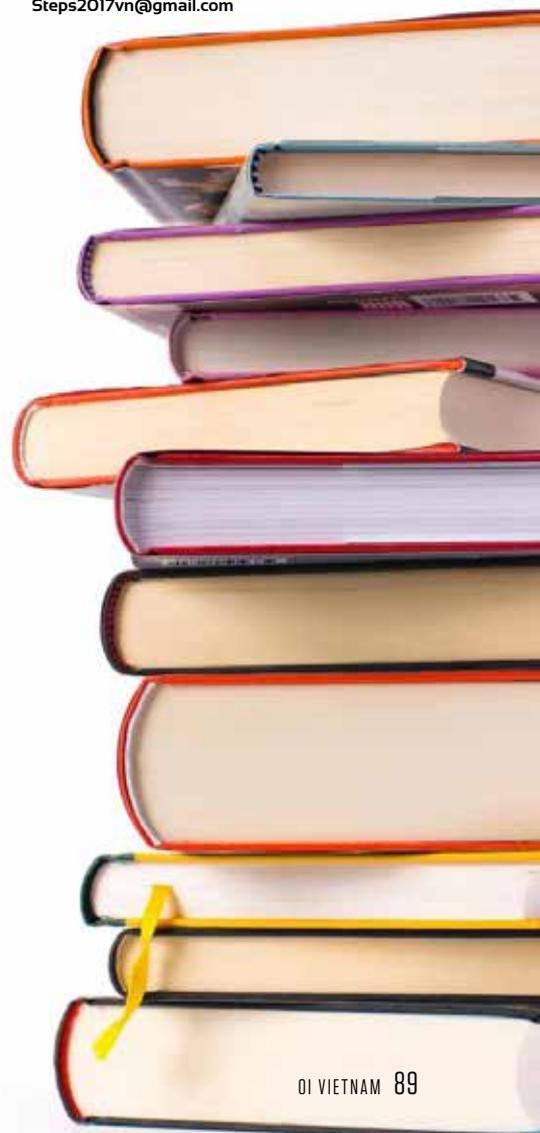
Founded in 1997, Saigon South International School seeks to accommodate an increasing need for American education for both local residents and expatriate families. SSIS enrolls over 850 students in Early Childhood – Grade 12 from over thirty-three countries in a spacious six-hectare, well-equipped campus.

www.ssis.edu.vn

STEPS Special School

STEPS (Support Teach Encourage Person with Special Needs) Special School caters to children with Autism, ADHD/ADD, Speech Delay, Intellectual Disability, Behavior Difficulty and Deaf. Our mission and vision is to nurture all children with Special needs in a safe inclusive and supportive environment through education, therapeutic interventions and community acceptance. We offer full - day, half - day, after school program, and school assistance.

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AsiaLIFE
www.asialifemagazine.com

www.smallchangevietnam.com





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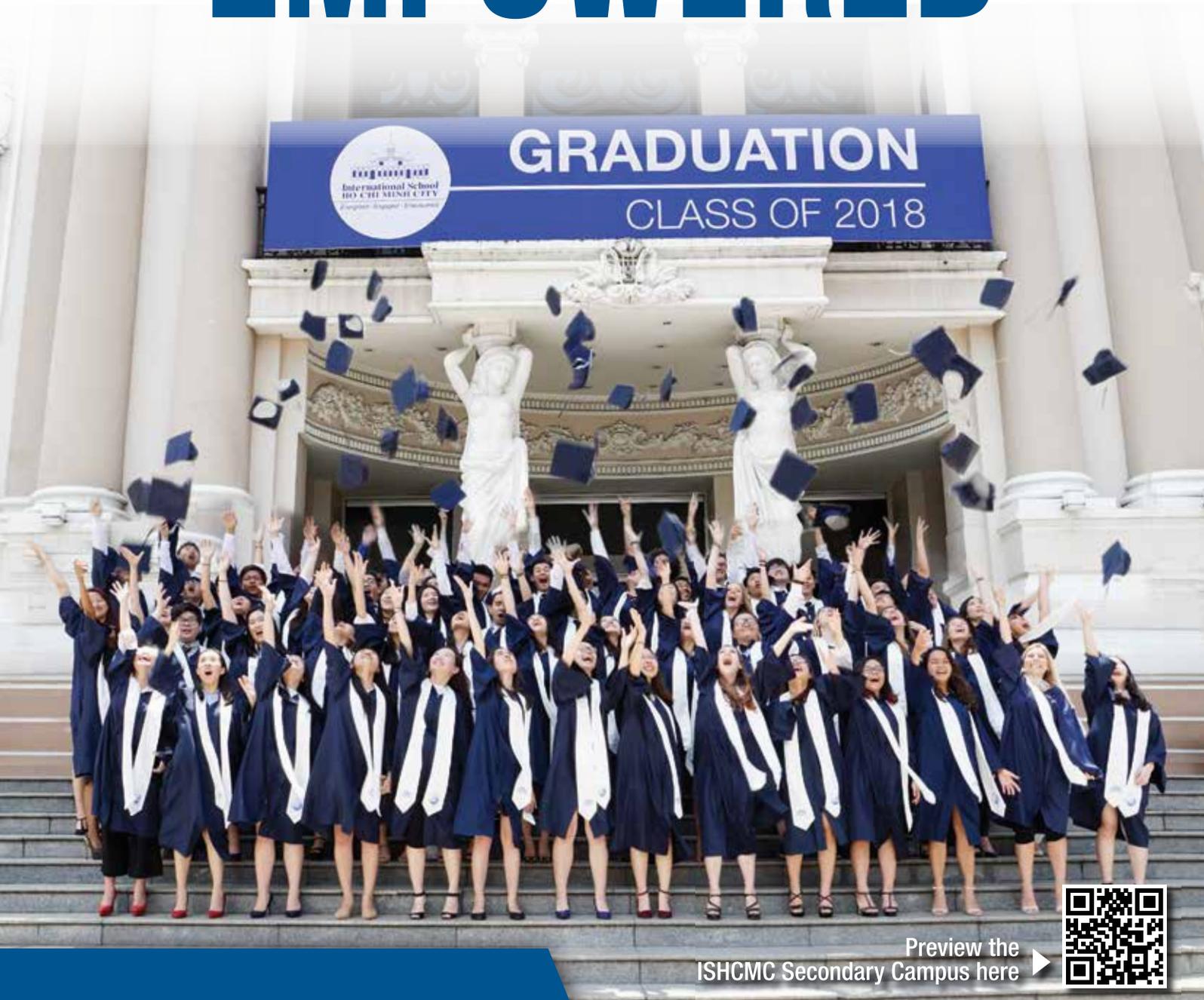
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