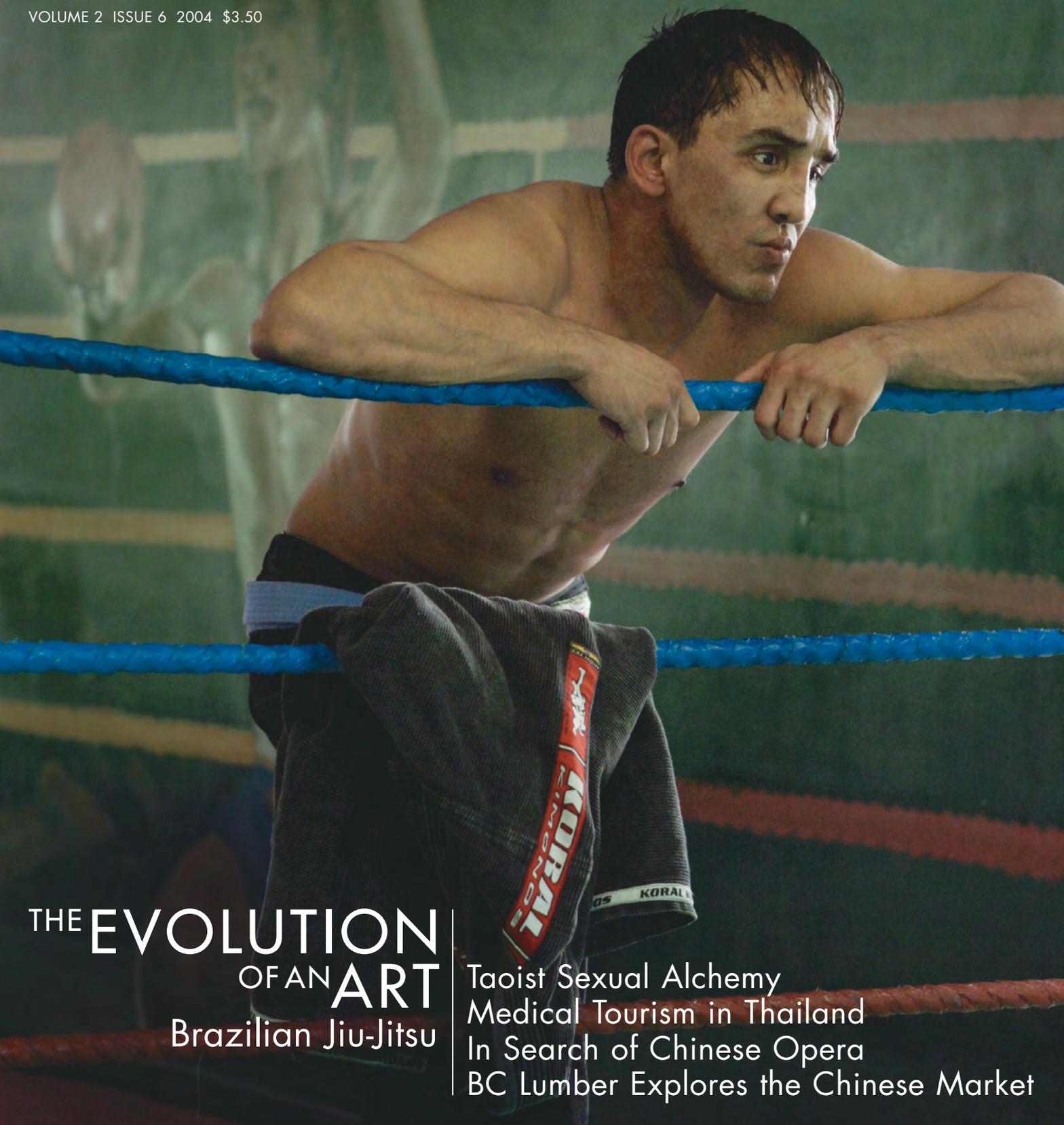


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EVERYTHING CHANGES, AND NOTHING STAYS THE SAME. | This adage maintains its currency today when the changes are not so much related to the social and political recasting of 30 or 40 years ago, but more to this city and province we call home. In this case, the landscape is changing—physically and culturally. | In the City of Richmond there is a shopping centre, which for more than 10 years was called the Aberdeen Centre. As Tiffany Chan’s article in this, the 16th issue of *Pacific Rim Magazine* details, the Aberdeen Centre is now referred to as the New Aberdeen Centre. Is this a marketing ploy? Perhaps. But more profoundly, this mall with a makeover has not only grown in size, but has also changed in nature—the shops are mostly Asian and the first Japanese ‘dollar store’ is included. | The mall’s reorientation reflects the cultural changes in Richmond and further, in Vancouver, which in turn brings a new vitality and a new economic focus. | Such changes have also had an impact on Langara College, including enhancing the diversity of the ethnic and cultural identities of our students, and increasing numbers of students in general. This has led us to redevelop the master plan for our facilities, and to refocus on strategic directions that will keep us vital, relevant and ahead of the new economy. | *Pacific Rim Magazine* is one example of the capabilities of Langara students, and the ability of the college to predict and react to change. Another step will be a changed physical landscape on the college site to better meet the demands for access from Langara students.

LINDA HOLMES, PRESIDENT

IT’S ALL IN THE DETAILS. | The other day while waiting for my dental appointment I flipped through a half-dozen or so magazines, not wanting to commit to any long articles as I would soon be summoned to the dreaded chair. Other patients were doing the same. The thought struck me: the injustice of it all. Such short shrift to these reading treasures so painstakingly produced. | As I write this, 24 students in the Publishing: Techniques and Technologies Program at Langara College are immersed in the details of producing the 16th issue of *Pacific Rim Magazine*. They are honing stories, designing pages, scanning images, checking proofs and taking part in endless meetings. They have all turned into nitpicks, and happy to be so. Details. Details. Details. Otherwise perfectly sane people are finding themselves in impassioned debates over whether a sentence should have a comma or a semi-colon, or whether a rule should be one point or two points. | These students, and their colleagues from other departments—Photography, Marketing and Sales, and Library Technology—have been involved in a three-month frenzy of activity, aiming to prepare them for the real world. Most magazine readers, of course, are not aware of the volume of detailed work that goes on behind the scenes. | The editors, the designers, the production directors, the advertising managers who, with the guiding hands of their instructors, created this magazine will have experienced the agony and the ecstasy of life in the production trenches. I’m willing to bet that when this book is put to bed, these same students will look at each other and say: “Hey, that was fun, let’s do it again.”

ROB DYKSTRA, PUBLISHER

IN RECENT YEARS, ‘GLOBALIZATION’ HAS BECOME THE NUMBER ONE BUZZWORD ATTACHED TO MANY OF THE WORLD’S PROBLEMS. | The term immediately brings to mind thoughts of exploitation, irresponsible environmental policies and an imbalance of wealth. While it is true that free market capitalism is broadening the playground for reckless multinational corporations, dooming the poor almost across the board, some of the more positive effects of our shrinking planet are often overlooked. | Some people, including us, are concerned about the effects of cultural rather than economic globalization, fearing that as all cultures bleed into one, many of the finer points of each will be lost in the mix. From this merging of cultures, however, new experiences and traditions are created. One of the things *Pacific Rim Magazine* is dedicated to documenting is the way in which these cultures come together. | In this issue, we discover how the martial arts world is being taken over by a fighting style that was invented in Japan, but came into its own several hundred years later in Brazil. We learn how couples across North America are benefiting from age-old Chinese meditation techniques. At the same time, building methods perfected in Canada are catching on in China, and being used to solve housing and resource related difficulties. | While the onset of a homogenous global monoculture is terrifying, perhaps we should stop and observe how our own lives are benefiting from ideas and values that we would never have been exposed to in a world where each culture remains isolated.

HELEN STORTINI, EXECUTIVE EDITOR
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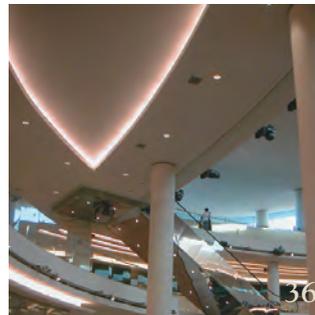
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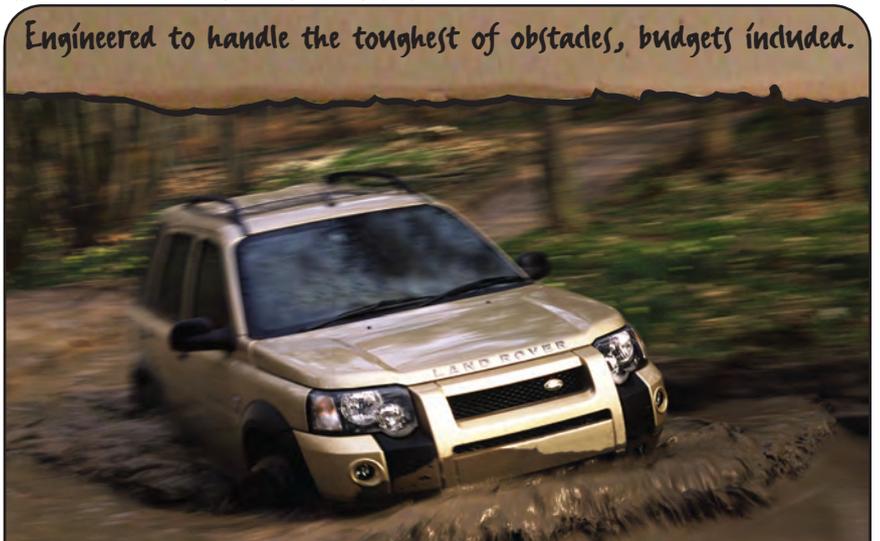
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PHOTO COURTESY OF Vancouver Sowers Society of Education

SOWING HOPE

Sowers Action works to bring education to Chinese children

STORY VERONIQUE MEURGUES

Education is the solution to poverty. This is the belief of the Vancouver Sowers Society of Education. On August 17, 2003, VSSE members went for a walk. The goal of these determined walkers was to raise funds for education in China.

That same year, VSSE member Michael Li joined Sowers Action Hong Kong volunteers on the same mission. The charity walk, a five-day trek from Hong Kong to Guangzhou

It is not unusual to see rural village schools that are without electricity, water, toilets or playgrounds.

was part of their continuing campaign to raise money and awareness for education in Mainland China. Over the years, Sowers Action has provided financial assistance totaling more than \$20 million. The organization has subsidized school fees for students in rural areas and rebuilt over 400 damaged schools.

Affiliated with Sowers Action, the VSSE is a registered non-profit organization, and the first branch outside Hong Kong. Established in Vancouver, BC, in 2002, the society has participated in numerous events to promote activities and raise funds for the Hong Kong branch. Initiated by Ben Choi, president of the VSSE, the group counted 15 members in 2003. While VSSE is financially and administratively independent from the Sowers Action in Hong Kong, both organizations share the same beliefs and objectives.

Poverty in China is a major obstacle to education. Educational development has become a challenge in remote and poor areas, as well as in provinces occupied mainly by minorities. Recent statistics reveal that 1 out of every 10 children has never enrolled in primary school. These studies, conducted in 9 of the poorer provinces in China, also show that up to 35 percent of children cannot finish their education, creating obstacles to work opportunities. Moreover, illiteracy is a reality for many rural parents, so children cannot learn at home. The National

Bureau of Statistics reported in *The China Daily* that in 2001, approximately 70 percent of the country's total labour force were rural labourers, and only 12.2 percent had a senior middle school education or higher.

In the mid-nineties, the Chinese authorities undertook a poverty reduction program to raise per capita income to the equivalent of \$91 (based on 1990 prices). More recently, the Hope Project, an educational fund-raising initiative, was implemented to help even the poorest children receive an education.

The Chinese government has used more than \$1.6 billion to support education and learning conditions in deprived areas. Over the years, government spending has increased and the enrolment ratio of school-age children is higher than ever. However, the gap between urban and rural education is widening. Some organizations, such as Sowers, believe the government's efforts are insufficient, and have taken their own initiatives to encourage education in rural China.

Sowers Action remains one of the most active supporters of the fundamental right to education. Implementing safer building methods, improving the quality of teaching and providing financial assistance to low-income families constitute the main activities of both the Hong Kong and Vancouver branches.

The rising cost of education is too often a major obstacle in sending children to school. Vanessa Cheung, vice-president and treasurer of the VSSE, says that a year's tuition for a secondary student in the Butuo County costs \$75. This is a high price in a poor family's budget, especially since the average wage in China is about \$30 per month. Sowers Action tries to provide the

minimum funds for educating children in poverty zones, so that all children may receive schooling.

Updated books and reference materials, and well-trained teachers are necessary to improve learning conditions. Rural communities are suffering from a shortage of teachers because of insufficient salaries. As a consequence, many schools are closing. In response to this, Hong Kong Sowers, which has started to cooperate with the Hope Project, regularly trains teachers, or sends experienced instructors into deprived areas. Thanks to the efforts of Sowers and the Hope Project, more than 400 teachers have been trained.

Sowers Action also takes part in the reconstruction and renovation of schools. The VSSE recently decided to raise funds to rebuild a school in the Yunnan Province. Like many other schools, the institution was originally constructed in a rudimentary way, and no longer meets the educational system requirements.

It is not unusual to see rural village schools that are without electricity, water, toilets or playgrounds. In other places, classrooms are in abandoned houses, or outdoors. The VSSE believes that these unsafe conditions are unacceptable and has taken the initiative to rebuild or renovate schools, provide new equipment and, by doing so, contribute to a better and safer learning environment.

The members of the VSSE and the Hong Kong branch believe increasing literacy and giving Chinese children access to an education can only benefit the country. They strongly believe that China's economic future lies in quality educational resources. ☞

For more information on the VSSE, e-mail vansowers@yahoo.com.

Handcrafted: Paper Artisans

STORY TARYL GUENTER PHOTOS PAUL HUANG



From left to right: Eric Jin Li's finch lamp stands nearly six feet tall; Ann Vicente's handmade artichoke and abaca paper; Li's heart-shaped table lamp crafted from Thai paper; Vicente's drawers of typesetting tools and accessories; Vicente's Alphabet Book (top) and Fall Book (bottom); Vicente's handmade silk paper.

Can you imagine carving a letter onto a stone tablet and trying to mail it? That's how documents were made thousands of years ago, along with being scratched into soft clay, and written on scraps of wood, animal hide or cloth. Stories were transmitted through songs, while books came in the form of scrolls bound and rolled together—that is, until the invention of paper in China.

Legend has it that during the Han Dynasty (202 BCE–220 CE), a court official named Ts'ai Lun invented paper. Working with a mortar and pestle, he mashed together a compound of rags, tree bark, old fishing nets, rope and other fibrous materials, and spread the pulp out to dry. Chinese artisans further developed this process and be-

came skilled at creating different kinds of paper using the fibres from materials such as mulberry bark and bamboo.

Even though paper manufacturing has become highly industrialized, there are still many artists who use ancient techniques to explore new avenues of art, or have experimented with a fusion of old and new technology. Some of these artists are drawn to handmade paper because of the beauty it adds to their projects.

Vancouver artist Eric Jin Li chooses handmade paper for his lamps because of its variety and texture. He creates lamps from galvanized wire and handmade paper from Thailand. Gathering inspiration from his environment, his first project was a

small lamp, which “looked like art and nature come together.” He loves to use natural material in his designs, he says, referring to a large lamp that he modelled after his pet finch.

Ann Vicente, owner of Papermaker’s Press, is a local Vancouver artist who has been making handmade paper for over 15 years. She often creates artists’ books for special collections at public institutions and for private collectors. Vicente laughs as she proclaims herself a true luddite. “I have even given away my computer and put a vase on the table instead.” She is involved with the entire process of creating books, from making the paper, to setting the type on her old-fashioned press, to binding and decorating the books.

Vicente experiments with different types of materials for papermaking such as daylilies, irises, western red cedar, cotton and asparagus, as well as Japanese fibres. She recently created a book called *The Paper Sample Alphabet* in which each letter was created from materials that matched the letter. The letter A, for example, was represented by paper made from abaca and artichoke.

Gina Page, owner of Seawrack Press, works mostly on her patio in Richmond, BC. She fell in love with papermaking when she learned how to make paper at Emily Carr Institute of Art and Design. She uses her knowledge of papermaking to create her own books, some of which she has used to print her own poetry, which she has also illustrated.

Page has created an interesting paper from cedar bark. The natural colours of the bark cause the paper fibres to darken at the edges, earning it the name Siamese Cat paper. She also experiments with a variety of materials such as abaca, black silk, cherry bark fibre and wisteria fibres. “I even have some dried seaweed in the basement,” she admits sheepishly. Page is currently working on projects for *The Passionate Book*, a show taking place on Granville Island in October 2004.

Modern papermakers are keeping the ancient art alive while finding new and innovative ways to make this craft part of every day life. Thanks to the efforts of these artists, paper is not just the material on which images and words are printed. It is the art itself. 🐼

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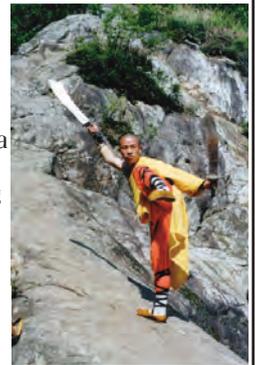
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Master Yuan – was the kung fu head coach of China Shaolin Temple martial monks, as well as the head coach of China national martial arts kung fu team.



