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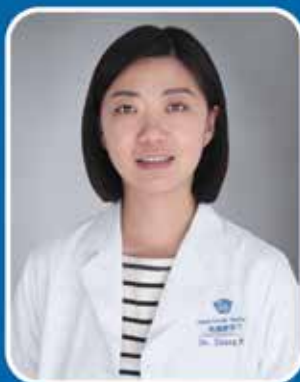
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Introducing some of our contributors, editors & designers

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Whispered Promises

By Maitiu Brallaghan

*I started whispering stories in your newborn ear.
Even then they held the seeds of all we felt that you should know:
Don't trust strangers.
Remember, pain will always come around again.*

*In this age old waltzing of words
Young girls tripped till their bleeding feet could dance
No more; then into a butcher's shop they'd hop
To set about lopping off their poor petite pedicures.*

*Brother and sisters were abandoned by mothers and fathers.
For grown-ups can be cruel as you wander through
Forests filled with shadows, wolves and unicorns
And all the euphemisms for which they stand.*

*Even then we saw, though goodness always overcame,
Pain it seems can last a long, long time.
And I held you tightly wrapped within my arms
As lightning split your red-haloed gaze,*

*Knowing I could not protect you from all the bad things,
Sad things that would grind, punch, rip at everything you are.
But I will walk beside you till I can walk no more
And you walk beside another child and promise them the same.*



Cinderella Man

Once upon a time, a wicked witch lived in a gingerbread house just off Sanpailo, together with her evil stepmother. Yet, all around, the whole kingdom of Jinling had been asleep for a hundred years, awaiting a kiss from Prince Pixiu.

Awaking, the witch snapped, "Who's been eating my baozi?"

"Whatever", said the Prince. You will go to the ball.

Welcome to "Fairytale" from The Nanjinger.

Ed.

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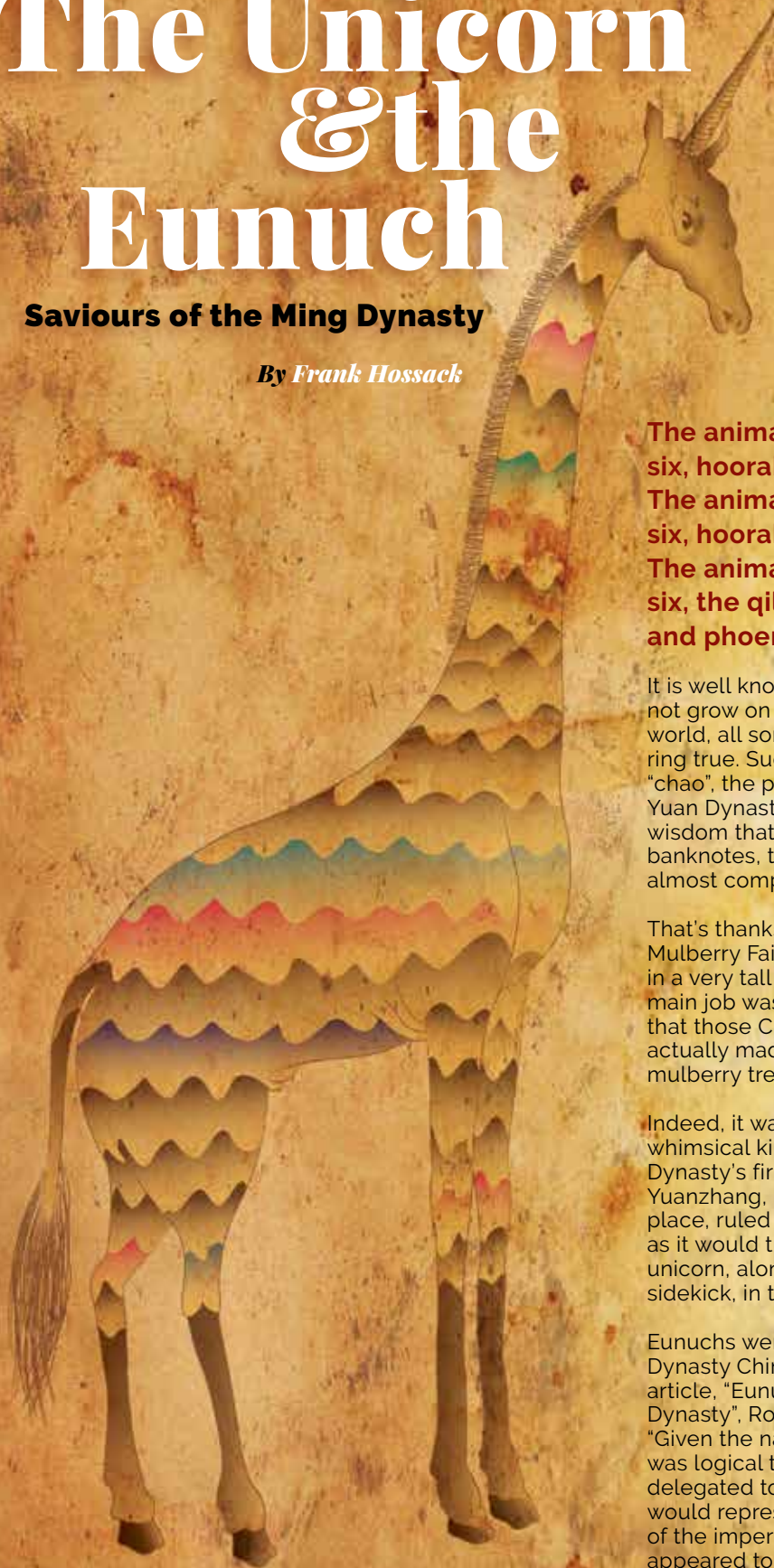
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The Unicorn & the Eunuch

Saviours of the Ming Dynasty

By Frank Hossack



The animals came in six by six, hoorah hoorah.

The animals came in six by six, hoorah hoorah.

The animals came in six by six, the qilin, dragon, turtle and phoenix...

It is well known that money does not grow on trees, but in a fairytale world, all sorts of impossibilities ring true. Such is the case with the "chao", the paper money of the Yuan Dynasty. While it is accepted wisdom that the Chinese invented banknotes, their topiary origins are almost completely unknown.

That's thanks to Shi Shi the Mulberry Fairy. She lived in Suzhou in a very tall Mulberry tree and her main job was to protect the secret that those Chao bank notes were actually made from the bark of mulberry trees.

Indeed, it was a somewhat whimsical kingdom that the Ming Dynasty's first emperor, Zhu Yuanzhang, inherited. A magical place, ruled not only by one man, as it would turn out, but also a unicorn, along with their trusty sidekick, in the form of a eunuch.

Eunuchs were a big deal in Ming Dynasty China. In his 1961 journal article, "Eunuch Power in the Ming Dynasty", Robert B. Crawford writes, "Given the nature of autocracy, it was logical that power would be delegated to those the emperor felt would represent only the interests of the imperial family. Eunuchs appeared to meet this criterion".

None were more qualified than Zheng He, the navigator and fleet commander given the tremendous responsibility of envoy to the nation, over seven voyages in the early 14th century, from Nanjing to as far as the east coast of Africa. Depending on who you believe, there may well have been another, eighth voyage that saw Zheng reach the Americas a good 50 years prior to Christopher Columbus.