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A HAZY VIEW

The Declining State of Vancouver's Air

STORY MONICA PENNER ART MARGARET TAN

The alarm rings. You sit up, feeling groggy. Something catches in your throat and you have a coughing fit. You walk to the window and throw the curtains open to view the mountains. You stare into a heavy grey cloud that envelops the peaks you remember so clearly from childhood. You sigh and briefly glance at an old photograph instead. As you're leaving for work, you slip a surgical mask over your mouth before stepping out the front door.

This may not sound like an ordinary morning to you, but it could one day be. Every city must combat air pollution. Andrew Wiens, a former Vancouver resident living in Greater Seoul, recalls his experiences with air pollution in Korea: "In 2002, in the fall, there were some days when the pollution looked like regular fog." The view of the mountains was clear when Wiens first arrived in May 2001, but nearly two years later, the mountains were nothing more than a bluish haze.

Like Seoul, Vancouver is a city surrounded by mountains, which have a direct effect on its air quality. Though not to the same extreme as Seoul, Vancouver is also struggling to achieve and maintain good air quality. The treasured and familiar sight of Vancouver's mountains may one day be a rare event.

Two pollutants, ozone and fine particles, are a major concern for human health in cities everywhere. While ozone protects us from ultraviolet radiation high up in the atmosphere, it becomes harmful when it is near the surface of the earth. Fine particles, called PM, or particle matter, can be carried deep into the respiratory system causing serious damage to health. PM can also contribute to visibility problems.

Ozone is created when emissions like those from automobiles mix and react with other polluting agents in the air. Motor vehicle emissions are also major contributors to PM pollution. Like ozone, there are many different sources of PM. According to Dr. Michael Brauer, professor and director of the School of

Occupational and Environmental Hygiene at the University of British Columbia (UBC), research indicates that the fine particles from motor vehicles have a stronger effect on health than larger particles from other sources.

Another source of air pollution in Vancouver is long-range air pollutants, states Dr. Ian McKendry, professor of Geography at UBC. Carried by wind currents, these pollutants can come from anywhere in the world. The time of year is key. In Vancouver, many pollutants are carried over from Asia in spring when weather conditions create a direct route across the Pacific Ocean. Pollutants can travel by air from Asia to Vancouver in just six days. Once they arrive, Vancouver's mountains create ideal atmospheric conditions allowing these pollutants to settle over the Lower Mainland.

Three types of pollution make their way over land and sea to Vancouver. The first is dust. Depending on the meteorological conditions, dust can be carried across land and ocean, waiting for conditions that allow it to mix with lower air currents.

The second is persistent organic pollutants such as PCBs and DDT. They vaporize into the air in hot climates, travel over the Pacific and condense with snow or rain in cold climates. While their strength is low, they concentrate in food chains and can be harmful. Evidence of this type of long-range pollution has been found in animals such as orcas and bald eagles.

The third long-range pollutants are emissions from industrial and urban areas. The rapid increase in urban-based pollution in Asia is reflected in the higher emissions found in background pollution, or air from the Pacific Ocean. This means pollution



"There are few things more stupid than driving to Safeway to buy a litre of milk in a vehicle designed for hunting elephants."

from cities in Asia affects Vancouver's air quality. Long-range pollutants, however, don't just travel one way. Emissions from Vancouver are also transported to other areas of the world.

Although beautiful, the mountains in Vancouver and Seoul create ventilation problems for both cities. Vancouver's location on the ocean both increases and helps to diffuse this problem. Pressure created by the different temperatures of land and sea causes ocean breezes to pick up. While they help disperse concentrations of poor air, the breezes also circulate over the city. Instead of dispersing the poor air from the city, the breezes actually ensure that the pollutants keep coming back. This is especially the case in summer when the land is much warmer than the ocean. These types of air currents are one reason why pollution in Vancouver can be particularly bad in the summer.

Wiens felt the effects of poor air quality first hand. After two years in Greater Seoul, he returned to Vancouver with lung problems. Initially believing it to be a resurgence of childhood asthma, his lungs cleared after two months in Vancouver. Doctors attributed his health problems to air pollution.

The most serious effects of air pollution to human health are increased deaths and shorter life expectancy, an occurrence that has been seen in Vancouver. Lesser impacts include a higher number of hospital visits, asthma attacks and effects on the heart and lungs. Hardest hit are the elderly, especially those with pre-existing heart or lung conditions. Also affected are asthmatics and infants. Research currently suggests that air pollution can affect birth outcomes, leading to pre-term birth, or low birth weight. In addition, there is some evidence that air pollution can cause lung cancer. "If you lived in a more polluted city, your risk of developing lung cancer, even if you were a non-smoker, is greater than if you lived in a cleaner city," says Brauer.

Because emissions from motor vehicles are especially harmful, people living 300 to 500 metres from major roads are more affected

by poor air quality, notes Brauer. There are even cases of people developing asthma from living near highly trafficked roads.

Vancouver is working hard toward cleaner air. The Greater Vancouver Regional District has established an air quality management plan. According to Dr. Douw Steyn, associate dean of Graduate Studies and professor of Atmospheric Science at UBC, it is among the best in the world: "Of all cities I know, [Vancouver] has probably the most effective air pollution monitoring, management and control organization."

Programs such as AirCare, Vancouver's automobile emissions inspection and control program, have done a great deal to improve air quality. "AirCare allows us to understand what we've achieved," says Steyn. He continues to say that AirCare has reduced the amount of the most polluting vehicles on the road, replacing them with low-emitting vehicles, thereby reducing total emissions. This has made a demonstrable improvement in Vancouver's air quality.

But each city's management plans can only do so much. There are still too many cars on the road. Emphatically, Steyn remarks, "There are few things more stupid than driving to Safeway to buy a litre of milk in a vehicle designed for hunting elephants." McKendry, like Steyn, feels that problems of air pollution would be greatly reduced if people stepped out of their cars. For example, if people lived closer to work, they could walk or ride their bike, or if vehicle co-op programs were started up, the levels of pollutants in the atmosphere would go down. "Remember this," says Steyn, "people can live for 60 days without food, 6 days without water, and 6 minutes without air." 🌿

a humble little bean

STORY MAX MITCHELL PHOTOS FILIP HRIBAL

A little green plant pushes its way out of the soil. Slowly, it strengthens and unfurls its body, stretching itself out. A pod grows. Inside: a row of small beans. Seemingly innocent and weak, these little beans are nothing of the sort. With a background in agriculture and industry, and a future in health, the soybean's prospects seem limitless.

The mere presence of the little beans gives strength to your listless body. You feel richer in protein and thoroughly nourished. You suddenly feel invincible. Heart disease and osteoporosis, once paranoid nightmares, become laughable threats. You feel the energy of 5000 years of Asian culinary commitment surge through your veins. From your fingertips, you can now summon calcium, magnesium, iron and yes, even riboflavin. You have left humanity behind and have transcended into the world of soy.

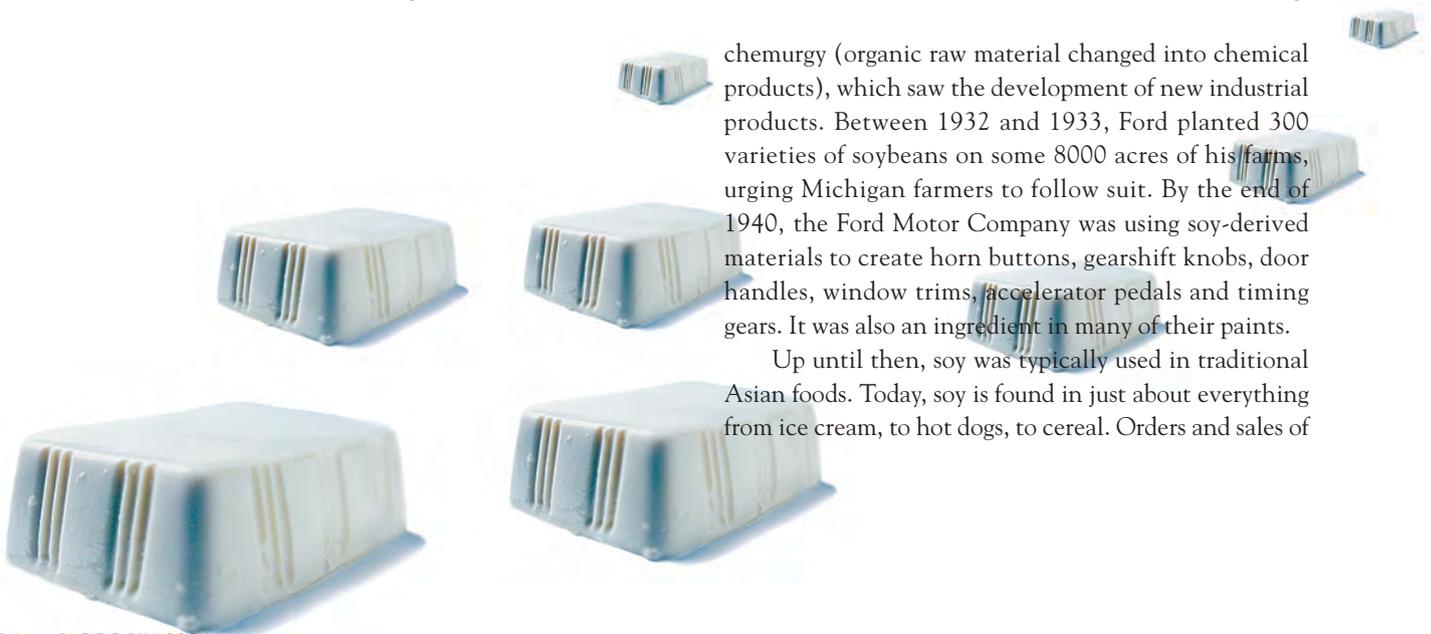
Soybeans originated in Asia, where they began to produce soy as early as 200 BCE. It was first cultivated in China's Yellow River Valley, geographically similar to the Fraser Valley. The bean remained an Asian secret until the 1700s when American trading ships returned from China, bringing soybeans with them. Yet, it wasn't until the mid 1800s, when various government offices began to distribute soy seeds to farmers, that soy truly began its North American dissemination. However, soy wasn't being promoted as the new health food—it was promoted as a forage crop for feeding livestock.

While scientists had been continuously testing and experimenting with the crop in the late 1800s, it wasn't until the bean attracted the attention of Henry Ford in 1928 that the public began to take notice. Ford had become increasingly interested in the possibilities of

You have left humanity behind and have transcended into the world of soy.

chemurgy (organic raw material changed into chemical products), which saw the development of new industrial products. Between 1932 and 1933, Ford planted 300 varieties of soybeans on some 8000 acres of his farms, urging Michigan farmers to follow suit. By the end of 1940, the Ford Motor Company was using soy-derived materials to create horn buttons, gearshift knobs, door handles, window trims, accelerator pedals and timing gears. It was also an ingredient in many of their paints.

Up until then, soy was typically used in traditional Asian foods. Today, soy is found in just about everything from ice cream, to hot dogs, to cereal. Orders and sales of



grocery store soy products are increasing at a rate of 15 to 20 percent annually. Why the rapid growth? Along with yoga and gym memberships, the increased popularity of soy products is directly linked with the public's growing concern for personal health, and nothing has caught their attention like tofu, the traditional soy product. This product, once widely considered to be 'hippie food,' is now finding a place beside meat and dairy products in the average Canadian's diet.

One of the leaders in this new generation of health food products is Sunrise Soya Foods. Leslie Joe, the ambitious entrepreneur behind the company, started the business by selling homemade tofu out of the back of his small grocery store in Vancouver's Japantown in 1956. By the 1970s, Leslie's tofu was beginning to appear in local health food stores across the Lower Mainland. By the 1980s, it was on the shelves of grocery stores throughout the country. A state-of-the-art processing plant was built, greatly increasing the production of the 'homemade' tofu. Today, Sunrise Soya Foods has risen to become the largest tofu manufacturer in Canada and the third largest in North America. The man now running the show is Leslie's son, Peter Joe.

While Peter may not admit it, he has made the world a better place for soy. Hundreds of years of misunderstanding and obscurity have made soy foods a difficult sell. Regardless of the positive press and nutritional information, many people still believe that soy and tofu are not worth their time. A quick search on the Internet will bring up pages of people denouncing it. So how do you sell products to an unwilling populace?

"We find that the best way to sell the product is to educate the public," Peter explains. In fact, Peter has lent his name to a new line of tofu called Pete's Tofu, which grew out of Sunrise's research and development department. The new line's motto: Taking the guesswork out of tofu. The entire line aims to counter excuses to not eat tofu. Don't like the taste? Pete's Tofu comes in a variety of flavours. Don't know how to prepare it? Just look on the back of the package for some quick and easy recipes. Pete's Tofu has an answer for every question and is on a mission to make even the most hard-boiled meat junkie a soy convert.

From ancient and humble roots, the little bean has kept up with the times and increased its popularity, changing its product, its clientele and even its look. 🐼



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GARDENING



the rough STORY HELEN STORTINI

First cultivated more than 70 years ago, Cougar Annie's Garden has continued to transform itself. With Peter Buckland's help, the garden will live to see another generation.

PHOTOS HELEN STORTINI AND
COURTESY OF SALAL BOOKS

Atop a fir tree, overlooking an isolated harbour on Vancouver Island, a hungry raven calls out for its breakfast. Peter Buckland gets up from his paperwork and fishes a chunk of bread from the compost tub. Stepping onto the deck, he waves it overhead as the raven bounces excitedly from branch to branch. Buckland tosses the bread into the air. The bird swoops, catching the bread just before it hits the ground.

This is a ritual on sunny mornings at Boat Basin, the site of Cougar Annie's historical garden set in the northern reaches of Clayoquot Sound. The raven is lucky today. The sun has made an appearance—rare weather so late in October. Buckland finishes his own breakfast quickly, keen to take advantage of the dry weather. There is always much to do in the garden.

Accessible only by boat or float plane, this 5 acre plot of land is located 54 kilometres northwest of Tofino. The area has undergone a number of changes in the past century. It has been transformed from a wild, dense rainforest to a florid sustenance garden, to an art garden, and finally into an educational centre.

It was another clear day back in 1968 when Buckland first discovered this unusual parcel of land and its inhabitants. Buckland, a Vancouver investment analyst, often accompanied Bus Hanson, a prospector and old friend, on treks to remote parts

“I hope it remains alive.
It’s bigger than the sum of its parts.
It’s a garden on a wild coast amidst a rich history...”



*From left to right: Cougar Annie’s house; an old gate in the garden; the Shinto gates frame the back of the Japanese garden (photo courtesy of Salal Books).
Opposite Page: Cougar Annie and her gun (photo courtesy of Salal Books); Peter Buckland in a field study cabin. Next Page: Rhododendrons bloom after years of lying dormant (photo courtesy of Salal Books).*

of Vancouver Island. On that particular trek Hanson suggested they drop by Boat Basin to visit Cougar Annie and her garden. Buckland had no idea the visit would change the course of his life.

Fifty years before Buckland’s first visit, Cougar Annie, more formally known as Ada-Annie Rae-Arthur, arrived on the sand beach of Boat Basin in hopes of starting anew. Her husband was a drunk and an opium addict, so they moved to the wilderness to escape the temptations of the city.

On this secluded plot, Cougar Annie hewed out a life amidst the unyielding rains and old-growth forest. She raised eight children, outlived four husbands (three of whom were mail-order grooms), cultivated five acres of land and fiercely fought off any cougar that dared set foot near her garden.

Life was hard for the family. Supplies were acquired by rowing 10 kilometres across the harbour to meet the coastal steamer, the Princess Maquinna. Consequently, the Rae-Arthurs grew much of their own food. They kept a constant watch over their garden and livestock to protect them from the various predators. They also operated a mail-order nursery, sending out bulbs to customers as far away as Ontario. And most ingeniously, they petitioned for and ran the Boat Basin Post Office, collecting money from the government despite

having little postal business in their sparsely populated corner of Vancouver Island.

The isolation and pioneer spirit of the small, blue-eyed woman immediately impressed Buckland, who after his first visit to Boat Basin returned once a month for 20 years. Cougar Annie grew old and her wooden house and garden deteriorated. Her children were grown and all but one had left. Buckland helped out when he could—bringing supplies and helping run the post office. Cougar Annie recognized Buckland as a potential successor to her land and encouraged him to buy her out.

In 1981, he bought the property and gave the old woman a life estate. “His concern for her and his love of the place was why she asked him to take it over,” says Stuart Wilson, a longtime friend of Buckland’s. In the autumn of 1983, Cougar Annie, at the age of 95, left her life’s work. She died two years later.

Cougar Annie devoted nearly 70 years to her garden, rarely leaving the site. Nestled in the heart of the old-growth forest, she created a palette of vibrant colour. She planted whatever she could lay her hands on: dahlias, daffodils and irises—some of the species coming from as far away as Japan and New Zealand.

Yet by the time Buckland arrived in 1968, Cougar Annie, nearly blind, had for some time been unable to contain the

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ever-encroaching wilderness. No one thought the garden would recover from its years of neglect. But it did.

In 1987, Buckland left Vancouver accompanied only by his cat, 'The Mouser,' and moved to Boat Basin full-time. After building a house for himself, he began to restore the garden. In the late eighties, the garden was, says Buckland, a "sleeping beauty jungle" because Cougar Annie's plants lay seemingly dead beneath the overgrowth. "There was so much more variety here than anyone ever anticipated. I would come into an area, rough clear it and 2 or 3 years later up comes, say, these hostas, totally unexpected, having been dormant for 50 to 60 years."