He had been dispatched by emperor Zhu Di. Only Zhu Di had a problem; that his ruling was regarded by some as illegitimate.

You see, Zhu Yuanzhang outlived his successor, and so Zhu Di found himself and his siblings playing second fiddle to their nephew, Zhu Yunwen. When the upstart began throwing his weight around a little too much, namely by executing some of his uncles, Zhu Di saw a chance and made a successful grab for power.

With an army of several hundred thousand men, Zhu Di raided Nanjing, set fire to the palace, and, claiming that the emperor had died in the fire, sat himself upon the throne.

All should have then been right with the world, but Zhu Di was unsettled. As the fourth son, his claim to the throne was weak at best. Something else bothered him too, that Zhu Yunwen may have survived the palace fire and escaped China. That little conniver might well have been spilling his guts to half of Asia by then.

Zhu Di hit upon a plan; he would build a mighty fleet of ships, right here in Nanjing. These magnificent vessels would be the largest sailing ships ever made.

They would sail the seven seas, ostensibly in the name of free trade and exploration; to bring back untold riches that would empower his great nation and secure his legacy; but also to possibly unearth the hiding place of Zhu Yunwen, and to whip his loose mouth firmly into shape, i.e. shut.

To command such a fleet upon many voyages would require someone of unswerving loyalty. Zhu Di figured one of those eunuchs would be just the man, so to speak.

A few years later, about the time Zhu Di was getting really nervous and constantly looking under his sedan chair, Zheng was once again back on the high seas, now on his fourth voyage, in 1414, and about to port in Bengal for an international conference of envoys.

There it transpired, the delegation from Malindi, now part of Kenya, had brought with them, to the disconcerting delight of the other envoys, a herd of giraffes, intended as tributes to other nations among efforts to establish friendly ties, or rather, avoid all out wars. Zheng was presented with one of the giraffes, and returned to Nanjing.

Now, emperor Zhu Di was well used to receiving animals as gifts from those looking to curry favour with Chinese nobility. He had seen it himself and witnessed same as a youngster, as he observed those kowtowing to his grandfather. Bears, parrots, peacocks, you name it, he had seen just about it all, and in fact, had grown rather cynical of such pithy offerings.

Then he saw the giraffe. Zhu Di was impressed to the

extent that he asked a court artist to paint the hitherto-unseen-in-China beast, for he was perplexed to say the least.

You see, the giraffe shared many of its characteristics with those of the mythical "qilin", the Chinese equivalent of a unicorn. According to Confucius mythology, the qilin should have the body of a deer along with cloven hooves and the tail of an ox. The giraffe had all three.

But it were the curious horns that really got Zhu Di's pulse racing. He was then reminded of how a royal aide had actually had the audacity to introduce the giraffe as an actual qilin as it disembarked from Zheng's ship. Now Zhu Di had since done his research, and he knew now that giraffes could also have a skin covered horn in the centre of its forehead, in addition to those on each side, once again, just like the qilin.

The penny dropped. Or rather, the Mulberry dropped. Zhu Di realised that this somewhat ridiculous creature was key to his clinging to power. Who in their right mind would take on an emperor of China in possession of a real life unicorn? No one.

And so it came to be. The days and years passed, with the giraffes gaily bounding free in the Yongle enclave, what is now Nanjing's Mingugong, the model for Beijing's Forbidden City that would be Zhu Di's crowing achievement.

And he did it with his trusty qilin by his side.

Had that giraffe's fate been never to walk down Zheng's gangplank in Nanjing, we might today be looking at a very different China. 🦒



Blood Red Beauty

By Angela Chen

Xue Hua ran through the field, a blur of pigtails and laughter. Her little hands cupped around a red flower. Green eyes that haunted me every time I looked into them blinked up innocently.

“Mama, look! Pretty flower.”

The flower consisted of an infinite red swirl of florets. I would recognise that flower anywhere. It was a red dahlia. I tasted bitter ash in my mouth as my mind snapped back to the day my daughter, Jade, died.

II That day, Jade had begged to take her new bike outside for a ride. The bike was purple, her favourite colour. She rattled the doorknob as I secured a helmet around her head. As soon as I let go of her, Jade dashed out the door and began pedalling furiously on her bike, luminous strands of hair streaming behind her. I shout for her to be safe as she becomes a purple dot in the distance.

The phone rang about 20 minutes later.

"Doctor Shu Mai? This is the local police. I'm so sorry, ma'am. There's been an accident."

"What accident?" I asked. Silence on the other side. This wasn't normal. I waited for panic to overtake my body, for each nerve in my body to come into extreme alert, ready for action. A small part of me knew that this phone call was different, that there was no action to be taken.

"It's your daughter, doctor. She's been hit by a car." I swallowed a lode in the back of my throat.

"Where is my daughter?" My voice sounded foreign and robotic.

"The morgue, ma'am."

I rummaged through my closet, looking for black clothes. My hospital scrubs fell out. Stupid, sickly green. Then I remembered, I didn't have any black clothes. I never needed black clothes; all I ever wore were scrubs. I went to the kitchen, and cleared away Jade's plate. I ran my hands through hot water until my skin burned. I scrubbed at the crack in the plate, as if I could magically erase the fracture. The porcelain cut my skin, and the water ran red. I should probably tell Jade's father, too. Not that he cared about anything that happened to her. I can already guess what he would say. He would blame it on me. Why didn't I go with her? How could I have let her ride on the streets by herself? He would ask, and I would listen, as if I hadn't already asked myself the same questions a thousand times.

I didn't even know how I got to the morgue. I saw Jade's body, cold and unyielding on the table. For a moment, I imagined her just asleep, and as soon as I stroked her face she would wake up and her eyes would twinkle with mischief. But then I saw the dried blood caked on her forehead, and her arm bent at an unusual angle. Cuts and blooming purple patches decorated her torso like crushed blackberries. I squeezed Jade's small hand, praying it would be enough to send a jolt of life through her. I fell to my knees beside the table. Every fibre of my being screamed for just one more laugh, one more hug, one more word, one more.

The police officer cleared his throat and helped me up onto my feet.

"Doctor?" He waited until I turned around, and averted his gaze. His eyes were bloodshot, as if he had been crying too. Jade had known this police officer. He was the one who nicknamed her "Little Yu".

"Who did this?" I asked, my voice calm and distant. My lips felt numb, as if someone had turned my whole face to stone.

"An eighteen year old girl named Dahlia Tang. Has a history of drug abuse. She was drunk when she was riding her motorcycle."

"Where is she now?"

"She didn't go far after the, uh, accident. Dahlia's being transferred to the local prison. Don't worry, Doctor Shu. She'll get the death sentence."

I nodded. I made my daughter's murderer one promise; her life

is mine. As long as Dahlia stays imprisoned, I will find her. And when I do, I will be the one to kill her.

III The warden at Dahlia Tang's prison called me to her office. I took off my black sunglasses as I sat down. With an eyebrow raised at my all-black attire, she handed me a cup of tea.

"Dahlia's execution will take place tomorrow morning at nine. As you requested, I have asked the execution team to leave it to you to administer the final injection", the warden said.

"Thank you."

"Dahlia just gave birth to her baby girl three days ago. Thank God her daughter won't grow up with a mother like her", the prison warden sighed.

"A baby? She was pregnant?" I asked, incredulous.

"Yeah, I know, hard to believe. Never give evil people the chance to create evil babies."

I put on my sunglasses. I patted the locket around my neck that contained a faded picture of Jade. I took a sip of my tea. It was green tea. My chest ached at the memory of a winter afternoon, right before Chinese New Year. I sat around the small kitchen table, mixing flour paste. The thick, sweet scent of green tea wafted from the teapot brewing nearby. Jade sat beside me, flour on her cheeks, her fingers sticky with paste. Suddenly, she burst into tears. I gathered her onto my lap.

"What's wrong, baby?" I murmured, rocking her back and forth.

"It's not snowing, Mama. It never snows here." I laughed, and sprinkled flour over her head. White dust peeked through the ink-black strands of her hair. She giggled, and tipped the bowl of flour upside down over her head, dancing under her snow. I almost didn't want to mop up the kitchen floor that night.

The warden's voice knocked me out of my reverie. She was eyeing my black clothes again.

"Shu Mai. Are you sure about this? It's been a while since Jade died, and it looks like you're still mourning. Maybe it's best for someone else to do it."

"No," I slammed the cup down on the table. "I couldn't save her. I've been saving people my whole life. I'm a doctor, for god's sake!" I wiped away the stray tears that leaked from my eyes. "But I couldn't even protect my own daughter."

"There was nothing you could have done. She was dead the moment Dahlia hit her."

I took a deep breath, steadying my voice.

"You need to let me do this. I have to be the one to kill Dahlia. I can't live knowing that Jade's killer is still out there, alive and breathing."

The warden chewed on her lip. She finally nodded.

"Fine. But be careful tomorrow. Dahlia's a psychopath."

Outside the warden's office, two doctors gossiped in the hallway in front a cell marked "HIGH SECURITY CRIMINAL".

"Pity, eh? 18-year-old girl giving birth in a prison", one of the doctors said, shaking her head. The other one grunted.

"Pity? I doubt it. She crashed into a little girl on her motorcycle. And remember how bad she was during the birth? Jesus, she almost bit my head off!", the first doctor shuddered.

"Yeah, she's horrible. I'm gonna ask for a pay rise just for standing there in the delivery room." The two doctors walked off, discussing pay rises and Dahlia like all this had nothing to do with them, leaving the door to Dahlia's cell open.

I felt my feet wobble, and all the blood in my veins turned into liquid metal. I stepped into the cell. The sterile room was white-grey. Paint peeled off the walls and fell in cracked snowflakes of decay. The girl's eyes were the first thing I noticed. They stood out against the white walls; as brittle as chips of emerald ice. Unevenly chopped hair hung like black tendrils of broken icicles at the sides of her face. The hypnotising allure of her green eyes almost made me forget what she did to my daughter.

"What are you staring at?", Dahlia growled.

I thought about what would happen if I grabbed the shackles around her wrists, tied them around her neck and pressed, until her gullet was blue and her strange eyes rolled into the back of her head. If I did that, I would be the one sitting on the same wood bed. My hands itched towards the sedative on the tray. I grabbed the needle, and held it behind my back.

I feigned an air of professionalism as my heart pounded in futility against its cage of bone and cartilage. My blood boiled.

"I'm Doctor Shu Mai. The obstetrician asked me to check up on you after the birth", I said. Dahlia fixed a glare on me.

"Don't you dare touch me", she hissed, her teeth gritted. Her eyes were a forest set ablaze.

"Please, I'm just here to help", I cooed. "I promise I won't hurt you. How are you feeling today?"

I reached out, still hiding the needle behind me. My fingertips grazed her arm. In a flash, Dahlia's mouth came down on my wrist and bit hard. I screamed. White-hot pain shot through my arm as blood oozed from the teeth marks on my wrist. Dahlia thrashed against her shackles like bullet ants were crawling all over her skin. Crimson red stained her lips.

I held my bloody wrist and ran out of the cell. The sharp pain obliterated everything in my mind except Dahlia's face. She will pay for what she did to Jade, and the new Dahlia tattoo burning through the skin on my wrist is just a reminder of my promise.

IV Dahlia shuffled in, a small smirk playing on her lips. Four uniformed people shadowed her every step. As soon as I saw Dahlia's face, my hands itched. I imagined my hands around her neck, strangling the breath out of her.

The execution team straps Dahlia in a gurney, and inserts two needles in her arms. I motion for them to leave, and turned to face Dahlia, the needle gripped tightly in my hands.

"You must take great pleasure in killing me today, Doc", she taunted.

I ignored her, busying myself with preparing the injection. I let two drops of pellucid liquid dribble from the needle onto Dahlia's arm. She winced slightly.

"Oh, come on, Doc. At least give me a smile. You finally avenged your daughter's death." She threw her head back and laughed. A horrible, maniacal sound. I clenched my hands around the syringe. How dare she speak of Jade. Dahlia saw the shock register on my face before I could hide it.

"Oh, don't look so surprised. People in this prison gossip, Doctor. That's all we have left to do. And a little birdie told me that the little girl I killed was your daughter." Her eyes widened in fake shock, and she cackled again. I've never heard a more repulsive sound. Vomit rose in my throat.

"If it makes you feel any better, I thought your daughter was such a pretty little thing. Pity I crashed into her. But that's why

you're here, aren't you?" "Why weren't you with your daughter, then? Not so much a responsible parent, are we? You're a doctor, after all. Perhaps that's why you didn't kill me the first time you came into my cell." Dahlia's lips twitched as she leaned as far forwards as her gurney straps would allow.

"Is it because you're too scared?" She mock gasped. "Or is it because I bit you? How's your wrist, Doc?" Another little chuckle. I wanted to rip the bandage off my wrist and let my blood flow until I had purged myself of Dahlia's venom.

"You're the type of mother to value your career above your child, Doctor Shu. I know, because I had a mother just like you. Maybe that's why your beloved little girl died. Maybe it's all your fault." The last three words, although a whisper, echoed around the room in slow waves. A look of satisfaction crept onto Dahlia's face.

"I hope you rot in hell", I whispered as I plunged the needle into Dahlia's arm, watching her eyes close for the last time.

I collapsed onto a chair, retching up the contents of my stomach. Dahlia's body lay motionless across the room. I felt the doors of the torture chamber I built in the dark vaults of my mind shut.

V As I passed by the nursery in the hospital that night, I was startled when I caught a glimpse of bright green eyes. The baby's eyes were a beautiful shade of green, a shade that felt eerily familiar. There was only ever one. On the crib hung a sign that read "Tang". The name rang in my ears like a warning. Dahlia's daughter.

Her tufts of hair were like Jade's, each ebony strand a hair of lightning. The baby's fingers curled around my pinkie. I immediately recoiled, then relaxed when she held on tightly. For the first time since Jade died, I felt my heart slowly unfold, beat by beat, petal by petal, in sync with the baby's tiny tympanic heartbeat.