The result of Buckland's labour is more than two kilometres of moss-covered trails running through the restored garden, set against a backdrop of rainforest and mountains. The trails wind, often through tunnels of rhododendron, from one cleared vista of the garden to the next. They lead to Buckland's enchanting sculptural additions such as the Japanese Garden and Sushi Bar.

The Asian influence seems appropriate to Peter Wharton, curator of the David C. Lam Asian Garden at the University of British Columbia. "There is an Asiatic strand throughout the landscape in terms of geology and vegetation. To me it makes absolute sense both now, and even more so in the future, when I think the cultures of western Canada and the countries of the Pacific Rim will be even closer than they are now," says Wharton.

The trails wind, often through tunnels of
rhododendron, from one cleared vista
of the garden to the next.

Buckland's contributions are especially impressive because they don't impose on the natural surroundings. Instead, the designs, like the cedar-shake woodshed crafted in the shape of a giant raven, seem to have emerged from the earth itself.

"Nature has the best form, and teaches the best design. You get the ability to look at things in different perspectives. Nature gives you the views and balances things better than anything," says Buckland.

Buckland, now in his early sixties, knows that he will not last forever. He also knows finding a successor to preserve the garden is unlikely. Hence, the plan for the Field Study Centre was born.

"I knew that if I did restore the garden it would take 10 years, and well, it took 15. I knew I had to have an exit strategy because I would be out of energy and the whole thing would just revert and be overcome by the forest again. So that's when the idea of the foundation and centre first arose," says Buckland.

Field study usually involves camping in pitched tents and cooking over a fire, which take valuable time from the study itself. At Boat Basin there are six cedar bunkhouses, each with its own unique outhouse, and a main

>> continued on page 53





a Look at... JAPAN

Capital Tokyo
Population 127 million
Currency Japanese Yen (JPY)
Time PST + 17 hours

Government Constitutional monarchy
Official Language Japanese
Religion Mainly Shinto and Buddhist

Climate
Temperate plus rainy season, Jun–Jul and typhoon season, Aug–Sep. Hot, humid summers. Bitterly cold winters in north.

Health
Update routine immunizations. Additional health insurance advised. Japan restricts some inhalers and other medications commonly used in Canada.

Health and Travel Advisories
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www.travelclinic.vancouver.bc.ca
www.tripprep.com

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Contacts
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www.vancouver.ca.emb-japan.go.jp
Canadian Embassy Tokyo www.tokyo.gc.ca
Canadian Chamber of Commerce Japan www.cccj.or.jp

Bits
Sumo is Japan's national sport and has existed for over 1000 years. Only a sumo wrestler can wear the distinctive topknot hairstyle. To keep their weight up, they eat a rich stew called *chanko-nabe* before bed. The heaviest wrestler was former *ozeki* ranked Konishiki, who weighed in at 275 kg. However, weight and size do not determine success in the *dohyo* ring. Sumo wrestlers use various techniques to win. A bout lasts an average 2 minutes, with the loser the first to touch the ground or be pushed out of the ring. Sometimes a wrestler will bounce right out of the ring onto those seated below.



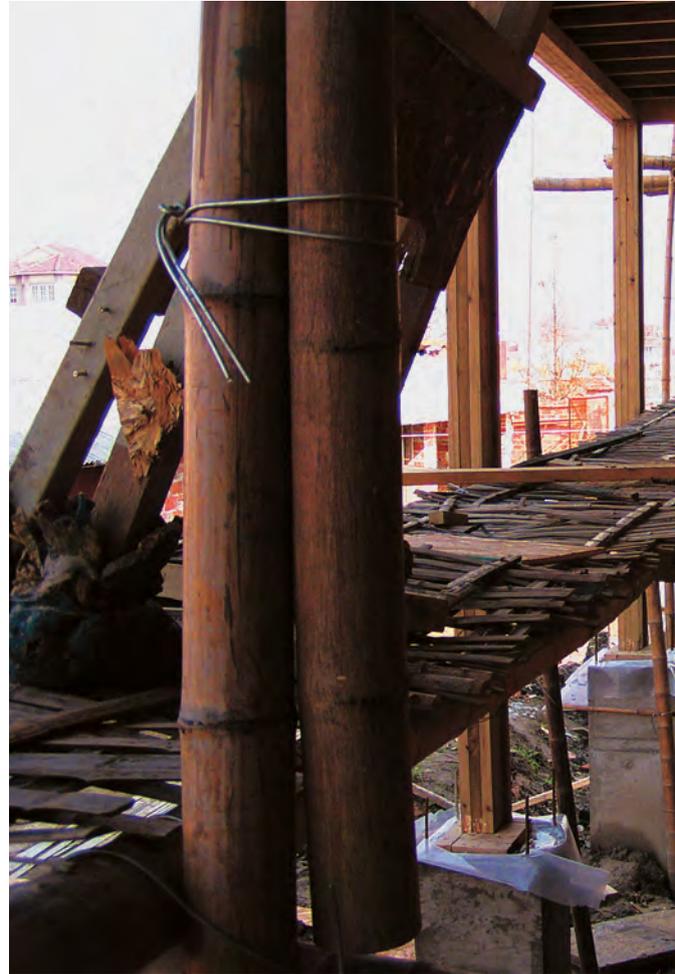
PHOTOS
LANTERN, MANNEQUIN
HELLE SIMONSEN
SUMO WRESTLER, BOY
RAIMEY OLTUIS

BUILDING FOUNDATIONS

WOOD-FRAME CONSTRUCTION IN CHINA

STORY DAVID ADAM

US imposed tariffs have incited the Canadian lumber industry to further pursue the Chinese market, which it has sought after for almost 20 years.



In 2001, the Softwood Lumber Agreement between Canada and the United States expired. The US, accusing Canada of unfair trade because of government-subsidized harvesting rates, imposed a 29 percent tariff on all imports to the US exceeding 14.7 million board feet. Canada went to the North American Free Trade Agreement and the World Trade Organization to challenge the US decision. In March 2004 the WTO ruled in Canada's favour, with NAFTA's decision still to come. The ramifications of the rulings remain to be seen.

The US tariff caused great turmoil in communities throughout BC that rely heavily on the forestry sector. More than 20 000 jobs and \$10 billion in

PHOTOS COURTESY OF CMHC AND BCIT CANADIAN HOUSING AND CONSTRUCTION CENTRE



trade have been lost since the SLA expired. Mills that have survived claim there is no profit in what little they can produce. Responding to this crisis, government and private industry have teamed up to open new export markets for lumber. China, with its increasing housing needs, is the primary focus.

Annual housing starts in the US are approximately 2 million. China is currently building 10 million units, and that number is expected to reach 30 million by 2010. The US market has been an easy sell because, like Canada, wood-frame construction is the preferred method. Conversely, China builds nearly all its housing with concrete or masonry. The general perception in China is that wood is unsafe,

not durable and too expensive. China also lacks a national building code for wood-frame housing and its workforce is untrained in wood-frame construction technology. Growing concern for China's natural environment, combined with the efforts of Canadian agencies such as the Council of Forest Industries (COFI), is helping to change this, opening up new doors for wood-frame construction.

In recent years, many Chinese who have lived abroad have returned to China with positive reports of North American-style housing. Many successful entrepreneurs in China want to live the western-style dream, including owning villas in westernized model communities. Current estimates show 5 million

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Clockwise from the top: Green Villa wood-frame houses in Shanghai built by Edmonton's Red Leaf Enterprises (photo courtesy of CMHC); a group of Chinese industry representatives tour a wood-frame housing project during their visit to BCIT (photo courtesy of BCIT); a BCIT instructor gives hands-on training to a group of Chinese students in Shanghai (photo courtesy of BCIT).

Previous page: Construction of wood-frame houses takes place in Shanghai using bamboo scaffolding. (photos courtesy of CMHC)

withstood hundreds of years of exposure to earthquakes, war and the elements. Over the years China has decimated its forests, creating a need for alternative construction methods. Concrete and brick have become the most common. At present, China's 1.3 billion citizens possess a meager 4 percent of the world's forests. The Chinese Academy of Forests recently imposed a nationwide ban on harvesting the few remaining forests. Paul Newman, director of market access and trade at COFI, states "[the yearly] shortfall in wood fibre is equal to the annual allowable cut in British Columbia." This leaves a sizable gap between supply and demand that BC can help to fill.

The first Canadian-style wood-frame homes in China were constructed in the mid 1980s shortly after Deng Xiao Ping, China's former leader, opened the doors to a market based economy. The agricultural sector was the first to prosper. Affluent farmers recognized the benefits of wood-frame housing and welcomed the Canadian product. Unfortunately, the 1989 events of Tiananmen Square brought most foreign trade, including the pilot projects, to an abrupt halt.

In 1999, Ron McDonald, then president of COFI, led a trade mission to China seeking new opportunities for wood product exports. Unfortunately, China did not have a building code that permitted the construction of wood-frame housing. Without the ability to build and sell, but only rent, developers were not interested in building.

The same year, however, a memorandum of understanding was established between the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) and the Chinese Ministry of Construction. In January 2004, after four years of collaboration involving the efforts of many Canadian agencies, new building codes were passed in China with sections pertaining specifically to the use of wood-frame construction. Canadian lumber grading standards were approved. Currently, only Canada and the US are granted this status. This enables graded lumber to be used in legally marketed homes.

Forintek Canada Corporation, a non-governmental organization based at the University of British Columbia (UBC), had a key role in getting the revisions passed. Dr. Chun Ni, a wood engineering scientist at Forintek, was appointed as a full member of the Chinese Timber Structural Design Code Revision Committee with the Ministry of Construction in Beijing.

In November 2001, Canada and China formed three more memorandums of understanding to promote education and training for wood-frame construction. The first one, established between COFI, the British Columbia Institute of Technology (BCIT) and the Science and Technology Committee of the Shanghai Municipal Construction and Management Commission (STC), focused on a transfer of technology and vocational training. The second one involved the efforts of COFI, the City of Coquitlam and STC. The purpose of this memorandum was to train building officials. The third memorandum, between COFI, UBC, Forintek, the Canadian Wood Council and Tongji University in Shanghai, focused on designer training and timber engineering research. Although these initiatives concentrated on activities in Shanghai, there was hope the success could translate into national industry standards.

>> continued on page 56



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taoist healing love

HARNESSING SEXUAL CHI

STORY STACEY CLARKE
PHOTOS MARIANNA SULIC

Saida Désilets and Michael Guzman sit in Taoist Healing Love poses.

a. Eye Gazing with Heart Connection.
Softens the heart and is used to harmonize Chi (energy).

b. Yab Yum (father-mother union).
A meditation that symbolizes the uniting of wisdom and compassion.

c. Circular Chi.
Creates a current of Chi between partners' hearts and sex centres.

d. Yin Yang Harmonizing Mudra.
A meditation for couples implementing eye gazing.



Sometimes called sexual kung-fu, Taoist Healing Love is an age old practice of lovemaking that transports its practitioners to states of euphoria. It has helped many people develop a more soulful bond with their partners, as well as enhance their energy and relaxation outside the bedroom. The Healing Love technique involves a variety of daily relaxation exercises to promote better health. Through meditation, strengthening and breathing exercises, practitioners become aware of their own sexual energy, and how it can be expanded during sex and in their daily lives.

Healing Tao is one of the oldest and largest Tao institutions in the West. The association oversees the certification of Tao instructors, allowing them to open their own centres and schools using the name. It was founded in 1981 in the United States by Mantak Chia and a small group of students that included Michael Winn. The founder and director of Healing Tao University, Winn describes Healing Tao as a way to promote self-cultivation. An authority on Taoist practices, he has edited seven of Chia's books and is co-author of *The Taoist Secrets of Love: Cultivating Male Sexual Energy*.

When people take courses at Healing Tao, they first learn all the basic techniques and principles of the Tao before they get to learn Healing Love.

Universal Tao is the international branch of Healing Tao. Saida Désilets, a Universal Tao instructor in Vancouver, teaches Healing Love to "bring beauty and sacredness back to sexuality." She has worked to develop the female side of Healing Love and has presented her findings to Chia. Based in Vancouver, she now teaches seminars all over the world, and runs a corporate wellness consulting business to help people with stress relief.

Désilets' seminars and private consultations are hands off and clothing on. They begin with the foundation practices of Tao—deep breathing, meditation and understanding of the importance of relaxation in everyday life. Ancient Chinese medicine mapped out the paths that energy, or *Chi*, travels in the body. Healing Love promotes knowledge of these paths and teaches people how to find their sexual energy, or *Ching Chi*.

"This is not a path for those seeking a pill formula," says Désilets. "It is not a path for people who want to follow somebody. It is a path of self mastery, so it requires investment in yourself."

Both men and women are given exercises to help them prolong and multiply their orgasms. There is a lot of focus on multiple orgasms for men because they open the door for much more fulfilling experiences. Once people are aware of their *Ching Chi* energy, they are taught how to mentally focus that energy and circulate it, which can help them experience the euphoria of a full body orgasm.

Sexual energy can be used to heal ailments and emotional scars, or just achieve balance. A similar concept to acupuncture, *Ching Chi* removes blockages as it rushes through the body. Energy flows into damaged areas, prompting a speedy recovery. To reach these heights of awareness, one must first be in control of the body and mind. That is where a teacher like Désilets can help.

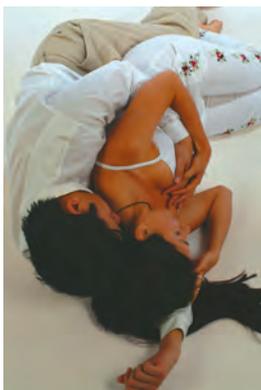
Ken Grossberger, a New York businessman, has done several private sessions with Désilets. "I've worked with a lot of people over the years," he says, "but every once in a while you run into someone who has studied their craft well and has a gift. Désilets is one of those people." Grossberger described his sessions as being very meditative, focusing on basic relaxation and presence of mind. "Even though I was only with her for a



a



b



c



d



e

a. A nurturing pose.
The receiver is held in unconditional love and the giver activates the receiver's heart and crown centres.

b. Heart and yoni (vulva) healing.
A nurturing pose for a woman who is feeling vulnerable.

c. Spooning.
Links chakras and rebalances Chi between partners.

d. Yin Yang Harmonizing Mudra.

e. Micro-cosmic Orbit Meditation.
A finishing pose used to absorb Chi after exchanges between partners during a meditation session.

For more information on Saida Désilets and her seminars, visit www.jadegoddess.com

For more information on Universal Tao instructors, visit www.taoinstructors.org

few hours, whether she removed a mountain or a pebble, the path was certainly now clear.”

About 85 percent of Désilets' private clients are business people. She finds that impotence and other sexual problems are common among people in stressful jobs. “Part of what happens when our body is under a lot of stress is our sexual energy, or vital life force, is redirected to the vital organs to keep us functioning,” she says. Désilets has had positive results helping people in these situations regain their vitality. Her clients find they have more energy in their everyday lives, require less sleep and report getting sick less often.

The main selling point for Healing Love is that it is about better sex, but sex is only part of a much bigger picture.

Désilets has witnessed many of the more visible transformations in people who have worked with her. “Even after an hour,” she says, “their eyes are brighter, their face will be softer and more open.” Over time, people tend to become more grounded and relaxed.

Winn also cites the medical benefits of Healing Love. For men, he says, it can help with sexual dysfunction, including premature ejaculation and low libido. It can also be a cure for chronic sexual frustration. For women, Healing Love can help someone who is frigid overcome sexual blocks. “Frigidness is a contraction, it can be detracted,” says Winn. Healing Love can also help alleviate symptoms of PMS and balance menstrual cycles.

Taoist sexual alchemy is thought to be about 3000 years old. The Chinese text, “the oldest medical sexology text in the

world,” says Winn proudly, dates back 2500 years. It was once very popular and was taught mostly by Chinese Taoist monks. It is thought that over time, Confucianism wiped out most of the Taoist sexual practices, driving sexual alchemy underground where it was taught only in secret societies. Some of these societies kept their traditions alive by training women to be concubines and consorts. However, many women in these sects were captured, imprisoned and killed for their sexual ideology.

While China may have experienced a lack of sexual freedom in the past, Winn reports that the future is looking brighter. Since 2001, several sex therapy clinics have opened up and a few are teaching Taoist sexual alchemy again. Though, says Winn, there is still a lack of good teachers in China.

The main selling point for Healing Love is that it is about better sex, but sex is only part of a much bigger picture. Learning to breathe and getting your body in balance is part of a lifestyle. “This is about everything, not just sex,” says Désilets. People who come to her for private consultations often think they're going to have a sexual class, but she explains that the first few classes are just about achieving balance. “If people can connect with their body and breathing they will have a lot of success. Even five minutes a day can make a difference,” she says.

While the health claims associated with Healing Love can seem far-fetched, practice makes perfect, and faith enhances results. Thousand of years of testimonials show that there must be something behind these exercises. With the rising popularity of Chinese medicine and eastern philosophy, and the high-stress lifestyles of today, Taoist Healing Love might be just what the doctor ordered. 🐉

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GRAPPLING WITH CHANGE

The Evolution of Brazilian JiuJitsu

STORY OLIVER McPARTLIN

PHOTOS DAVID ADAM AND
COURTESY OF INVISIBLE CITIES PRESS

In 1914, the Japanese fighting art of jiu-jitsu was brought to South America, where it began to undergo substantial changes and a meteoric rise in local popularity. Over the past century, one visionary family, the Gracies, has become synonymous with the sport by spearheading its evolution. The Gracie influence has had such an effect that Brazilian jiu-jitsu and Gracie jiu-jitsu have become interchangeable terms. Today, Brazilian jiu-jitsu has come to be regarded by many worldwide as the essential martial art, both for self-defense and for sport.