I settled in an armchair near the crib, and held Dahlia's baby in my arms. I had forgotten what it felt like to hold a child. A peaceful hum fell over the night, and for once, sleep lulled me into its oblivion. My house appeared in front of me. Jade dropped her purple bike on the pavement, and ran towards me. I stood on the steps. Jade's face lit up with a smile I missed so much it hurt. I opened my arms and hugged her close.

"I'm happy here, Mama. I want you to be happy too. I miss you", she said, then looked lovingly at the baby's sleeping form.

"I've always wanted a baby sister. She's so tiny and beautiful, just like a snowflake. Call her Xue Hua, Mama."

Before I could say anything back, a cloud settled over Jade's face. I woke up, my arms held aloft around an imaginary shape. The baby still slept softly next to me. Morning sunlight filters through the hospital window, casting shapes on the tiled floor like sweet honey. I could almost see Jade's smile manifest in the trickle of rays as I look out the window. I kissed Xue Hua's forehead.

"We will miss you too", I whispered.

VI "Come, sweetie, put the flower down. Time to go home." I beckoned to Xue Hua.

She took one last look at the dahlia, as if memorising every speck of colour, and tossed it in the air. As the flower disappeared among the riot of red, a dangerous glint sparked in her dark eyes. She rubbed a single blood-red petal between her fingers. 🌺

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Tomb Defender

**Guarding the Wealth
of Nanjings Past.**

By Renée Gray

In China it is said the 9th son of Dragon defecated on God's floor, violating the law of heaven and seriously upsetting the Jade Emperor, who then (as a punishment) sealed up his bottom and restricted his diet to gold, silver or jewels only. And so as legend would have it, this is the earliest story we have as to the beginnings of Pixiu; the non-pooing, mystical guardian protector of wealth.

From thenceforth, Pixiu (貔貅) has played a pivotal role in Chinese myths involving wealth and good fortune. Identifying Pixiu can sometimes see it mistaken with the stone lion. One must look for the head of a dragon (龙), and the body of a lion (狮), for Pixiu is a ferocious creature that stands proud alongside the dragon, phoenix, turtle and qilin, together making up the five mythical creatures of China.

Pi (貔, a.k.a. Tianlu; 天禄) is male; he has one antler. Xiu (貅, a.k.a. Bixie; 辟邪) is female and she has two antlers. Tianlu is in charge of wealth and the collection thereof. Bixie wards off evil and assists those suffering from bad fengshui. While the male side of Pixiu is said to bring wealth to its master, the female side is said to hold on to that the male has gathered. It was the Qing dynasty that altered the appearance of Pixiu, making him fatter, stronger and rounder so that his stomach shall be filled with endless wealth.

In China, those said to be going through a bad year will especially draw strength from Pixiu, who is said to possess mystical powers that pull in all manner of Cai Qi (财气; wealth).

Nanjing people are more than familiar with Pixiu. Bartender, Yullen Yu, commented, "Pixiu is Nanjing's heritage, he can bring you luck and protect you against bad things happening. If you are a businessman you will have Pixiu, he will help bring you money. My mother and relatives buy small jewelry pieces of Pixiu".

In fact, locals are particularly fond of Pixiu; as a visitor to this ancient capital, you have most definitely encountered it at some point. Perhaps guarding the entrance to a bank, tomb or the train stations, or even dangling around someone's neck or wrist. Just as the saintly presence of Mary Magdalene looks down upon the people of Rome; Pixiu is here, everywhere, looking over the people of Nanjing.


"Pixiu was dug up from underground a long time ago. During the Yuan Dynasty, Emperor Zhu Yuanzhang renamed Nanjing's Buddhist temple, where Pixiu was found, [as] Linggu Temple. He made the biggest Pixiu in China and after that from all over donations came to China... Pixiu can have benefits and negatives, [but] not everybody uses Pixiu, however", Yu added.

Indeed, Linggu Temple is the place to go to learn more about Pixiu, where it eternally sits guarding the entrance. Surrounded by forrest and seemingly well kept, considering it dates back to the Liang Dynasty (502-557), the temple is a place where the tranquil pondering of mystical ancient China can be done.

Said to be a bold creature that is loyal and obedient, Pixiu also has supernatural powers that enable it to protect against natural disasters and in times of war. According to blogger Yu Tuan Lu, "Pixiu [was] totem of two clans in the ancient times. Legend has it that Pixiu assisted emperor Yan and Emperor Huang in war". Pixiu's open mouth that bares large fangs is said to be used to attack evil spirits draining their soul and turn it into wealth. Pixiu guards against disease threatened by said souls. Its ability to gobble up and attack evil and its general ferociousness made Pixiu the ideal guardian on the battlefield in ancient China; hence its long standing connection with the army.

Local businesswoman, Joyce Zhang, told The Nanjinger, "Pixiu is only used by businesspeople... it dates as far back as the Tang Dynasty which was before the Song, the Yuan, the Ming and the Qing Dynasties; that's how far back its connection with Nanjing started and has remained".

In ancient China, Pixiu could be seen on the four corners of the roofs of important people and was used to guard important tombs. The statues of Pi and Xiu would guard the entrance to the tomb to ward off evil and protect wealth. Around Nanjing sits at least 34 such Pixiu tomb guardians, with some dating back to the Nan dynasty.

These days in Nanjing, and around the world, Pixiu is featured everywhere; in Disney's "Ducktales" as the gold monster, in the slot machine game Pixiu by Arrow's Edge, and even as the British Columbian occupational, health and safety company Pixiu Safety. Pixiu has become a modern day, internationally recognised symbol of health, wealth and happiness, with its roots in humble old Nanjing. 

"Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day;
teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime."

Maimonides



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Red or Dead

Teas with a Swagger

I've used this column in the past to vent my criticism of the tea sold in China's supermarkets. Today's Strainer marks no retreat.

There are usually two locations for tea in the supermarket. There's the loose tea; often located next to the pickles, stored in a similar way. Those glass jars, containing leaves of indeterminate age, are not the fitting place for happy tea; light is every bit as ravaging for green tea as heat or oxygen. And those unimaginative selections of tea, usually Long Jing [龙井茶], invariably smell as stale as their yellowness suggests.

Green tea needs to be refrigerated. Independent stores know this. Market stall sellers know this. Supermarkets, for all their deep-sea freezers full of angry looking beltfish, don't understand.

But then there's the supermarkets' packaged tea, near the milk powders and the porridge oats, the ginseng and the birds' nests. Again, some of these bags commit the photochemical sin, large windows glaring onto crispy green tea. This time the leaves don't look as yellow, because the window itself is sometimes tinted green, for reasons more meretricious than conscientious.

Okay, okay, you say. Avoid the green tea in the supermarket; we get it. But what about the remaining varieties of tea in those air tight bags? Do they all earn Strainer's scorn?

Flavour wise, they usually represent poor value for money compared with equivalents bought outside. Honing in on expensive-sounding names such as

Da Hong Pao [大红袍] or Jin Jun Mei [金骏眉], they often feel like tea marketed for people who don't know tea. Aesthetically they miss the mark, too. The triumph of British tea marketing, charming packaging housing leaves of indifferent quality – has barely been attempted here. The supermarket shelf is a mess of upper-case Pinyin and over-saturated depictions of “the nature”.

But there are new tea labels on the shelf. When I call this “red tea”, I mean red enough to rouse the ghost of Senator McCarthy. One of these, Guizhou's GTX Tea [贵天下], sports stars and revolutionary fonts on its keemun [祁门红茶] tins. Another, named Iron Peasant Tea [铁衣茶], from Hunan, presents itself as a tea of the people. There's nothing in this that we could call irony or knowingness, but both brands marry their retro aesthetic with a modern sensibility and real swagger. Like Xiaomi earphones, the latter tea tin namechecks the design agency as readily as the parent brand (lilotea). These packages are as sexy as Twinings and as funky as Teapigs. That attribute pairing doesn't necessarily result in a cohesive brand impression, but they're already as aspirational as anything Lipton has released.

The tea? Well, it's all right. Lilo's long leaves, with pale downy hairs, make it look expensive, but there's no depth here. The keemun (expensive at ¥50) is drinkable, but with few of the trademark keemun notes and none of its own.

Other customers strained their necks to look at these tins at the checkout. They certainly stand out. That's a victory of sorts, I suppose. 🍵

Chinese Investment in European Football

Chinese investment in football is known worldwide for the huge salaries and offers made to bring well recognised players to their local leagues, and also of its Government's ambitious project to make Chinese football a serious competitor for the World Cup. In recent times, Chinese investment in clubs overseas is becoming the norm, especially in Europe. UEFA's financial report estimates that China is the biggest spender on foreign clubs. Indeed, among the world's three principal leagues there are clubs benefiting from Chinese investment:

The new Italian "Chinese Derby"

The major Milan clubs, AC Milan and Internazionale di Milano, are now owned by the Chinese, while the well known "Derby della Madonnina" is now called by the press "The Chinese Derby."

In June 2016, it was made official that Nanjing born Zhang Jindong, through his company, the Suning Group, bought 70 percent of Inter Milan for an estimated 270 million Euros. The Group also owns the Chinese Super League club Jiangsu Suning. When the acquisition was officially announced in Nanjing, Zhang said, "Acquiring Inter of Milan is part of Suning's strategy to become a leader in the sports industry in the coming 5 years. We will make Inter more internationalised". Suning also has plans for building a new stadium since the San Siro Stadium belongs to the local Milan government.

After 31 years, last April Silvio Berlusconi sold AC Milan. Rossoneri Sport Investment Lux (RSIL) invested around 800 million Euros for the acquisition of 99.93 percent of the club, including 290 million of debt. RSIL is a Group formed by Haix-

ia Capital, a state-owned company, and businessman Li Yonghong. Part of their plan is to enter the stock market in Hong Kong. The agreement between the former Italian Prime Minister and Chinese group encountered many difficulties during completion and its structure is still not very clear. Besides, last month an investigation by the New York Times exposed possible wrongdoings and fraudulent deals in which Li could have been involved; his father and brother were sentenced to jail for bilking thousands of investors through one of their family companies in Guandong. Thus far, AC Milan has invested over 200 million Euros recruiting players in trying bring the club back to its glory times.

In England

Perhaps the most well-known, Chinese invested club in England is Manchester City (World no. 6 team by revenue), owned by the Emirian Mansour bin Zayed Al Nahyan. Nevertheless, China Media Capital (CMC) has a 13 percent share in the City Football Group, a holding company with investments in Manchester City in England, New York City in USA, Melbourne City in Australia, Yokohama Marinos in Japan and Girona in Spain. For this minority share, CMC paid 380 million Euros in 2015. This was the first Chinese investment in the English Premier League.

The 139-year old club West Bromwich Albion was bought in August 2016 by construction tycoon Lai Guochuan. With his firm, Yunyi Guokai Sports Development, he took an 88 percent stake in this Premier League club for an estimated 230 million Euros. He also plans to build six big football complexes across China in order to


develop youth football as a means to expand the West Brom brand name.

The Premier League team, Southampton is also owned by a Chinese magnate; Gao Jisheng. Second tier teams Aston Villa, Birmingham City and Wolverhampton Wanderers are also Chinese-owned, meaning that almost all clubs around the midlands city of Birmingham have been swallowed up by the Chinese.

In Spain

The Rastar Group, a toy car maker based in Guandong, is now the majority owner of the Catalonia team Espanyol. In 2016, it was reported that the new president Chen Yan-sheng secured a 54 percent share in ownership of the club after paying 45 million Euros. So far, he has invested more than 150 million Euros. Chen was ranked no. 254 on the 2015 Forbes China Rich List.

The world's biggest private property developer and largest cinema chain operator, the Wanda Group, invested 45 million Euros in 2015 for the acquisition of 20 percent of the renowned club, Atletico Madrid. The company also spent money on the new Atletico stadium, inaugurated last September, and named "Wanda Metropolitano". Rumors indicate that Wang Jianlin, one of the richest men in China, plans to own the club outright within the next 5 years.

Not only have the principal leagues in Europe received Chinese investment, other clubs such as Slavia Prague in the Czech Republic and Ado den Haag in Holland are in China's basket. This demonstrates how big and international the football business is and how the Chinese are willing to become part of it, both for profit and global exposure. 

UNLEASHED TO THRIVE

Year End 2017

Conducting Your Personal Review

By Tim MacDonald

As 2017 comes to a quick close, I am sure many of you are consumed with the typical December activities; finishing out the semester, finalizing your year-end reporting, making preparations for the trip home... and then there's the holiday shopping for Christmas and Hanukkah. Yikes! What an exhausting time of the year this can be.

However, as you get past the mania of December, have you thought about doing a personal year-end review? Perhaps a few of you have, but for most of us, probably not. Let me suggest a very simple method that may prove to be invaluable.

BEST & WORST

Many evenings around the MacDonald dinner table (not the golden arches!), we take turns sharing our "best" and "worst" of the day. Our two boys (4 and 6) always provide hilarious entertainment, often creating other categories, sharing their "happiest" and "silliest" moments of their day. It not only makes for great dinner conversation, but actually proves to be a healthy way to do a quick reflection of our day.

While there are many ways to do a year-end review, I suggest you use this "best" and "worst" method; it's simple, draws out great insights and provides a potential path forward into 2018.

REVIEWING YOUR 2017 – BEST, WORST & LESSONS LEARNED

I suggest finding a quiet place, at a time of day that your mind and soul are sharp (for me, it's early morning). Grab your 2017 calendar and begin reviewing the year, month by month; your business/school activities, as well as your personal/family/social activities.

Next, simply list out the months January through

December, and write out your best and worst experience or accomplishment for each month. If you want to categorize by business and personal, go for it, but keep it simple.

For some it will be an accomplishment, for others a relational moment with a good friend, or experiencing new food, visiting a new place, or hearing from friends or family back home.

Take a minute to think through each of these experiences. What made them your best? Your worst? Briefly write out the lesson learned from each.

Once you've completed all 12 months, go back and number your top three "bests" and your top three "worsts".

WRITING A NEW SCRIPT FOR 2018

With your best and worst of 2017 in hand, begin to think forward to the year ahead. What do you want more of? Less of? What can you do to be intentional on both fronts?