Since the early nineties, the Ultimate Fighting Championship (UFC) has brought this fighting style to the world's attention. The no-holds-barred, mixed style tournament brings together boxers, kickboxers, Muay Thai fighters, wrestlers and anyone else willing to put their skills, reputation and well being on the line. Time after time, Brazilian jiu-jitsu has proven to be the ideal mixture of techniques because of its fluid, strategic and cerebral approach.

Jiu-jitsu's long metamorphosis began in 1914 in Para, Brazil, with a Japanese immigrant named Mitsuyo Maeda. Maeda, convinced that the Amazon region was a better choice for Japanese immigrants than the United States, was working to build a Japanese community in the area. He worked closely with the Japanese and Brazilian governments to promote this idea. Maeda, also known by his fighting alias Count Koma, had been a renowned prize-fighter both in Asia and in Europe before travelling to the Americas. Perhaps foreshadowing things to come, it is rumored that in Japan, he was expelled from the renowned Kodokan Judo Academy in Tokyo for participating in matches against fighters from other disciplines.

In Brazil, Maeda befriended Gastao Gracie, a local politician. Gastao offered to help Maeda promote and facilitate Japanese immigration in exchange for training his son Carlos Gracie. At the time, it was against Japanese law for jiu-jitsu to be taught to foreigners because of its original application as a hand-to-hand combat method, first for samurai, and later for the Japanese military. After training Carlos for almost 10 years, Maeda returned to Japan, leaving essential knowledge in the hands of his student.

Carlos went on to open his own school in Rio de Janeiro in 1925. Around that time, Carlos' father fell ill and Carlos took his brother Helio Gracie, 11 years his junior, in to live with him. Helio, the youngest of the family, was notoriously fragile as a boy. His parents never allowed him to engage in physical activity, fearing that his slight frame couldn't handle it. Nonetheless, he watched his older brother teach classes until he had the moves memorized.

Legend has it that one day Carlos didn't show up to teach and Helio offered to take over. He realized that he knew all the techniques, but found them difficult to execute with his diminutive stature. He began adapting the traditional jiu-jitsu to his own frail body's abilities, fine-tuning the use of leverage in many of them. This is considered the turning point where jiu-jitsu in Brazil broke off from the original Japanese form, which was bound by tradition and rigid methodology. The two broth-

ers went on to adapt the fighting style to better suit their needs, applying changes to the sport that would have been inconceivable under the strict Japanese guidelines.

Carlos' son, Rolls Gracie, continued to expand the sport in the 1970s when he began training with wrestlers from the US and adapting wrestling techniques into their still nascent form of jiu-jitsu. Rolls is also credited with incorporating elements of the Russian fighting art, sambo, into the mixture. It is this openness to the mixing and sampling of different styles that makes Brazilian jiu-jitsu such a powerful force in events like the UFC and other *vale tudo* (anything goes) competitions.

The UFC was the brainchild of Helios' son Rorion Gracie and was dominated by his other son, Royce Gracie. This first UFC was broadcast in 1993 on pay-per-view to an astonishing 86 000 viewers. By the fifth show, the number of viewers had increased to over 300 000.

The scope and spectacle of the UFC was definitely a new innovation, but not an entirely novel idea. The pitting of this martial art against others has been a fundamental element in its development. As far back as the 1920s, the Gracies were challenging fighters from other disciplines to highly publicized *vale tudo* matches, mostly to spread the word about their school and their new style. Helio's first public fight at age 17 was against Antonio Portugal, the Brazilian lightweight boxing champion. Helio dodged one punch, took Portugal down to the floor, and won the match in less than 30 seconds. In 1950, Helio put forth a challenge to legendary American boxer Joe Louis to fight for a 1 million Brazilian cruzeiro purse. The fight never transpired. Throughout their careers, however, the Gracies continually challenged fighters from other disciplines, winning publicity and putting their methods to the test.

The *vale tudo* style tournament has created a new breed of fighters. Trevor Clarkson, director of the Creative Fighters Guild in Richmond, BC, explains: "It used to be that some guys would cross-train a little bit but mostly stick to just one style or just one art, convinced that it was the best. But as more people started seeing UFC, they started to



Above: Helio Gracie balances his son Rorion on his legs, 1953. Opposite page: Helio and Carlos Gracie train outdoors in Brazil. (Photos courtesy of Invisible Cities Press)



Marcus Soares, a sixth-degree black belt, grapples with Vlado Skrepnik on the mats of Gold Lion Muay Thai gym.

so quickly. “Grappling is the most natural fighting art. From the time we’re very young we’re wrestling, rolling around. So when you do jiu-jitsu, it’s very easy for your body to pick it up—it’s based on natural movements. You don’t need any special skill because we all already have those basic senses. It’s very natural for it to mix with other styles.”

It seems that the future of Brazilian jiu-jitsu is uncertain. Kang says in the near future he hopes to see the sport rise “at least to the level of boxing in terms of the level of professionalism, level of popularity and number of viewers, just without the corruption, hopefully.”

Kang’s trainer is Brazilian jiu-jitsu veteran Marcus Soares, who has been instructing novices and training professionals in Vancouver since March 1997. Sometimes referred to as the Human Jiu-Jitsu Encyclopaedia, Soares is a sixth *dan* black belt, one of only a handful of black belts in the sport outside of Brazil. He started his training in Brazil at age 13 under the tutelage of Carlson Gracie, a friend of his uncle’s. He earned his first black belt after only seven years of training, and soon began helping Carlson train the younger fighters. Unlike some of his own students, Soares has never fought a professional *vale tudo* match. The no-holds-barred style was banned in Brazil in the early 1960s, only to start up again in the 1980s, after he had stopped competing. He did, however, fight competitively for more than 10 years, through the seventies and eighties, and put himself through school on a Judo scholarship, earning two university degrees. He now teaches classes at Gold Lion Muay Thai on Commercial Drive and at several other locations. He also gives seminars in Canada, the US and overseas, spreading the wealth of his vast knowledge of the sport.

realize that you have to cross-train. You need to mix up all these different elements to stay on top of what everyone else is doing.”

Dennis Kang is a Vancouver-based fighter who has trained and fought in many countries, including, Japan, Canada and the US. He has also trained with the Gracie family in Brazil. He agrees with Clarkson on the importance of cross-training. “This sport is not just a jiu-jitsu match and it’s not just a kickboxing match. It’s a mixed martial art competition. So you’ve got to know how to grapple, you’ve got to know how to hit, you’ve got to know how to take the person down...Nowadays, cross-training is just training and training is cross-training.” Like countless others, Kang credits the UFC with sparking his initial interest in the sport more than 10 years ago.

John Kefallonitis, who recently opened Universal Martial Arts in Vancouver, says: “A lot of people still mistake what you see in the UFC, the *vale tudo*, for Brazilian jiu-jitsu, but what they’re seeing is a mixture that happens when you’re applying it against other arts. But Brazilian jiu-jitsu is only jiu-jitsu; it’s just grappling... The *vale tudo* is what gets all the exposure from stuff like UFC, but I think real pure Brazilian jiu-jitsu is what’s actually more widely practised as far as people who do it for themselves, or just for the love.” He also speculates as to why the art seemed to catch on

Today, the Gracies and their extended family, the Machados, continue to own and operate martial arts academies all over North and South America that routinely churn out top-notch fighters. 🐾

Gold Lion Muay Thai is located at 3070 Commercial Drive in Vancouver. For more information, call 604.876.6661.

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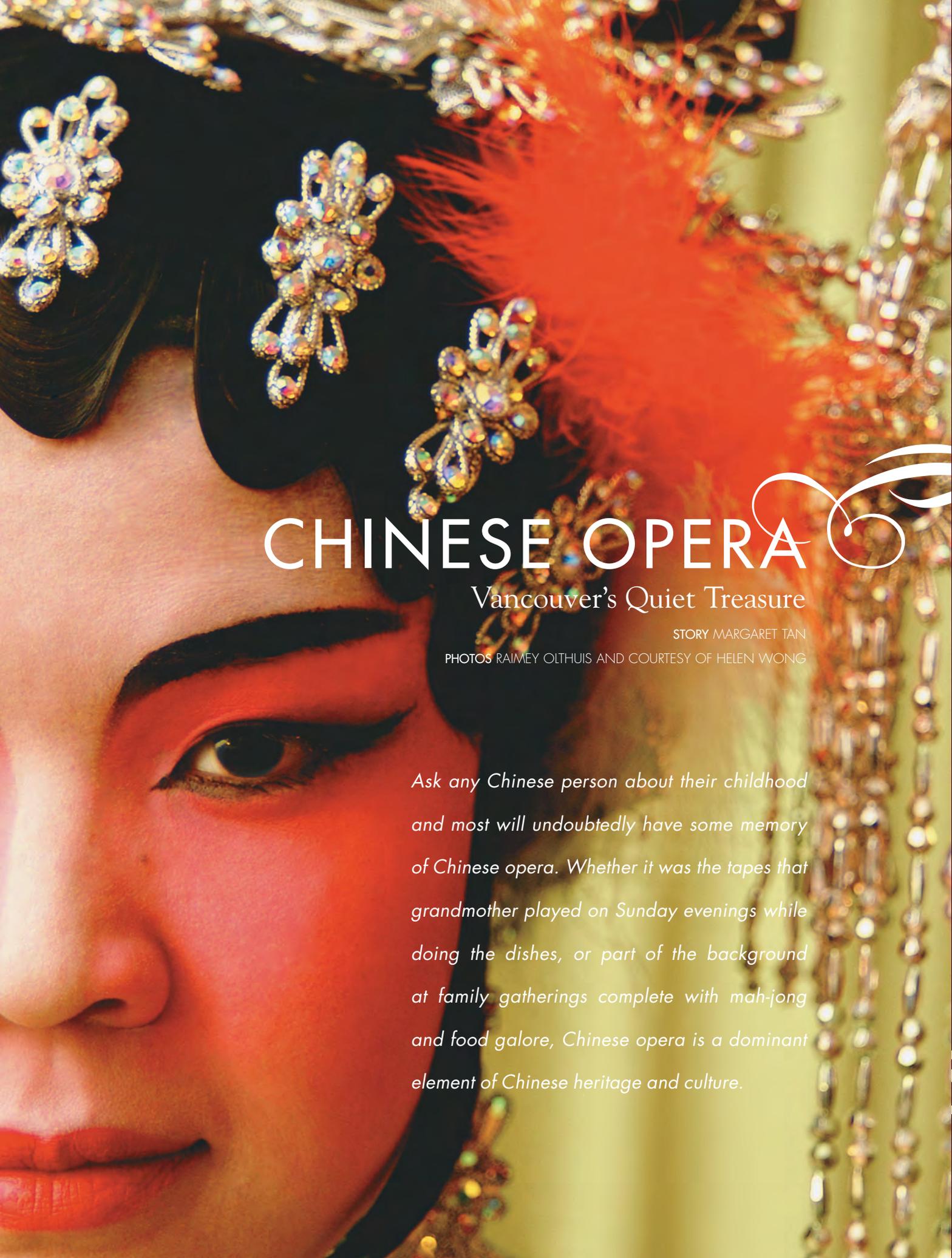


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CHINESE OPERA

Vancouver's Quiet Treasure

STORY MARGARET TAN

PHOTOS RAIMEY OILTHUIS AND COURTESY OF HELEN WONG

Ask any Chinese person about their childhood and most will undoubtedly have some memory of Chinese opera. Whether it was the tapes that grandmother played on Sunday evenings while doing the dishes, or part of the background at family gatherings complete with mah-jong and food galore, Chinese opera is a dominant element of Chinese heritage and culture.



Helen Wong
as a hua dan (princess).
(Photo courtesy of Helen Wong)
Opposite page: Margaret Tan
dressed as a hua dan.

My first experience with the opera was at just such a family gathering. The sounds were alarming and bizarre to my untrained ears—what were these extreme tonal highs and lows? And what was the appeal? Despite my initial confusion, I soon found myself leading a mini-troupe of impersonators. With towels as extended sleeves and my mom’s blush, we rehearsed with energy, not unlike the real deal. I had the opportunity 23 years later to revisit my wonder with Chinese opera, only this time I was looking for real costumes and real makeup on real performers, not just mom’s blush.

You would think that being a cornerstone of Chinese culture, Chinese opera would be easy to seek out. That a simple click of the mouse would do the

trick—not so. As it turns out, Chinese opera in Vancouver is as mysterious as a smoke-filled basement room in Old Chinatown. There is little factual information on the few websites that exist, and a visit to the Vancouver Public Library resulted in only a handful of books on the topic. Armed with only a couple of names (but no addresses) of local Chinese opera societies, I decided to venture to Chinatown in search of a live encounter.

After making three rounds through the core of Chinatown with no success, my will was finally defeated. Bemused, tired and puzzled, I could only wonder: who does one have to know to access the elusive world of Chinese opera in Vancouver?

What I do know about Chinese opera, specifically Beijing opera, is that it dates back to the Ching Dynasty (1644–1911). With its roots in vaudeville-style acts, it combines both song and dance to tell the story of thousands of years of history. It is an amalgamation of mime, martial acrobatics, vivid makeup, elaborate costumes and melodic storytelling.

The typical stage setting for a performance usually consists of a table and chairs, and few props. The minimalist setting relies instead on the imagination of the audience and the miming capabilities of the actor.

Chinese opera varies greatly in style and composition from region to region. In Beijing opera, also known as Peking opera, the roles are divided roughly into four categories: *sheng* and *ching* (the male characters), *dan* (the female characters) and *chou* (the jesters). These categories are further divided based on age, singing range and temperament. It is not unusual for a woman to play a man if her demeanour is more suited to the characteristics of a male role.

The singers, dressed in elaborate and colourful costumes, are accompanied by an orchestra comprised of a variety of Chinese instruments. Their faces are carefully painted with makeup, each colour symbolizing a different quality of the character.

I decided to look within my own extended family for access to the opera and discovered Helen Wong. Once an active member of the Ching Wan Society in Vancouver, Wong was more than pleased to talk to me about her 14 years with the troupe. Finally, the doors had been opened into Vancouver’s





From left to right: Della Tse places real human hair on Margaret Tan; Hair is styled using tree sap; The hua dan crown is set on Tan's head.

elusive world of Chinese opera. With the demure mannerisms of a *hua dan* (one of the primary feminine roles), Wong recounted her experiences with fondness.

According to Wong, Chinese opera in Vancouver began as a means to socialize and partake in traditional entertainment. All performances were offered to the community by donation and were an occasion to bring the people of Chinatown together. These elaborate shows were put on to celebrate the coming of spring and welcome the Chinese New Year. Rehearsals were held every Sunday. Wong happily added: “The gatherings were great fun. We ate and did what we really enjoyed with good friends—it was the perfect way to socialize and stay connected with the community and our heritage.”

Officially retired from the Ching Wan Society, Wong is still involved in Chinese opera, but as an audience member. Although Chinese opera in Vancouver has taken on a more entrepreneurial role in the community, the art has remained true to its purpose of bringing people together.

Upon hearing of my fascination with the costume and makeup of the opera, Wong insisted that I pursue my childhood dream and don the ensemble of a character. She introduced me to one of her close friends from her days with the opera society, Della Tse. Another veteran of these arts, Tse wears a serious face, but conjures up a smile that could light up a dust-filled room. Tse welcomed me into her home for a transformation into a character straight out of a live performance: a princess.

With a freshly washed face, the process began. I was layered with Vaseline, a highly pigmented red cream to accent my eyes and cheeks and then with a white powder to draw out the colour on my face. The final stages were ruby red lips, newly drawn brows, and dark dramatic eyeliner worthy of Tammy Faye Baker. With a smile, Tse held up a mirror to let me have a peek. The person who stared back at me was barely recognizable.

The next step was to slant my eyes upward by tugging and tying my skin and scalp back as far as possible. Tse performed this process on me only once. “Normally, for a performance, we

do this three times to get the maximum effect—it gives you a really bad headache—but on you, I’ll only do it once,” she said with a teasing smirk. The reason behind this look is “to mimic the eyes of the phoenix...exotic, beautiful and fierce.”

On a thin wood board sat rows of shiny black hair. These pieces were real human hair (possibly 100 years old) kept glossy with tree sap. The cold, slithery extensions were attached to my face and head with sturdy pieces of fabric. Once all the hair pieces were applied, the headdress and its accompanying ornaments of rhinestones and costume jewels were meticulously placed on my head.

During this lengthy process, Wong and Tse reminisced over their performance days. Although their native dialect was Cantonese, they were trained to perform in Mandarin, the dialect of Beijing opera. Tse livened up the room with stories of the makeup sessions that took place before shows, causing Wong to giggle and shoosh from across the table. With the energy of two teenage girls, they recounted stories of people falling asleep during makeup sessions. Wary not to disturb my own makeup, I tried to suppress my smile. The two ladies were amused that they could make a child, as they referred to me in Cantonese, laugh at their chit-chat. When the room quieted down and I was dressed with the final touches, I could not help but feel a bond with these two women I barely knew. I finally understood the draw behind Chinese opera.

Knowing the colourful history of Chinese opera is not the key to the experience—it is so much more. Rich with storytelling and beautiful costumes, it is almost easy to overlook the obvious. Chinese opera in Vancouver has not only served to entertain familiar audiences, but newcomers as well. An experience that captivates while recreating history in time, place and culture, Chinese opera links us to a past that could not be done in a more enticing way. Bringing people together with music and entertainment, this art form is here to stay. Transcending generations and cultures, Vancouver’s Chinese opera scene is quiet but very much alive and well. 🍵

a Look at...

CAMBODIA

Capital Phnom Penh
Population 12 million
Currency Cambodian Riel (KHR)
Time PST + 15 hours

Government Multiparty constitutional monarchy
Official Language Khmer
Religion Mainly Buddhist
Climate Tropical. Rainy, May–Oct. Dry, Nov–Apr.
Health* Malaria risk in some areas.



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Contacts

Cambodian Embassy USA www.embassy.org/cambodia
Canadian Embassy Phnom Penh www.phnompenh.gc.ca

INDONESIA

Capital Jakarta
Population 220 million
Currency Indonesian Rupiah (IDR)
Time PST + 15, 16, 17 hours

Government Republic
Official Language Indonesian
Religion Mainly Muslim
Climate Tropical. Rainy, Oct–Apr. Dry, May–Sep.
Health* No malaria risk in tourist areas.



Visa
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Business travellers advised to apply
in advance.

Contacts
Indonesian Consulate Vancouver
www.indonesiavancouver.org
Canadian Embassy Jakarta
www.jakarta.gc.ca

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www.travelclinic.vancouver.bc.ca
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typhoid, Japanese encephalitis, rabies depending on area visited.
Evacuation coverage advised.



CHINA

Capital Beijing
Population 1.3 billion
Currency Chinese Renminbi (RMB)
Time PST + 16 hours

Government Communist
Official Language Mandarin
Official Religions
Buddhist, Taoist, Muslim, Protestant, Catholic
Climate
Temperate, tropical and semi-desert regions.
Health*
Malaria risk in southern border areas.

Visa
Required.

Contacts

Chinese Consulate Vancouver
www.chineseconsulatevancouver.org/eng
Canadian Embassy Beijing www.beijing.gc.ca
Canada China Business Council www.ccbc.com

Bits

China's biggest construction project since the Great Wall is slated to finish by 2009. The Three Gorges Dam on the Yangtze River is the world's largest power project, with a planned capacity of 18 200 MW. Flooding 632 sq km of land to create a reservoir has forced the resettlement of 820 000 people. Some towns were abandoned and buildings demolished to make way for the floodwaters. Historic temples have been dismantled and rebuilt on higher ground. Controversy has dogged the project with allegations of corruption leading to shoddy construction or the improper allocation of resettlement funds. Meanwhile, the water is rising.



PHOTOS

CAMBODIA CYNTHIA CRICK
INDONESIA VERONIQUE MEURGUES
CHINA CYNTHIA CRICK

The New Aberdeen Centre REDEFINING RETAIL

STORY TIFFANY CHAN
PHOTOS COURTESY OF ABERDEEN CENTRE

Fluid and modern, the Aberdeen Centre has forever changed the skyline of Richmond, BC. Originally opened in 1990 in Asia West—an area named for its dense Asian population—the Aberdeen Centre was Richmond's first Asian-style retail complex. Rebuilt in 2003, the centre has reinvented the idea of a shopping mall and offers a cosmopolitan shopping experience from Asia. Its new design reflects the city's bustling lifestyle, and creates a fusion of East meets West. Its success has since started a major trend in the area for retail complexes with an Asian aesthetic.

Retail development and expansion, often the products of urban renewal, are spawning new generations of architecture. This architecture focuses on marketing and design in order to promote culture, community and lifestyle. Fairchild Developments Ltd. took note of this trend when the reconstruction began for a bigger and better Aberdeen Centre.

Fairchild Developments Ltd. commissioned one of Vancouver's well-known architectural design firms, Bing Thom Architects (BTA), to design a piece that would reflect the charisma of Richmond's popular Chinatown. The BTA group designed a retail space that would cater to the clientele who shop there—mostly families and Greater Vancouver's growing Chinese community.





While the original Aberdeen Centre was mostly comprised of small vendors—a style that is similar to the street markets of Hong Kong—the new Aberdeen Centre holds over 200 shops, and also functions as an entertainment pavilion.

Aberdeen Centre holds a unique place in Vancouver architecture. Its low-rise serpentine façade, a winding curtain wall made of clear and coloured glass, stands out against the symmetrical stucco and cement high-rises of the city skyline. One of the more innovative architectural designs in the greater Vancouver region, it was a challenge to erect. Its size forced Hazelbridge Way to curve around the mall’s organic structure and a portion of the street had to be repaved.

There is nothing antiquated about the mall’s retail design. “We didn’t want to remain married to one shopping mall idea... primarily the suburban opaque shoebox,” says Chris Doray from BTA. “Shop fronts change as often as the merchandise that is put on display. We borrowed this culture for the building form. There is a sense of fluidity to the spaces created and even if you stood still, the building feels slippery.” The architects at BTA spent five years designing a structure that defies the architectural forms normally attached to retail design. “As architects, we are the artists, the master-builder and the educator... constantly trying to find a balance between form and function,” says Doray. The curving spaces, circular shapes and graceful bowl-shaped ceiling are forms that function as an interface for human interaction.

The shopping centre is three storeys high. Particularly stunning at night, the colourful exterior is lit from within, giving the building the appearance of a billowing Chinese lantern. The roof is shaped like a disk with circular skylights punctuating the mall’s ceiling. The fluid shape of the outer façade draws many shoppers in through the concave entrance to experience a multi-sensory interior, filled with light shows and a singing fountain reminiscent of the Bellagio singing fountain in Las Vegas.

The City of Richmond granted \$80 000 to create a public art piece for the new mall. Merging sculpture with architecture can be tricky, but the sculptural piece named *Pixel* serves its purpose and easily integrates with the sleek design of the building. The sculpture spans the entire length of the curtain wall and uses a variety of clear and coloured glass. The notions of flux and variation are important themes to the art piece, which is meant to reflect the changing attitudes of consumerism. The red, green and blue represents colour created from pure light, and is randomly dispersed across the façade. The piece is a blur of movement, reflecting the variety and flow of shoppers and vendors within the mall.

Modern retail design offers an interactive experience beyond that of simple consumerism. It has a much more elevated presence that focuses on the lifestyle and culture of a particular area, and is aesthetically pleasing to passers-by. Aberdeen Centre is a landmark, a shopping mall, an entertainment pavilion, a residence, a commercial unit and a work of art. Above all, it is a place of human interaction and a reflection of the city’s changing times. 🎨

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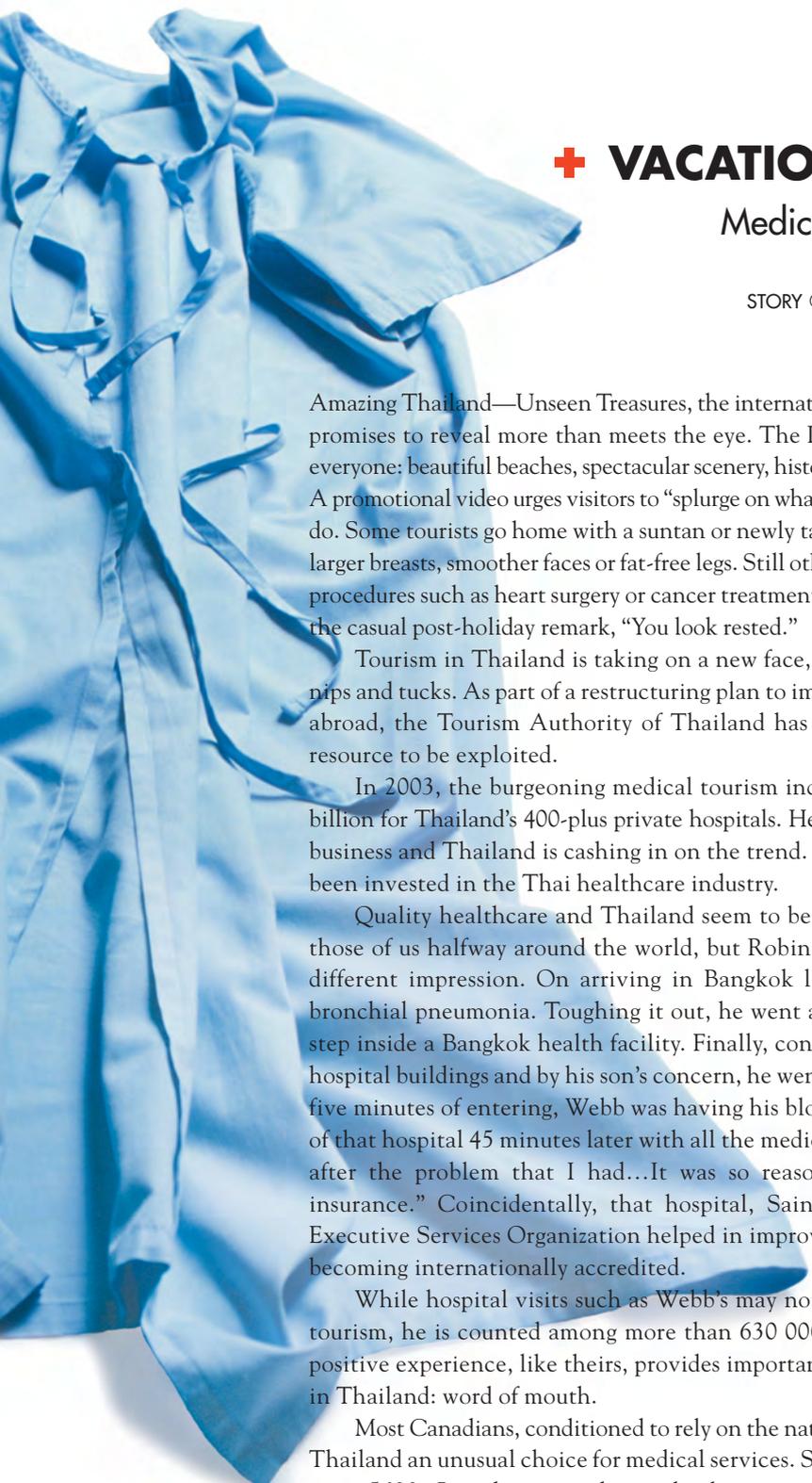
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+ VACATION IN WARD B

Medical Tourism in Thailand

STORY CYNTHIA CRICK PHOTOS FILIP HRIBAL

Amazing Thailand—Unseen Treasures, the international tourism slogan for Thailand, promises to reveal more than meets the eye. The Land of Smiles has something for everyone: beautiful beaches, spectacular scenery, historical sites and of course, shopping. A promotional video urges visitors to “splurge on whatever your heart desires.” And they do. Some tourists go home with a suntan or newly tailored clothes, others return with larger breasts, smoother faces or fat-free legs. Still others undergo more serious medical procedures such as heart surgery or cancer treatment. It gives a whole new meaning to the casual post-holiday remark, “You look rested.”

Tourism in Thailand is taking on a new face, and that face may involve a few nips and tucks. As part of a restructuring plan to improve the way it markets tourism abroad, the Tourism Authority of Thailand has identified medical tourism as a resource to be exploited.

In 2003, the burgeoning medical tourism industry generated more than \$1.5 billion for Thailand's 400-plus private hospitals. Healthcare is becoming a profitable business and Thailand is cashing in on the trend. Since 1999 over \$1.3 billion has been invested in the Thai healthcare industry.

Quality healthcare and Thailand seem to be an incongruous combination to those of us halfway around the world, but Robin Webb of Whonnock, BC, has a different impression. On arriving in Bangkok last spring, he came down with bronchial pneumonia. Toughing it out, he went about his business, not daring to step inside a Bangkok health facility. Finally, convinced by the gleaming, modern hospital buildings and by his son's concern, he went to the nearest hospital. Within five minutes of entering, Webb was having his blood pressure taken. “I walked out of that hospital 45 minutes later with all the medication that was necessary to look after the problem that I had...It was so reasonable I didn't even go to the insurance.” Coincidentally, that hospital, Saint Louis, is one that Canadian Executive Services Organization helped in improving its quality management and becoming internationally accredited.

While hospital visits such as Webb's may not be strictly classified as medical tourism, he is counted among more than 630 000 overseas patients in 2003. His positive experience, like theirs, provides important marketing for medical tourism in Thailand: word of mouth.

Most Canadians, conditioned to rely on the national healthcare system, may find Thailand an unusual choice for medical services. Some, like Webb, do not. In 2003, over 5600 Canadians sought medical treatment at Bumrungrad Hospital in Bangkok. With an atmosphere more akin to a five-star hotel than a hospital, Bumrungrad is not only the largest private medical institution in Asia, but also the first hospital in Asia to become internationally accredited.





Tourism in Thailand is taking on a whole new face, and that face may involve a few nips and tucks.

After moving to Bangkok, Helle Simonsen of North Vancouver began experiencing neck pains and went to Samitivej Hospital. She was able to see an orthopedic surgeon right away. Concerned about her x-ray results, he arranged an MRI scan for the following day and instructed her to return to see him with the scan results. "I went there, I had the scans done and then I waited for about 45 minutes while they developed the scans. It was quite instantaneous." Simonsen was back to see the surgeon at Samitivej within 24 hours of her first visit. He took her down the hall to another specialist, a neurosurgeon, who advised she needed immediate surgery on two herniated disks in her neck.

Such speed is unheard of in Canada. In fact, it was almost too fast for Simonsen, shaken by the seriousness of the surgery she faced. "It happened really quick. It could have happened quicker. I could have just said yes right away and popped under the knife, but I wanted to get it checked." Armed with her MRI scans, she went to two other hospitals. At about \$20 a consultation and with no waiting list to see a specialist, getting a second and third opinion was well worth it. She even sent the scans to Canada just to be sure.

The two doctors who operated on Simonsen, an orthopedic surgeon and a neurosurgeon, were both educated in the United States. It is not unusual to find doctors in Thailand with overseas training. Angela Stafford, head of the international centre at BNH Hospital in Bangkok, affirms that doctors find it a career advantage to train abroad. As a result, doctors speak a variety of languages at BNH, an important factor in attracting foreign clientele.

BNH Hospital receives its fair share of foreigners. Patients average 40 to 50 percent foreign. Many expatriate patients are from the Canadian Embassy, including Canada's ambassador to Thailand. Other patients come from abroad, often to undergo cosmetic surgery. Stafford reveals that a well-known plastic surgeon, Dr. Preecha Tieawtranon, has a clinic at BNH and is one reason for the hospital's popularity.

Patients do not necessarily jump straight into cosmetic surgery. According to Benchawan Ukrid, former director and consul of the Vancouver Thai Trade Centre, the first step is often traditional Thai massage or spa treatment. From there, tourists learn about other services, including non-surgical treatments such as Botox, microdermabrasion, laser hair removal and laser rejuvenation therapy. These procedures are available at many hospitals. Dr. Nalinee Sutthipisal of Samitivej Hospital comments that increased demand is the reason for their new skin and laser centre. For those choosing to take the next step, cosmetic surgery is often an affordable option at many Thai hospitals.

Cosmetic surgery is becoming increasingly more common in our society. A few years ago, a TV show such as the American-produced *Extreme Makeover* would have been



inconceivable. Last fall the Australian program *A Current Affair* followed a Sydney woman to Bumrungrad Hospital to film her fortieth birthday present to herself: breast implants. More than 700 e-mail inquiries from interested Australians soon followed. In Bangkok and tourist resort centres such as Phuket in southern Thailand, hospitals and clinics offer just about any cosmetic procedure. Some refer to Yanhee General Hospital in Bangkok as “the plastic surgery hospital.” With young women whizzing by on roller blades delivering messages around the hospital, it does a brisk business.

The Thai Trade Centre in downtown Vancouver gets calls just about every day requesting information. The Thai government is actively promoting medical tourism at health fairs and through Thai Trade Centres abroad, targeting to reach 1 million patients by 2005. Whether or not they will reach that goal, doubling the patient number from 2001, remains to be seen. Maintaining high quality and competitive prices will remain the key factors.

Currently, medical costs remain relatively low because staffing and overhead are low. Another less obvious reason is the difficulty in pursuing medical malpractice suits in Thailand. Doctors vigorously oppose any legislation that would make it easier for those seeking damages. Stafford notes that doctors at BNH all have personal liability insurance, but “are honour bound to make sure that whatever went wrong is [made] right.”

Ruben Toral, marketing director at Bumrungrad Hospital, cautions that when going abroad for medical care, people need to be smart consumers. They need to realize that they are taking their health in their own hands and “understand where [they] are going to, and make sure this is an accredited facility with management standards, care standards, quality standards that [they] would expect in [their] home country.”

Back in North Vancouver, Simonsen does not rule out returning to Bangkok one day as a medical tourist. She maintains that the doctors in Bangkok are “trained over here, so you’re getting western medicine but at a cheaper price...more quickly, more efficiently, and you get probably much better care in the hospital than you would here because they’ve got a higher staff ratio.”