Many of us have histories of laying out New Year's resolutions that seemingly begin to dissolve towards the end of January, and go unfulfilled. But take another look at your Bests and Worst from 2017; your lessons learned. Why not make 2018 truly a new year? Who says you have to live out the same old script?

Write out three very practical ways you can increase your Best experiences, and three ways not to repeat your Worst experiences. Connect in with what matters most in each category of your life; business, family, learning, your faith, etc. Begin to write the script for what you want your life to be about in 2018. The Best is yet to come! 🌟

Tim MacDonald is the Managing Director of Chrysalis Consulting, a Nanjing based firm that assists MNCs with Operational Excellence, Supply Chain, Organizational and Talent Development challenges. Contact him at Tim.MacDonald@ChrysalisAsia.com

The *Hanfu* Movement

Fashion Politics

16 autumns ago sparked the beginning of what is now known as The Hanfu Movement. It was, in fact, the autumn of 2001 and the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) summit where world leaders Vladimir Putin, George W. Bush and Zhang Zeming appeared in staged pictures around the world dressed in Manchu style jackets in what was at the time China's nod to international peace and cooperation.

By *Renée Gray*



No audience, however, would have guessed at the time that this inadvertently set the stage for a Han revival. After the fall of the Qing dynasty some 100 years ago, “Manfu” (Manchu Dynasty Yifu (dress) the style worn by the formally oppressive ruling monarchy, was from then on how the Chinese were visually represented.

Patriotic Chinese have in the past taken offence at being represented visually by the Manfu style, which ultimately led to the formation of The Hanfu (Han Dynasty Yifu (dress) Movement. The movement has been described as “neo-traditionalist”, “nationalist” and that it represents “anti-foreign sentiment”.

“The left collar covering the right represents the perfection of the human culture on human nature and the overcoming of bodily forces by the spiritual power of ethical ritual teaching; the expansive cutting and board sleeve represents a moral concordant relation between nature and human creative power; the use of the girdle to fasten the garment over the body represents the constraints of Han culture to limit human's desire that would incur amoral deed”

[Chinese Clothing – Five Thousand Years' History; Culture Essentials Explore Chinese Culture]

movement has been disregarded by most as ostentatious and impractical. The group applied to the 2007 Olympic committee in Beijing to have athletes don Hanfu in order to better represent China. The appeal was rejected by the government.

It is said the movement gained traction when Mr. Wang Letian from Zhengzhou paraded down the streets of Henan wearing traditional Hanfu for the “first time in 350 years”. Wang gained a following that inspired others to “reflect on the cultural identity of the Han”. However, it seems the majority of modern day Hans have rejected the idea of a Hanfu revival, dismissing it as “eccentric”.

In the journal article, “China’s State of Warring Styles”, Lecturer at Macquarie University, Kevin Carrico, said, “The movement promotes a sacred tradition surrounding profane reality, declaring an aestheticised warfare on the dictatorship of the real”. People claim that the main “characteristics of Hanfu were symbolic of cultural, moral and ethical values”.

While most of us feel we are somewhat exempt from the world of fashion and its “meaningless” pursuits, the influence of what we put on our back ultimately solidifies who we are and how we identify ourselves.

“Fashion is not something that exists in dresses only. Fashion is in the sky, in the street, fashion has to do with ideas, the way we live, what is happening.”
[Coco Chanel]

The movement has clear goals and presents an alternative to visual representations of national patriotism; it however neglects to include the other 55 minorities that have helped to make up China’s 5,000-year history. As a result this has led to its rejection by the government and the majority of modern day Hans, however what the movement has helped to do is recognise a growing need for a clearer nationalist identity in China. 🇨🇳

Layering Up

The Re-Envisioned Chinese Paper Gourd

From his chilly studio in Beijing, Li Hongbo stretches the possibilities of China's most celebrated invention and art's most humble material; paper.

His sculptures, which at first appear like European marble busts, are composed of several thousand layers of paper, meticulously glued layer upon layer in an alternate striped pattern. When stretched the mound of glued sheets unfolds to create a honeycomb concertina, which can be expanded and distorted into infinite forms. The effect combines the sophistication and pomp of classical sculpture with the playfulness and appeal of a slinky.

Li Hongbo has long been fascinated by paper. For lack of toys as a child growing up in Jilin province, he used his knack for creativity to refashion school textbooks into paper playthings. He later developed a sensitivity towards paper, its quality and various applications, working as an adult in book design and publishing.


The inspiration for Li's sculptures is founded in decorative paper gourds, which can be stored flat and unfolded into a three-dimensional gourd shaped like an "8". This traditional folk art technique is still prevalent today and Chinese continue to hang paper gourds in their homes during festivals to enliven the auspicious qualities of this magical fruit. Li Hongbo's adaptation of this simple yet ingenious method is a nostalgic reference to tradition while allowing him to explore the possibilities of paper and challenge conventional applications of this ubiquitous material.

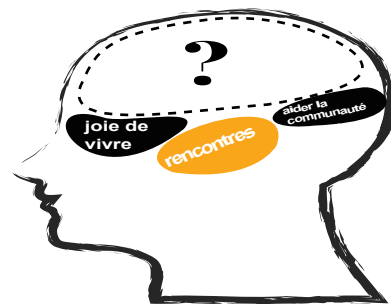
The artist first used the paper gourd method to make a gun shaped object which, upon stretching

and opening, takes on an entirely different form resembling neither its original shape nor retaining the violent connotations associated with guns. Through interaction, the object is prescribed with kinetic agency. Our perception as viewer is instantly transformed and as partaker we become a creative element in the artwork itself.

Each sculpture can take months to finish and uses on average between 6,000 and 25,000 sheets of paper. First the artist uses a metal stencil to paste glue in a striped pattern onto a sheet of paper before placing another piece on top and repeating this process several times. Once a stack of paper reaches about five centimetres in height it is roughly cut out into the shape needed for one layer of the sculpture. The stacks are then glued together and eventually carved and sanded into their final form.

To some, the idea of stretching the head of Michaelangelo's David or distorting the face of Greek goddess Athena is strange and disturbing. To others, it opens up a new dimension to objects and images which we thought were familiar.

When placed within a gallery the sculptures rely heavily on human handling and manipulation which unfortunately is limited to white-gloved assistants. Whether one considers it a strength or weakness, this evokes in the viewer a powerful desire to participate and play with the object, exemplifying the idea of "look, but don't touch". To overcome this restriction, Li Hongbo created smaller models for visitors to play with when exhibiting in Australia, allowing them to appreciate the intimacy which make his tactile sculptures such a success. 



Brain Gymnastics

Helping Our Creative Endeavours

We are all well aware of the benefits of maintaining general good health. However, there is a very specific area of our health that we take for granted.

Mental health is never something we think of as our responsibility. When was the last time that you made plans to improve your brain health?

Nowadays, there are available and affordable medical tests that can help us establish the current state of our brain health, just as we can check the condition of our heart or do a general body check up.

In that way, we can take steps to prevent ailments such as Alzheimer's, which take years and years to develop in our brain before they can be detected or start manifesting symptoms.