Webb feels no reservations about going back to Thailand for medical care. “If my grandson or my children ever got sick with a problem that [is] not taken...seriously...here, and there’s waiting list upon waiting list, I would put everybody on a plane and take them to Thailand. And that’s a fact.” Strong words for a man who admitted being initially nervous about getting medical care in Thailand. Amazing Thailand indeed. 🇹🇭





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The Music of Gamelan

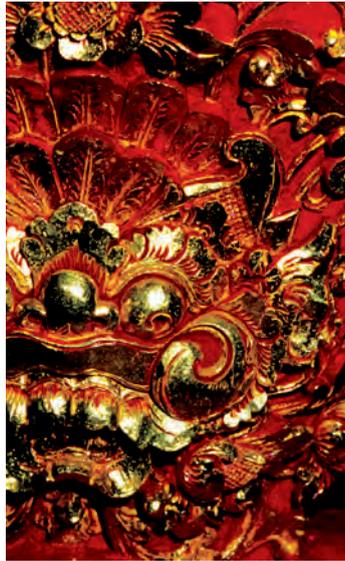
STORY DIANE YEE PHOTOS LOUISE MAJOR

All around Vancouver, groups of musicians gather to practise and perform a traditional trance-like music. Seated on the floor, they strike gongs and other metal instruments creating intricately interwoven musical patterns. Gamelan, played in Indonesia in one form or another for about 1500 years, is a type of percussive orchestra consisting of different sized bronze gongs and instruments that often accompany dancers and shadow puppet plays. These instruments, called metallophones, are similar to western xylophones. Vancouver has a vibrant and varied gamelan community with three orchestras representing Balinese, Javanese and Sundanese gamelan, the three main gamelan styles of Indonesia.

One of the translations of *gamel* in Old Balinese is to hold, or come together as one. This sense of community is a vital part of gamelan structure. The entire set of instruments is viewed as one unit and musicians learn to play all parts. Even singers are viewed as instruments, since there are no soloists or conductors in a gamelan orchestra. Leaders, however, do have a subtle presence, helping indicate changes in musical cycles, or setting the tempo, but the musicians are all expected to pick up on their cues. Everyone works together to feel and produce the music in unison. “You need to be in tune with others. You cannot do your own thing; it just doesn’t work,” explains Audrey Foo, a member of the Vancouver Community Gamelan.

A gamelan is built as a collection of instruments tuned to each other, but not in a conventional western way. Tuning differs from one set to another, even within a given style. For this reason you cannot take an instrument from one orchestra and use it in another unless it matches perfectly. Martin Gotfrit, the director of Simon Fraser University’s School for the Contemporary Arts explains: “The subtleties of tuning are what gives the instrument its fabulous timbre...The colour of the instrument is based on the tuning and how the various parts of it combine and shimmer. The sound has a kind of physical presence, it sparkles.”

The Vancouver Community Gamelan practise on a full sized Javanese court-style set called *Gamelan Kyai Madu Sari*, or The Venerable Essence of Honey. A Javanese set has two of each instrument, representing two different scales. These are not played at the same time. *Gamelan Kyai Madu Sari* consists of



“The sound has a kind of physical presence, it sparkles.”

about 40 instruments housed in ornately carved, red and gold painted frames. The Indonesian Consulate donated this set to Simon Fraser University’s School for the Contemporary Arts after it was on display at Expo ’86.

The musicians play cyclical melodies and sing stories and proverbs in Javanese. Their hands move gently back and forth across the instruments striking keys with one hand and dampening notes with the other. The higher pitched instruments play faster than the lower ones, interlocking to produce soothing, meditative music.

At the University of British Columbia, *Sekaha Gong Gita Asmara*, translated as the Gamelan Club of the Sound of Love, play a Balinese-style music that is fast, fiery and extremely powerful. The group consists of four musicians seated at a set of kettle-shaped gongs placed horizontally in a single row along a red and gold frame. As they perform, patterns of limbs and hammers move in unison across the frame, sometimes converging upon the centre, delighting the senses both visually and sonically with the rhythmic chime of the gongs. A Balinese gamelan has two of each instrument in the same scale, but one of each pair is tuned to a slightly higher pitch creating the shimmering sound distinctive to Balinese gamelan.

Jon Siddall is the director and one of the composers of *Gamelan Si Pawit*, a Sundanese (western Javanese) *Degung* orchestra. Siddall started the internationally renowned Evergreen Club in Toronto with a set he put together himself, using the bronze parts of a set from Indonesia and Canadian-made frames.

The gamelan set, named *Si Pawit*, or The Beginning, is now in use by the Vancouver Community College music department for its advanced gamelan course. Set on smooth wood frames with a natural finish, the set looks markedly different from the instruments of the other two orchestras in Vancouver.

The music that streams from *Si Pawit* is a light and sweet-sounding Sundanese *Degung* style. It is comparable to a chamber music ensemble because there are only eight musicians. Sundanese *Degung* uses only one of the two scales used in the Javanese style, and the *bonang*, a set of small kettle-shaped gongs set horizontally on a wood frame, are smaller and have a different pitch than those found on a Javanese set. From their set, a large gong resonates intermittently while a flute floats gently over the chiming gongs and metallophones.

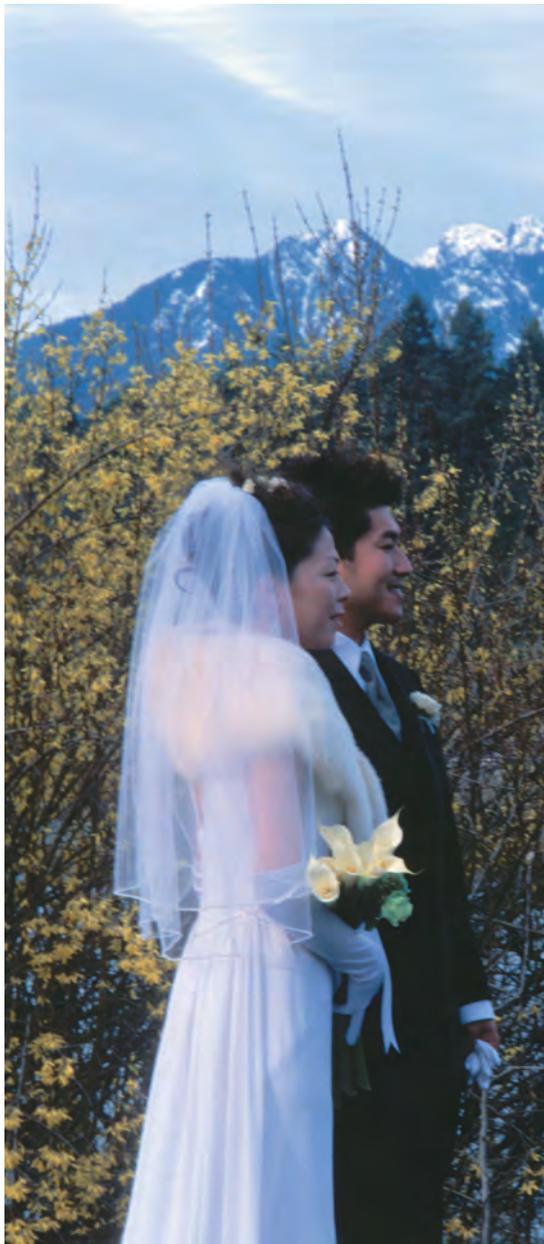
The Vancouver gamelan community provides a valuable opportunity for Indonesian musicians to share their culture with Canadians. Michael Tenzer, artistic director of *Sekaha Gong Gita Asmara* affirms, “Music is a form of intelligence. When you learn the music of another culture you are learning the most positive and beautiful aspects of that culture. People want that knowledge.”

For many people, playing the gamelan is a deeply satisfying experience. For Siddall, it is a remedy for today’s hectic pace. “There’s something about playing the gamelan. You’re hitting these things so gently and they make these really beautiful sounds, and they look lovely—it always puts people in a good mood. There’s something about it...it’s rejuvenating.” 🐼

Destination Wedding

Couples are travelling from all over the world to exchange their vows in Vancouver's only wedding chapel.

STORY JENNIFER SLATER PHOTOS FILIP HRIBAL



Destination weddings are not a recent phenomenon for Japanese couples. Places like Puerto Vallarta, Maui and the Bahamas have long been favourites for couples seeking their dream wedding. Compared to this list of tropical paradises, one would think Vancouver, BC, an unlikely choice, but the wedding chapel at Stanley Park is making Vancouver the new matrimonial hotspot.

Near the entrance of Stanley Park sits a concrete building, covered with a four-storey mural, and shrouded in mystery. Although the building is not even 10 years old, it is already legendary. Built by Dr. Stanley Ho, a Hong Kong businessman, it is believed to have been his private residence, complete with an automated car elevator. While the Lord Stanley building does in fact have an elaborate parking system, it is actually comprised of three rental suites and a commercial space on the ground floor, which houses Vancouver's only wedding chapel.

Minister Allan Burnett and his wife, Betty Ann, opened the chapel in April 2001. Couples who want a church wedding but do not belong to any particular church, often have difficulty finding a place to get married. The Burnetts saw the need for a designated wedding chapel. "What we're doing here is something no one has done before," says Allan. The busiest season is between May and September when Allan has performed as many as 48 weddings in a month. "To put that in perspective," Allan adds, "that's probably more weddings than the average minister would do in a lifetime." The Burnetts had no idea their chapel would be such a success, both locally and internationally.

Part of the chapel's appeal is its beautiful interior. Most people are surprised by how quiet it is inside the chapel—the high quality construction of the building keeps the sounds of the city outside.



The peaceful environment is further provided by the stunning leaded-glass windows created by North Vancouver artist Andreas Mladek. Inspired by Asian design, the windows show an abstract landscape of bamboo stalks. Set against the ivory walls of the chapel, the clear glass allows for the colours of the park to show through—a backdrop that changes with each season.

While Vancouver is a popular wedding destination for couples from all over the world, a significant number come from Japan. For Masumi and Yasuyuki Kajima, it was the spirit of adventure that brought them to Vancouver in September of 2002. Escaping the expense of a traditional Japanese wedding is a motive for many couples, but not for this one. Initially, they just wanted to take a trip somewhere together since neither had ever left Japan. When they learned about the chapel at Stanley Park from Watabe Weddings Inc., a Japanese company that has coordinated destination weddings since 1964, they decided to get married in Vancouver. “It was an easy decision,” Masumi says.

Masumi and Yasuyuki were amazed that their wedding could be tailored to exactly what they wanted. “The wedding packages in Japan don’t have options to choose from,” says Masumi. “And a traditional Japanese wedding is expensive.”

Susan Hyatt, of Susan’s Weddings in Paradise, has noticed a change in wedding styles over the 17 years she has been in business. “It’s more towards the couple and what they want rather than etiquette. I tailor their weddings to suit their dreams, their wishes and their budget.” The chapel at Stanley Park has options ranging from the basic service to horse-drawn carriage rides and catered receptions.

The Kajimas chose a package that included a western-style wedding ceremony at the chapel at

Stanley Park, limousine service, photographs and dinner for four at the Salmon House on the Hill, where they were presented with a personalized miniature wedding cake. In preparation for their wedding ceremony, Watabe Weddings provided them with a videotape of other celebrations, a translation of what is being said and an English script with the instructions: please practise.

Allan, who has learned enough Japanese phrases to do the vows and ring exchange, gives the couples the choice to say their vows in Japanese or in English. “Almost all of them like to do it in English,” he says, “because they videotape the ceremony and take it home to show their friends and families.”

Yasuyuki liked getting married in English. “The words are so casual. Sometimes Japanese is too formal and that makes me uncomfortable.”

With destination weddings, Allan often meets the couple for the first time just half an hour before the ceremony. His smile and relaxed manner quickly cross any language barrier and put people at ease. During the rehearsal, he sometimes uses humour to help a nervous couple relax. When Allan says to the groom, “You may kiss the bride,” there is always a shocked look on their faces. In Japanese culture, kissing in public is generally not done. The first rehearsal kiss is usually so quick that the photographer doesn’t get a chance to catch it on film, so Allan says *yukkuri*, which means ‘slowly’ in Japanese. The couple usually laughs and then kisses again. Masumi giggles when she remembers kissing the groom in front of everybody. “I’ve never seen my parents kiss.”

Allan has a gift for personalizing each wedding. He gets to know a couple and uses a style that suits them, sometimes with surprising results. One Saturday he had two weddings back-to-back. The first couple

Allan Burnett performs Mie and Yoshihiro Urakawa's wedding ceremony; the Lord Stanley building at the corner of Chilco and Georgia; leaded-glass windows reveal the backdrop of Stanley Park; the Lord Stanley building's mural spans four storeys. Opposite page: Mie and Yoshihiro travel from Japan to experience a western-style dream wedding in Vancouver.

>> continued on page 56

Some flowers have cultural or religious significance in Asia—songs have been sung, poems have been written and festivals celebrated in their honour. They are closely related to important events or changes in season. These flowers often have symbolic meanings that are unknown to North Americans, but the traditions surrounding them are kept alive throughout Asia.

Flowering Asia



Cherry Blossom
prunus mume

Cherry blossoms are one of the most beloved flowers in Japan. They are so celebrated that news reports track their progress as they bloom in a wave from south to north—starting as early as January in Okinawa and finishing around May in Hokkaido. The Japanese celebrate the new spring under these lush blossoms with picnics, drinking and singing. Cherry blossoms are imprinted on everything from clothing to pottery, and from art to household items.

Cherry blossoms, known to the Japanese as *sakura*, are part of Japan's history and folklore. The word *sakura* comes from the name *Kono-Hana-Sakuya-Hime*, which means tree-flowers-blooming-princess. This legendary princess supposedly dropped from heaven into a cherry tree.



Chrysanthemum
c.maderensis

In many Asian countries, the chrysanthemum symbolizes longevity because of its long-lasting bloom. It is often present at funerals and memorials. The ancient Chinese word for chrysanthemum is *chu*, and the city of Chu-Hsien was named in its honour.

The chrysanthemum appeared in Japan around the eighth century. It was so revered that it became the Emperor's crest and official seal. In Japan, the flower also symbolizes the sun—the symmetrical and orderly petals signify perfection. The Japanese celebrate the chrysanthemum each year with the Festival of Happiness.



Lotus Flower
nelumbo nucifera

The lotus flower represents truth, perfection and immortality. It is closely linked with religion and the *Lotus Sutra*, a famous Buddhist scripture. Rooted in muddy swamps, the lotus emerges fresh and clean above the water, unpolluted by mud. It is said to mirror the Buddha's life because he was born into the darkness of humanity, but grew up to become pure and truthful.

The lotus flower's petals unfold to reveal a fully developed seed pod. This symbolizes the cause and effect message contained in the *Lotus Sutra*. As the lotus flower opens and begins to die, the seed of new life is exposed—the cause and effect, or death and rebirth, occur simultaneously.

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a Look at...

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Population 48 million
Currency South Korean Won (KRW)
Time PST + 17 hours

Government Republic
Official Language Korean
Religion Mainly Buddhist and Christian
Climate Temperate. Cold winters, hot summers.
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PHILIPPINES

Capital Manila
Population 82 million
Currency Philippine Peso (PHP)
Time PST + 16 hours

Government Republic
Official Language Filipino
Religion Mainly Catholic
Climate Tropical. Rainy, Jun–Oct. Dry, Nov–May.

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THAILAND

Capital Bangkok
Population 64 million
Currency Thai Baht (THB)
Time PST + 15 hours

Government Constitutional monarchy
Official Language Thai
Religion Mainly Buddhist
Climate Tropical. Warmer rainy, cooler dry seasons vary between north and south. Very hot, Mar–Apr.
Health* Malaria risk in rural forest/jungle areas.

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Bits
Water pistols all but sell out in April as Thais get ready for *Songkran*. This is Thai New Year by the lunar calendar. The devout bathe Buddha figures with scented water and people throw water on each other to symbolize cleansing and renewal. What was once a gentle sprinkling of water, though, has turned into massive waterfights in some areas. As many head to family in the provinces, Bangkok streets become eerily quiet, making it all the more shocking when a canon of water hits you from a passing pickup truck.



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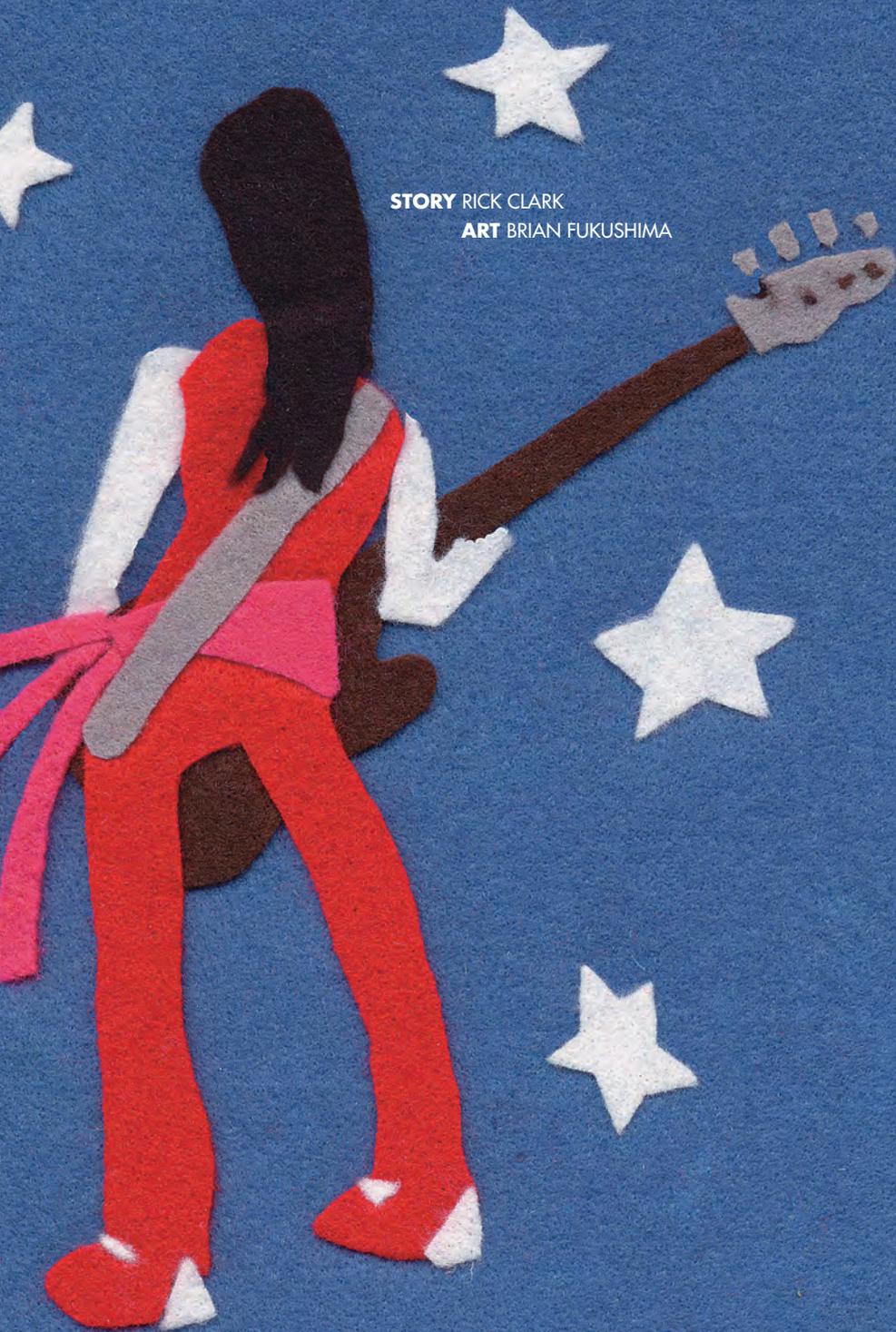
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this is hardcore

The use of English in Japanese grind music causes some to question its authenticity.