According to Dr. Daniel Amen, M.D., Founder of the Amen Clinic, and Tana Amen, B.S.N./R.N., author of "The Omni Diet", among the most detrimental habits that gradually deteriorate the health of our brain, the most critical could be listed as follows:

Smoking, sleep deprivation, excessive consumption of fat, sugar or alcohol, a sedentary life style or lack of exercise, dehydration, the wrong kind of diet (even those where you deprive your body of some essential fats). All these will impact negatively on your brain.

In a nutshell, all the routines and good habits that we put into practice for our general good health will also benefit our brain. However, there are additional activities that we can implement to assist with the welfare of this important organ.

All the activity produced in our brain is based on connections between neurones; the synapsis. As we get older, the neurones also age, losing their ability to produce the synapsis, and eventually die. Unfortunately, the nerves do not have self-regenerative properties as some parts of our body do, so once they become old or damaged their only fate is death. The good news is that our brain is loaded with a lot of fresh neurones ready to create brand new connections.

For these to come to life, it is not only necessary to have cultivated a top-notch general health, which translates

to good conditions for the brain, but most importantly, to have a consistent routine of mental exercising.

Is not uncommon to find people in their 70s who have a young and sharp brain with the cognitive capacities of a 20-year-old; these are usually people with a career that allows them a very active brain.

Meditation

The mental and physical benefits of regular meditation have been proven with magnitude. The practice consists of the use of several techniques to slow down the processes in our brain and body through deep breathing and focused thinking, favouring self-repair and resuscitation, including of course the brain, by slowing down the release of certain segregations. Neuroscientist and author of "Still Alice," Lisa Genova says that these segregations, in excess, can be detrimental to our body; those such as cortisol which can cause blockages between the neurones, slowing down or stopping the synapsis that is one of the causes of several kinds of dementia, including Alzheimer's.

Creative Activities

Learning to play a musical instrument, studying new languages, writing, painting; in fact, any kind of creative activity that creates new challenge has an enormously positive influence, not only in our brain, but also our entire body. Everything that represents a new activity, implying learning or discovery, forces the brain to break away from established thinking patterns created by years of habits, and create new and fresh paths of connections that help the brain remain young and active.

The advantage of having in stock these new connections is that when the inevitable happens and those old cells face their final destination, we are not left with a dried out brain, but instead, we have a whole set of spare fresh brain connections to keep it fully functional for much longer.

Keep in mind that when we embark on creative or artistic endeavours, the focus should stay away from being a master, which creates in ourselves an inhibiting stress; instead we should see it as an exercise that will help to extend our brain life. 🌈

OUR SPACE



GASTRONOMY *By Renée Gray*

Cheap & Cheerful; Classic Chinese

GRANDMAS, reads the bright neon lit sign outside Waipo Jia (外婆家; Grandma's Home) restaurant. With its humble Hangzhou beginnings, Waipo Jia now has multiple locations in Nanjing and other major cities around China; bringing Hangzhou style food across the country.

Not only does this restaurant offer more on the menu than that of your average Tiantian Jia (天天家餐; Everyday Chinese Food), prices are more than reasonable. Inside, decor is something of which to take note, featuring an up-cycled, industrial look that is dark and cozy, while inviting and pleasantly spacious.

With an extensive menu it seems diners at Waipo Jia have fun selecting a variety of dishes, as no one table appears to order the same thing. The Nanjinger particularly enjoyed the "Waipo BBQ Chicken" (¥38), the flavorsome "Potato Xiang Che Tudou" (¥10), "Garlic Shrimps" (¥48) and "Garlic and Ginger Chicken" (¥18).

Also to be found on the menu are the classic expat favourites "Kung Pao Chicken", spring rolls and fried rice, among others. At Waipo Jia, pints of cold Tiger come cheap at ¥10, with wine and juice options available too. Desserts are plentiful and look delicious.

The downside to this place is a product of its popularity; the restaurant does not take reservations, so getting in quick is a must. One rather busy Saturday night, The Nanjinger once waited longer than 30 minutes, ticket in hand, before giving up. However, on most nights the service is quick and the change over fast. Grandma's Home is an excellent choice for those of us just looking for some "back - home style" cheap Chinese food with a nice atmosphere.

Waipo Jia is located on the 8th floor of Xinjiekou's Xinbai Mall. It is open from 10:30 - 2pm and 4:30pm to 9pm. 中山南路3号南京新百A座8楼. Tel: 52431787. Other locations around town.

GASTRONOMY *By Frank Hossack*

Steak & Sausage; Nanjing's Western Staples

For all the hype associated with it, diners in Hexi looking for western options are going to quickly become bored. The Nanjinger was therefore potentially cheered to discover European Kitchen in the newly opened Golden Eagle Mall.

In Nanjing, when it comes to cuisine and decor, the word "European" can largely be replaced with "German", which in turn, might as well read "Sausage". We hence found on our table a Nuremberg Fried Sausage plate (¥29) paired with a Sausage & Bacon Pizza (¥58), the former best termed tasty and the latter, small but adequate.

The menu offers up no less than 14 grill options, from sirloin and T-bone steaks to racks of lamb ribs and pork chops, from which we opted for the cheapest; Black Pepper Beef Steak (¥49), that was again, quite adequate for the money, although our expectations were higher, given the menu's claim, "Our Beef...Listen to Music, Drink Beer and Get Massages".

Leaving the starters to last, Oxtail Soup was certainly that, the bone being a dead giveaway, while Salmon & Papaya Salad (¥38) was a standout for the crispness of its lettuce, no mean a feat in Nanjing.

European Kitchen is located on the 7th floor of Hexi's Golden Eagle Mall 应天大街888号 金鹰世界7F. Tel: 85200977.



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Nanjing International School celebrated reading, through workshops for students with storyteller, puppeteer and actress, Grethe Mangala Jensen, while Australian Slam Poet Champion, Zohab Z Khan, worked with students in Grades 5-12, inspiring students to discover the power of words and poetry.

Cradle Song

8 & 9 November, 2017



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Key Stage 2 students at The British School of Nanjing put on "Robin Hood and the Sherwood Hoodies", in which singing and dancing along with well-timed comedic interjections made sure the audience was captivated throughout, while the stage, props and costumes transformed the auditorium into a magical wonderland!



I Do it for You

15 November, 2017





During their One World Day celebration, students at EtonHouse Nanjing International School inquired into a country and explored its culture and traditions, culminating with performances for parents and guests, in what was a great way for all to learn whilst having fun!



Walk Like An Egyptian

17 November, 2017



The Nanjing leg of the Sino 10s Rugby tournament saw 10 teams playing against each other, with the Shanghai University of Sports becoming the day's big winners; both their men's and women's teams went home unbeaten. The Nanjing Rockets won two out three, putting them in third place in the league.

World in Union

18th November, 2017



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Over ¥17,500 was raised for the Amy Yang Fund with help from Nanjing International Club, when Nanjing's best-dressed ladies gathered in the Shangri La Hotel to watch the annual Melbourne Cup, with one lucky lady achieving a memorable trifecta when her chosen horses came 1st, 2nd and 3rd.

Chestnut Mare

20 May, 2017



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TEDx Youth@NIS

x = independently organized TED event

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In the spirit of ideas worth spreading, TED has created a program called TEDx. TEDx is a program of local, self-organized events that bring people together to share a TED-like experience. Our event is called TEDxYouth@NIS, where x = independently organized TED event. At our TEDxYouth@NIS event, TEDTalks video and live speakers will combine to spark deep discussion and connection in a small group. The TED Conference provides general guidance for the TEDx program, but individual TEDx events, including ours, are self-organized.

Find out more at tedxyouthnis.com or sign up by scanning the QR code below.





Technological Advancement's Effects on Copyright

In this modern age of technology, it is very easy to access any information we so desire. However, this brave new digital world brings just as much danger as it does pleasure. Whether it be accessing E-books on a tablet, listening to music on a phone or watching movies on a computer, the notion of copyright comes into question. All too often people are so caught up in how simple it can be to watch any movie, read any book or listen to any song, that they fail to realise they could be infringing on an artist's copyright. Is the cost of this new world of free information our Intellectual Property Rights?

The Internet can be a treasure trove for free information and social networking but the cold hard reality is that the ability to access the Internet anytime, anywhere and at a greater speed than ever before, brings with it certain dangers and risks. Take for example the use of the program BitTorrent on the Internet. To the uninitiated, BitTorrent is a very useful tool which allows you to easily and quickly download or upload large amounts of data.

On this basis, there is nothing wrong with the use of BitTorrent and it breaks no laws; it simply acts as a means to move files (e.g.) uploading your work for others to read/critique etc. However, generally speaking, this is not how BitTorrent is commonly used by web users. Many users of the BitTorrent program commonly employ its functions in order to upload/download the latest movies/books/music/applications, etc. After a quick search and a few clicks, users of a BitTorrent program are violating the copyrights of artists all from the comfort of their own home.


The ease of access and simple procedure are what is most alarming about this trend, as few people feel like they are doing anything wrong, much less breaking any laws. The websites hosting the torrent files all look and seem like any other on the Internet they would use for services or

social networking. However, many of the owners of these websites in Hong Kong, Finland, Sweden etc. have seen their day in court for copyright infringements. Although China does not criminalise copyright infringement which is not for profit, it is important to understand that it is still illegal.

There are difficulties with the enforcement of protection of Intellectual Property Rights in China, namely the sheer size of the country, as well as Intellectual Property Rights being a relatively new principle in the country, where intellectual property laws were first drafted in 1982; the case law and precedents make for a slim read at best.

In recent years, the landscape for Intellectual Property rights in the People's Republic has very much been homogenised. China has already signed, and is bound by, the provisions contained in the Berne Convention, as well as The Agreement on Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property, which are both international treaties on Intellectual Property Rights that guarantee standards for basic copyright regulations.

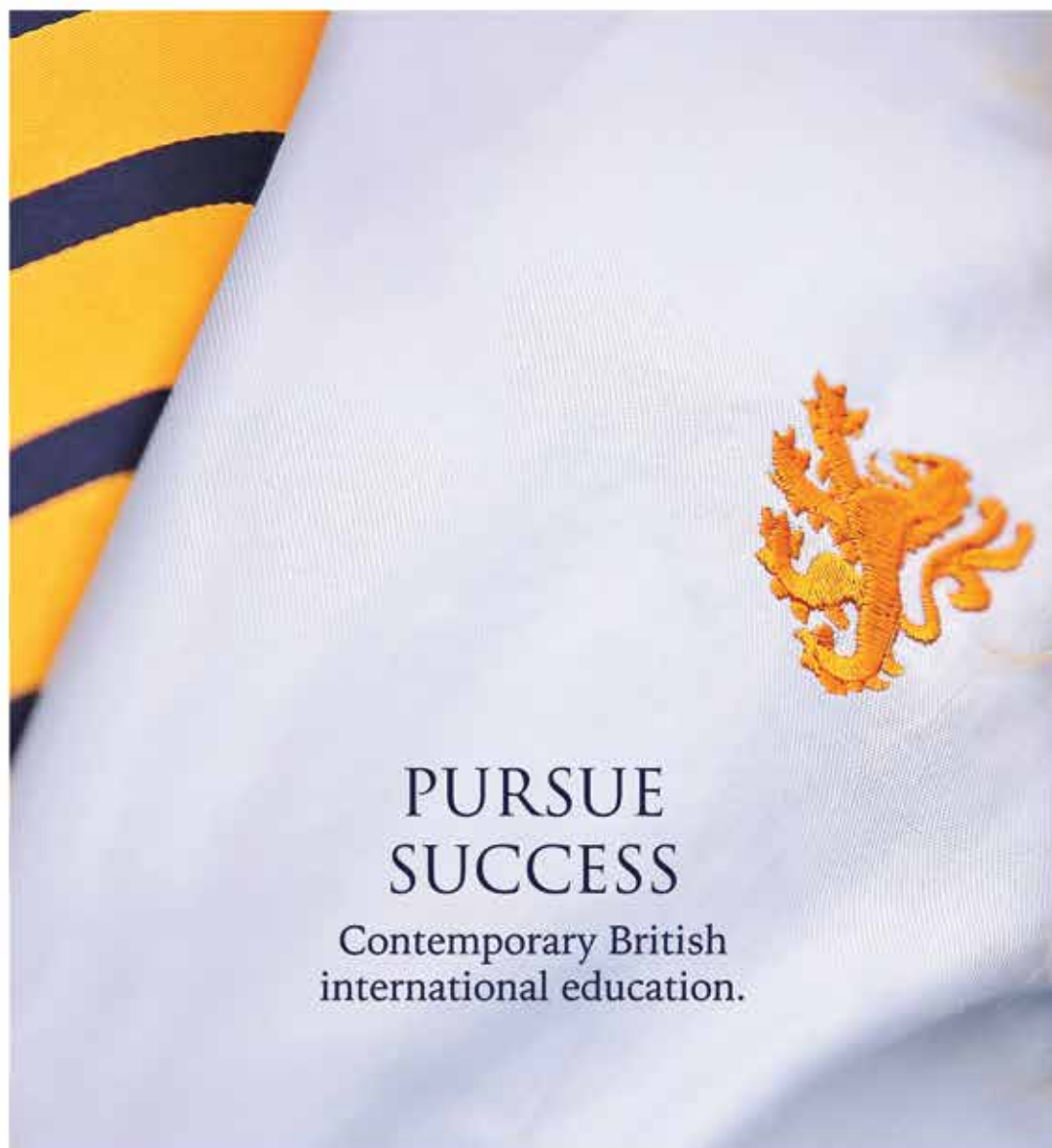
Under these provisions, all artists are automatically entitled to the works which they produce in that they are not required to register their copyright. However, in order to avoid disputes as to ownership of the works, it is advisable to register a copyright nevertheless. The copyright term is the life of the author plus 50 years, but for cinematographic and photographic works plus works created by a company or organisation, the term is 50 years after first publication. The legal provisions are of an international standard, therefore the legislature is not responsible.

The overarching problem is not the laws protecting copyrights in China; it is users who are oblivious, or alternatively, uneducated, as to the fact that they are actively violating copyrights should they upload/download content without the authors express permission. 

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