STORY RICK CLARK
ART BRIAN FUKUSHIMA



The music is abrasive, loud and subversive. It incites the listener emotionally—by filling the void of angry youth with the sounds of crashing cymbals and distortion guitars, or by causing those less open to rage to recoil in disgust. The tortured screaming of the singer fills every decibel with words of hate, hopelessness and pain. The music is textured and complex, with primal expression at its core. This is hardcore: punk rock, death metal, noise, gothic industrial.

These diverse and loud music genres were born out of the turbulent seventies. Socially disenfranchised white youth of North America and Great Britain joined subcultures that not only demonstrated their mistrust of government and civic authority, but also offered an alternative to the mainstream rock and roll, which had ceased to be the voice of youth.

As these genres grew and permeated the mainstream, young people no longer felt that their dissent was being voiced. Capitalism had changed the face of traditionally anarchical music. It made it palatable for the rich middle class and the profit-driven airwaves that relied on image-conscious corporate sponsors. This commodification of culture has drained the original political intent out of countless musical projects and turned them into vacuous trends made to sell records and merchandise.

The hardcore scene in Japan, growing in popularity and strength, provides a compelling example. Influenced by the aesthetics of its western counterpart, Japanese hardcore, known as grind, raises numerous questions about its ability to deal with issues of marginalization while working within the hyper-commercialized music industry. For anti-establishment sub-cultures, the trend in grind music to use English lyrics may force listeners to question the genre's authenticity. Vancouver musician and arts and culture analyst, Elizabeth Milton, says this is "a clear indication of the cultural effects of globalization."

The commercialization of Japan's music scene can be tied to the culture itself. Long known for being a world economic power, the going stereotype is that modern Japan has created a culture of capitalists. Irman Hilmi, webmaster of *j-underground*, one of the most visited Japanese hardcore music websites, has written extensively about the commercialization of the genre. "In Japan

everyone's a capitalist, including the musicians and bands who preach about oppression and scream 'justice and liberty' to their so-called government." If, as Hilmi believes, this is true about Japanese bands, then are the so-called anti-establishment artists contributing to the same establishment they purport to decry? While the English language opens up the potential for increased record sales, does it place grind music in league with the capitalists, or is it being used pragmatically, as the most efficient medium through which to reach the widest audience?

Educator and musician Roger Young believes the use of English can be beneficial to the subversive intent of grind music. "Using English allows for a larger listening audience. That, in turn, means that the message will have a greater effect." There is no simple explanation for why grind bands use English. "There are some bands out there just to make money," comments Young. "To lump all of them together because both sides utilize English as their platform would be dangerous."

Young believes that the use of English in grind music is anti-establishment in its own right. He sees it as Japanese youth rebelling against a restrictive traditional society. "To embrace English as your channel of expression is, in a sense, a way of turning your back on many traditional values that are associated with Japanese society." In Young's opinion this is because many of the older generation do not speak English. The younger generation, through its exploration of English, is finding its own identity.

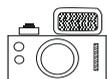
The question of content is also raised. One of the most famous grind music bands, Melt Banana, has lyrics comparable in proficiency to a low-level ESL student. But that's beside the point, believes music therapist Christopher Rippin. "They still manage to get their point across using sound versus lyrical content." It seems that the supposed liberation of using English falls second in significance to the genre's challenging musical form. Aesthetic rebellion from conventional pop music remains just as important as citing the ills of capitalism.

Political scientist and former Japanese resident Kap-Yong Park believes the use of the universal tongue is not simply for mass consumption in music, but rather to unite subcultural pockets that would otherwise

be fragmented throughout the world. Milton agrees: "Post-modern culture tends to breed compartmentalized and highly individualized subcultures that are simultaneously exclusive and global." Musically speaking, Japanese grind bands like Boris, Corrupted, Bathtubshitter and Congenital Haemorrhoids could be blasting from the headphones of any Vancouver teenager and be easily mistaken for any number of North American hardcore bands.

Although underground music from around the world usually involves some kind of cross-cultural exchange, this is not the case with pop music. How often does the average Canadian pop music lover dabble in the world of Asian pop? "Not often," says Milton. "Mass culture or popular commercial forms remain dominated by the American market, hardly allowing for the voices of other cultures to be heard on a comparable

>> continued on page 56



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By Any Other Name

STORY JENNIFER EWING PHOTO VERONIQUE MEURGUES



On a sunny autumn day an eight-year-old boy yells “Hey Jenny,” across the playing field at David Cameron Elementary in Victoria, BC. The girl coldly walks by him. With a chill in her voice she says, “My name is not Jenny. My name is Jennifer.”

This was twenty-something years ago, and the girl was me. I have repeated that phrase throughout my life. Growing up in Canada, I thought the name my parents gave me defined who I was. My mother said my name was Jennifer, end of story.

In my early thirties, I enrolled at Langara College in Vancouver, BC, where I met international students who had come to Canada not only for education, but to begin a new life. During my first week of classes, the instructors called out beautiful, exotic names, and to my surprise, many of the students said they wanted to be known by a western name. This fascinated me. It went against all my assumptions about the significance of one’s name. I have since learned that, although names are sometimes a connection to your cultural identity, they do not define who you are.

Jing ‘Jane’ Mu, a student from Tianjin, China, felt an English name would better acquaint her with Canadian society. When she arrived in Vancouver in 2003, her first Canadian friend gave her the name Jane because it sounded similar to Jing. She feels her English name will help her be accepted in Canada, and may help her in the future when looking for a job.

When Yu-Li Chen was younger, her English-speaking aunt gave her the name Jennifer to use when she attended English school in Keelung, Taiwan. But Chen did not feel that it was a good name for her—it was too long and feminine for her tomboy ways. When Chen moved to Vancouver

for school in 1998, she struggled with finding a Canadian name. Chen’s high school teacher told her to keep her given name until she found an English name that she liked. “I was trying to think of some English names at the beginning, but then I could not find one that I really liked, or that really represented me,” she says. After being in Canada for a year, Chen still considered finding an English name, but decided it was too much trouble. She liked how short and simple her name was, and everyone already knew her as Yu-Li. “I like my name. It represents me,” she says.

Margaret Lai Yuet Tan was born in Malaysia, but has lived in Canada most of her life. Her Cantonese parents gave her an English and Chinese name at birth. Tan feels her English name and her Chinese name, Lai Yuet, match in tone. At one time, she disliked having a Chinese middle name. “When you are a kid you are embarrassed about everything to do with your culture. When you get older you start to embrace it,” she says. Tan believes it’s unfortunate that people change their names to feel like they belong, when a name is such a big part of cultural identity. “Abandoning your Chinese name is almost like giving up your heritage,” Tan says. She is no longer embarrassed by her Chinese middle name and knows that if she has children, she will give them both English and Chinese names.

Shakespeare’s Juliet said it best: “What’s in a name? That which we call a rose by any other name would smell as sweet.” Some people feel a strong connection to their given names, and others find a new connection with their chosen ones, but in the end it is who you are and not what you are called that counts. 🌸

<< GARDENING continued from page 18

hall, complete with cooking facilities, perched on the ridge overlooking the garden. It's a perfect and convenient location for students and scientists to study the area's rich natural diversity. It is also the ideal place for groups to create customized educational programs.

The Boat Basin Foundation and the Temperate Rainforest Field Study Centre intend to "facilitate biological, botanical and ecological education to that end of Clayoquot Sound," says Doug Cherrington, director of the foundation.

The Field Study Centre at Boat Basin is also a means to control traffic. Heavy visitation to the area by people interested in purely recreational tourism could damage the fragile ecosystem. "There are many areas of the Pacific Rim that are despoiled for the purpose of tourism, all to feed the appetite of expensive recreation," says Margaret Horsfield, author of *Cougar Annie's Garden*. "We don't want any part of that."

Maintaining the centre and the garden is an expensive endeavour, and money is limited. In addition to the financial strain, development pressures are threatening Cougar Annie's garden. A road from Hot Springs Cove is being punched through the forest to allow the Hesquiat access to their traditional land. This means much more traffic in an area that has long remained isolated.

"I hope it's never paved," says Horsfield. "I hope it remains alive. It's bigger than the sum of its parts. It's a garden on a wild coast amidst a rich history...amidst a diverse ecology. The work the foundation envisions could be hugely important in bringing a lot of polarized interests together."

Many years ago, when Cougar Annie walked her traplines with a rifle, a light held to its barrel to catch the reflection of a cougar's eyes, she probably never envisioned her subsistence garden as a kind of ivory tower in the bush. Ironically, it may be cougars, or the wilderness of Clayoquot Sound, that assures the preservation of her beloved garden. Today, thanks to Peter Buckland and others, students may walk the same lines, flashlights aimed into the night, hoping to spot a cougar. 🐾

For more information on the Boat Basin Foundation, visit www.cougarannie.com.

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Artful Bloggers

The Rise of Online Journal Comics STORY BRIAN FUKUSHIMA ART JINGU J, ROXY LIAO, KEAN SOO



Comics, as a medium, have long struggled for legitimacy. Often dismissed as entertainment for children, comics rarely receive recognition as a valid art form. Even within the comics world there are a number of marginalized groups and genres. One such subcategory seeking to establish itself is journal webcomics.

In 1998, the first weblogs, or blogs, appeared on the Internet. These early incarnations were often filter sites (frequently updated lists of links to noteworthy web pages and other blogs). Since that time, there has been an explosion of blogs on the web and now these sites are innumerable. Different styles have emerged, including opinion and political blogs and personal diaries.

With the advent of the online diary came the adaptation of the journal comic. The existing genre of autobiographical comics and the canvas of the web fit perfectly together. Artists worldwide have explored the web journal comic phenomenon for personal expression.

A pioneer of webcomics, independent comics hero James Kochalka, kept and published a daily autobiographical comic for over four years. His *Sketchbook Diaries* were adapted for the web (www.americanelf.com) and have since influenced many young comics artists to start their own similar strips.

By mid 2002, there was a small group of comics artists posting daily strips about their lives. Following the blog format of frequent updates and including links to other sites, journal comics artists began to present opinions, rants and clips of their everyday lives to the online world. Burgeoning comics artists have embraced the opportunity to self-publish inexpensively.

There are many advantages to publishing on the web, primarily the worldwide audience and the lack of restrictions. Censorship and space constraints, two huge



ROXY LIAO

stumbling blocks for comics in print, have been eliminated online. Artists can publish whatever and whenever they want thanks to blogs and, perhaps most importantly, the artists can receive immediate feedback for their work.

One such artist is Roxy Liao, a native of Taiwan, who works for CGCG, an animation company in Taipei. Liao's site, *ProxyRoxy* (www.proxyroxy.com), is a cross between a blog and journal comic. She provides hyperlinks and musings on her life, but accompanies them with whimsical illustrations and short comic strips. Her drawing style is loose and succinctly depicts her daily feelings. Liao's site contains stunning animation and an impressive gallery of artwork.

Liao doesn't consider her blog to be a true journal comic. "I am more like an illustrator. So I always do one panel doodles," she writes in an e-mail interview. Her blog started as a casual journal and links site for close friends, but she now has a wider audience of readers.

A more typical journal comic site is *Daily Life*, the comic blog of Jingu J from Jakarta, Indonesia (www.xepher.net/~jinguj/). Similar to the style of Kochalka, Jingu J describes her life as a culinary and linguistics student in Southeast Asia. Her drawings are personal and intimate, perhaps because of their loose, sketchy style.

Jingu J did not originally intend to write a journal comic. A friend had asked her to maintain an online diary to keep in touch. Realizing how much more interesting journal comics were, she decided to draw rather than type her entries.

One of the web's longest running and best-loved journal comics is *Keanerdotnet* (www.keaner.net). Toronto based Kean Soo has documented his day-to-day life since New Year's Eve 2002. Originally simple drawings based on daily events, Soo's work has become more refined, both in terms of draftsmanship and writing. His strips have become longer, more emotionally driven and experimental. No longer merely a journal comic, Soo strives to record visual poetry on the web.

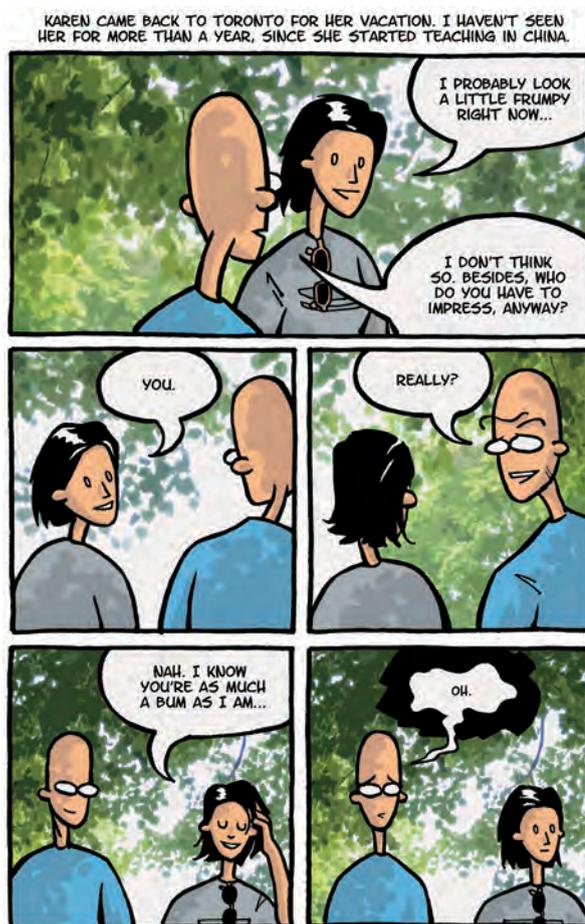
Raised in Hong Kong, Soo grew up on European comics like *Asterix*, *Tintin* and *Beano*. As a teenager, he became entrenched in the world of North American superhero and newspaper comics. "Hong Kong in general has been so westernized and has very little of its own culture," says Soo. "The openness and enthusiasm to embrace any kind of comic, regardless of its origin, is certainly more accepted there than it is in North America."

Soo has taken advantage of the possibilities of webcomics. He has played with the infinite colours made possible by the web, experimented with accom-

panying music and incorporated photographs into his comics. With a degree in electrical engineering, it is no surprise that Soo has put available technology to such creative use.

Recently, Soo has joined a few select webcomics artists in using the bitpass system (www.bitpass.com), a means of charging for web content through micro payments of a few cents. By testing the online market, Soo has become a webcomics vanguard. He also graciously hosts the *Journal Comics Jam* (www.keaner.net/JCJ.html), an ever-growing site that links to the pages of other journal comics artists.

In this digital age, journal comics artists are carving out a niche for themselves and forging a collective identity. Soo states, "I think the journal comic genre is starting to become a lot more accepted in the online community—in much the same way as blogs were in their early infancy. There's always going to be an audience for this sort of thing. Blogs aren't going away any time soon, and neither will journal comics." ☺



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<< WOOD-FRAMES continued from page 23

Throughout China there are different nations involved in construction projects. Competitors, including Russia, New Zealand and the Scandinavian countries, do not yet have authorization to sell wood-frame housing. However, Dr. Ni claims this could change as a result of Canada's success in revising China's building codes. Still, Canada's efforts in Shanghai could be key to a Canadian advantage. Shanghai has great influence over the rest of the nation and what becomes practice in this region generally spreads to other areas.

Until recently, Chinese consumers saw no distinction between a western-style villa constructed of concrete and a design using wood-frame construction. CMHC has been helping developers change the general Chinese perception of wood-frame housing. One strategy replaces the term R-2000 home (which is the Canadian standard of energy efficient housing), with the term Super-E home. Nellie Cheng, senior trade consultant with CMHC states, "Super-E signifies energy, efficiency, environmentally friendly and economical." As a result of these efforts, conscientious Chinese are becoming more aware of the benefits of living in healthier housing.

Sustainable harvesting of timber for wood-frame housing is necessary to the survival of many rural communities in BC. The Chinese market has great potential, but certain conditions must be met, including sustaining the environmental and economic outlook for both trading partners. BC has strong ties with China and has formed a trustworthy trading relationship. Paul Newman believes "you've got a hard row to hoe if you're just trying to sell the Chinese a product...to be really successful, you really have to look at it as, yes we're going to gain something out of this, but you're going to create jobs...and an industry [for China]."

Time is critical. BC needs to rebuild its forestry industry and China needs to build houses. Hasty harvesting without a concern for sustaining the resource, or haphazardly producing housing without addressing safety could produce undesirable results. Canada is not only looking for business, but wants to maintain fairness and integrity in trading practices. 🌿

<< HARDCORE continued from page 51

scale." This is in contrast to the unification of various underground scenes. Like the Japanese grind movement, they attempt to spread a message that is both politically and sonically challenging without falling victim to the whitewash of commercial interests.

Grind music continues to screech its lyrics, blare its guitars, crash its cymbals and incite anarchic glee into the ear-drums of its listeners. Like its predecessors, punk and noise, grind music attempts to revive rebellion without succumbing to commercial caricature. While one may be critical of grind music's usage of the English language, it is important not to condemn the genre for being unable to live up to impossible expectations. As Young says, "Music is not autonomous from culture." Although one may attempt to subvert the dominant system, one is never fully outside of its language. 🌿

For more information on the Japanese hardcore scene, visit Irman Hilmi's www.sound.com.jp/~grind/j-underground

<< DESTINATION continued from page 45

liked to laugh, so Allan added some humour to the ceremony. This set the tone for the whole service and by the end everybody was sore from laughing so hard. The next wedding had a tender-hearted groom who began sobbing the minute the bride started down the aisle. Before the service was over everyone, including the minister, was crying. "The beautiful thing about it," Allan says, "was that for both of those weddings everybody left saying that was the nicest wedding they've ever been to."

The chapel at Stanley Park began its fourth year in April 2004. For the Burnetts it is more than a business, it is a ministry and a service to people from all over the globe. Their vision is that this would be the flagship of many more chapels. "I love what I do and I'm interested in the people. My number one passion is to make that wedding what they want it to be." The efforts of the Burnetts have helped many couples, from Japan, from Vancouver and from all over the world, do exactly that. 🌿

For more information on the chapel at Stanley Park, visit www.thechapelatstanleypark.com or call Allan Burnett at 604.688.0770

a Look at...

VIETNAM

Capital Hanoi
Population 81 million
Currency Vietnamese Dong (VND)
Time PST + 15 hours

Government Communist
Official Language Vietnamese
Religion Mainly Buddhist, some Christian
Climate Cooler north, tropical south. Rainy, Jun–Nov.
Health* Malaria risk in rural and highland areas.

Visa
Required.

Contacts
Vietnamese Embassy Ottawa
www.vietnambassycanada.ca
Canadian Embassy Hanoi www.hanoi.gc.ca

Bits
The line can stretch for blocks outside Ho Chi Minh Mausoleum in Hanoi. Uncle Ho, still revered, lies embalmed inside. Monitors keep watch to ensure silence as visitors file past, mesmerized by the waxen features of his preserved body. The building closes periodically when Ho Chi Minh's body is moved to Russia for maintenance. It's been over 30 years since he died, and rumour has it the blanket covering his lower extremities is slowly creeping up.



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www.tripprep.com

Update routine immunizations. Vaccinate against hepatitis, typhoid, Japanese encephalitis, rabies depending on area visited. Evacuation coverage advised.

PHOTOS
VIETNAM ERIKA RICHARDSON
BURMA HELLE SIMONSEN



BURMA

Official Name Myanmar
Capital Yangon
Population 48 million
Currency Myanmar Kyat (MMK), Foreign Exchange Certificate (FEC)
Time PST + 14.5 hours

Government Military regime
Official Language Burmese
Religion Mainly Buddhist
Climate Tropical. Cool, Oct–Feb. Hot, Mar–May.
Rainy, Jun–Sep.
Health* Malaria risk in rural areas.

Visa
Required. Mandatory exchange of \$200 US on entry.

Contacts
Myanmar Embassy Ottawa
www.myanmar-embassy-ottawa.faiithweb.com
Canadian Embassy Bangkok, Thailand has consular responsibility for Myanmar www.bangkok.gc.ca

Bits
At dusk each evening a line of sweepers walks the perimeter of Schwedagon Pagoda in Yangon, brooms moving in unison. They sweep to gain merit, an important part of the Buddhist faith. To the east, pilgrims watch the sun set over Kyaikteyo, a giant gold-leaf covered rock balanced on a cliff edge. On the Irawaddy River to the north, thousands of temple ruins at Bagan glow warmly in the sun's last rays. Buddhism is a part of daily life for many people in Burma, and even children become monks or nuns.

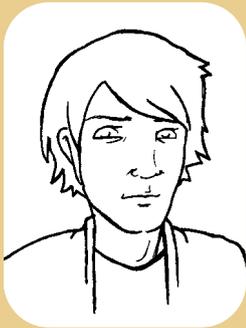


SalaThai

102-888 BURRARD STREET, VANCOUVER



PHOTOS ANGELA FAMA



BY BRIAN FUKUSHIMA

Upon entering the Burrard Street location of SalaThai restaurant, the senses are already put to very pleasurable work. The restaurant is elegantly designed—with an open and welcoming floor plan, warm wood-paneled walls, graceful murals, portraits of the King and Queen of Thailand and pieces of Thai inspired art. Soft and welcoming traditional Thai music greets you as you take your seat. The servers, dressed in traditional Thai attire, are attentive, prompt and courteous.

While all these accoutrements surely add to the dining experience, the true test of a restaurant's mettle lies in its food. SalaThai's menu is extensive, with a vast array of appetizers, entrées and desserts available. The dishes are served on exquisite blue and white china, often with the restaurant name revealed in the pattern upon completion of the food.

For an appetizer my dinner companion and I ordered the vegetarian spring rolls—stuffed with minced vegetables and vermicelli, served with homemade sauce. It's difficult to go wrong with spring rolls. These were more than adequate and inspired me to be more adventurous the next time around.

Always in the mood for a good curry, I took my self-imposed challenge and ordered the *Gaeng Pet Yang*—sliced roasted duck with bamboo shoots, pineapple and red curry in coconut milk and basil leaves. Having absolutely no

problem with spicy food, yet having no wish to injure myself, I requested a medium heat. It was exactly what I expected, a little bite but not near what I would consider hot. Next time I will be sure to request full heat. The duck was incredibly flavourful and tender, a good contrast to the stiffer texture of the bamboo shoots. With a side of coconut rice, this was a dish I enjoyed immensely and will definitely order again in the future.

In this reviewer's eyes, curry is best served with a nice cold beer. SalaThai offers imported Singha Beer from Thailand. Named after a mythical lion-like creature, Singha is anything but fierce. The beer is light and smooth with a slightly higher alcohol content than most domestic North American beers. It is refreshing and complements the spicy food.

While there are a good number of vegetarian dishes on SalaThai's menu, the staff is also happy to oblige with substitutions. My vegetarian dinner companion was dismayed to find a lack of meat-free *Pad Thai* (a traditional Thai noodle dish with shrimp, egg, tofu and bean sprouts), but our server gladly offered to omit the seafood and fish sauce from the dish.

SalaThai offers a superb dining experience at a modest price. With a wide variety of items, including house specialties and daily specials, there is likely something to pique the interest of any Thai food fan. 🍴



PHOTOS ANGELA FAMA

A strange thing happened when I told one of my fellow reviewers that I would be dining at Typhoon. She looked at me and said, “Why would you be going there? I never see more than 10 people in that place.” That being said, I was a little nervous about the quality of the establishment. Thankfully, Typhoon turned out to be one of the most satisfying dining occasions I’ve had in months.

Upon walking through the front doors, my nose caught the scent of sweet ginger in the air. A method of culinary foreshadowing, no doubt. As our server seated us, Tom Waits’ distinctive growl crept its way through hidden speakers into the dimly lit restaurant. This style of music seemed somewhat out of place given that the decor was a fusion of South Asian traditional and urban minimalism.

When taking our drink order, our server identified that our table was wobbly. Before I could say, “Don’t worry about it,” the problem was fixed and she was off to fetch our beverages. It was at this point my dining companion and I realized the music situation was getting stranger. High-energy funk music had begun to play. Then our beverages arrived and we placed our order.

As an appetizer we ordered the deep-fried tofu. Normally when I think deep-fried, I picture greasy, heavy foods that leave a brick in your stomach for days afterwards. But this tofu

was lighter than air, splendidly complemented by a sweet and tangy dipping sauce that contained a hint of spice. By this time, ethereal house music was playing and the volume had increased by about three notches.

My entrée was the cashew nut chicken—a delicious chicken dish served with rice, nuts and vegetables. It practically reaches off the plate and whispers in your ear “Enjoy me thoroughly.” The chicken, lightly sauced, had more flavour than I initially suspected it would. It was almost as if it had been marinating since it was an egg. The taste of fresh vegetables and rice worked masterfully with the chicken. At first I thought it wouldn’t be enough to satisfy my insatiable hunger, but before I was half way through, I could feel my stomach reaching its limits.

For dessert I had deep fried banana with mango gelato. Now, I do not partake in bananas or gelato very often, but I will say I could not have finished off my meal any better. The sweet, fruity tastes of banana and mango could not have more perfectly juxtaposed the tang and spice of my meal.

As my friend and I made our way to the doors, I felt completely satisfied by our meal. Neither heavy nor light, expensive nor cheap, rich nor bland, Typhoon was a perfect meal. Now if only they could do something about their taste in music. 🍴



BY MAX MITCHELL

820 WEST BROADWAY, VANCOUVER **Banana Leaf**



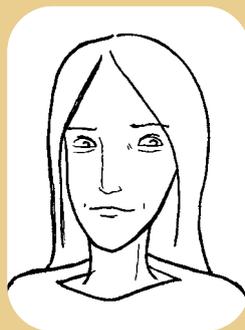
PHOTOS KATIE STEWART

One's senses are delightfully stimulated when entering Banana Leaf restaurant—colours, textures, flavours and fragrances invite you in to explore the rich culinary culture of Malaysia. Inside, the tropical décor replete with palm leaves, hand-made ornaments and traditionally patterned sarongs, creates the illusion of dinner on a sun-drenched beach in Malaysia. Hardwood floors and a sculpted wooden window frame contrasted with vibrantly coloured walls add to the adventure.

Banana Leaf offers a unique range of Malaysian dishes—from the well-known *Satay Chicken* to *Sambal Green Bean* (a dish consisting of stir-fried crunchy green beans with shrimp in chili, garlic and dried shrimp paste), to fragrant *Rendang Kari Beef*. The house specialties and dishes are influenced by South Asian cuisine and offer savoury combinations from varied culinary traditions.

You can choose from 12 different sauces to accompany Banana Leaf's vast selection of seafood which may be steamed, grilled, seared or caramelized. One such sauce, the *Assam* sauce, consists of tamarind, ginger, lemongrass, garlic and chili. Ideal for accenting fish and seafood, it gives a unique and subtle perfume that seems to define Malaysian cooking.

This eclectic mix of spicy and sweet tastes makes Banana Leaf a culinary adventure that is well worth taking. 🍴



BY VERONIQUE MEURGUES



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820 WEST BROADWAY, VANCOUVER **Banana Leaf**



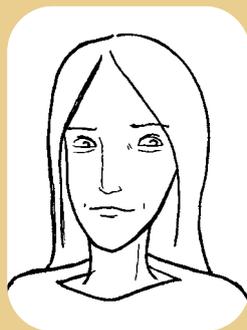
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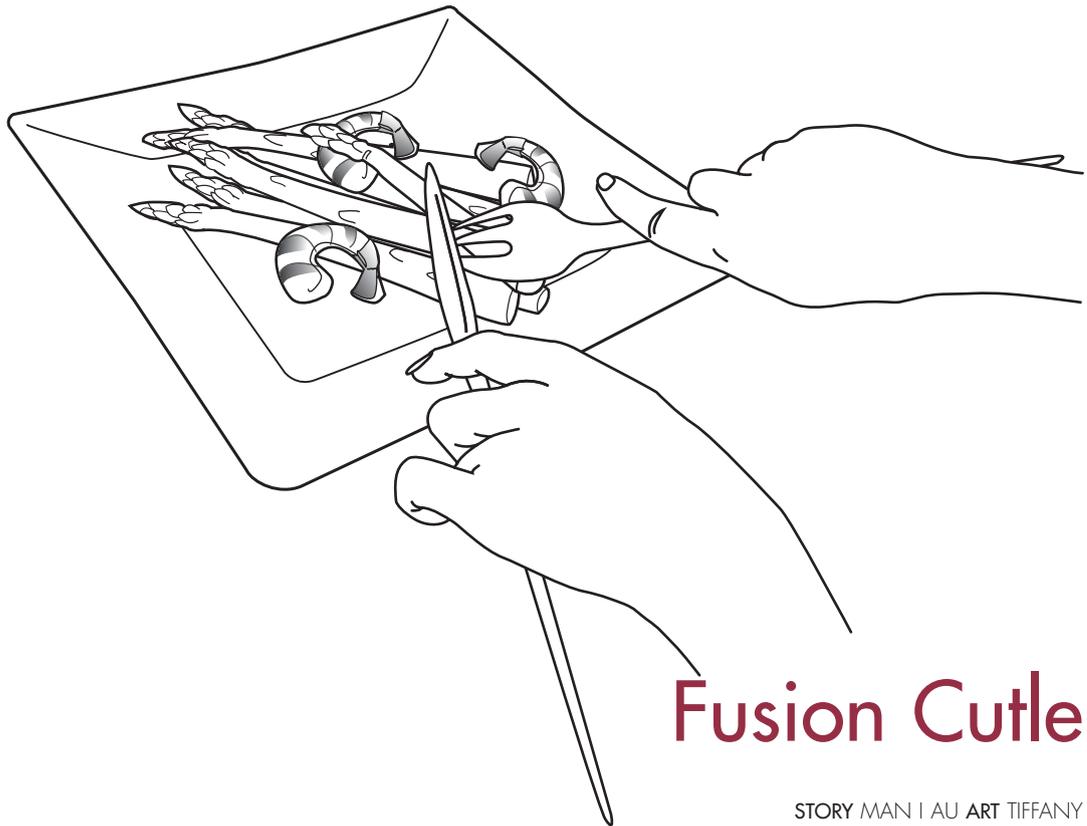
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Fusion Cutlery

STORY MAN | AU ART TIFFANY CHAN

Fusion cuisine, blending the flavours of one culture with another, is a popular choice for diners throughout the world. New tableware is taking this marriage of cultures one step further. This fusion cutlery will bring relief to those who struggle to master the art of chopsticks. What are these new utensils that are saving inept chopstick handlers the embarrassment of sloping noodles down their shirts? Called forkchops, they may be coming to a noodle dish near you.

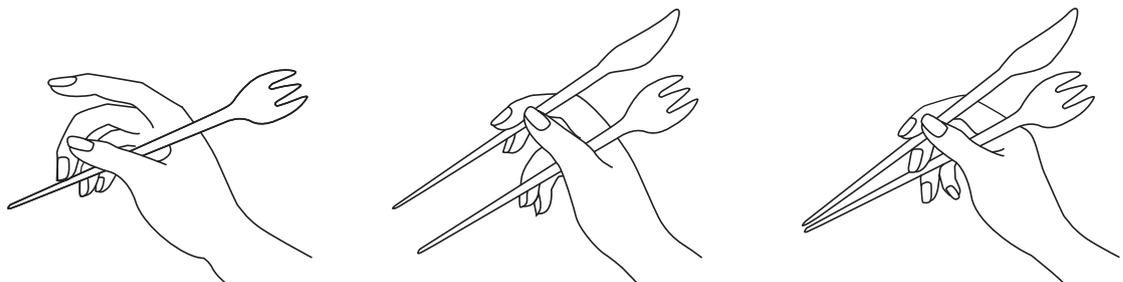
Forkchops were invented by Donald BonAsia, a Los Angeles designer. BonAsia spent five years in Japan where he discovered many westerners could not properly manipulate chopsticks. To aid them while they struggled to slurp up soba, he designed a utensil combining chopsticks on one end and a knife and fork on the other. BonAsia's innovative design resulted in learner chopsticks that are revolutionizing the act of eating Asian food.

Many westerners are not comfortable using chopsticks and will instead choose the western convention of a knife and fork. However, the texture of Asian

cuisine is better suited to the clamping action of chopsticks than the stabbing action of western cutlery. Using a knife and fork also denies the diner the full cultural experience of eating Asian food. Forkchops teach people how to properly manoeuvre chopsticks while allowing them the familiar comfort of a knife and fork. Available online, these nifty new utensils might change the way people look at slippery noodles.

Users should be wary, however, that chopstick etiquette also applies to forkchops. For example, as with chopsticks, in Chinese culture it is considered an aggressive action to point your forkchops at someone. It is also customary to keep chopsticks and other utensils separate. This means the knife end of the forkchop and the chopstick end should not be used together.

If used properly, forkchops give birth to a new kind of harmony. They allow fledgling chopstick users to feel comfortable with chopsticks, while exploring the many elements of Asian cuisine and culture. It also saves fumbling beginner chopstick handlers the embarrassment of dropping their dinner on their laps. 🍴





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