

擇個良辰吉日
來親頭等郎
同

望風情水旱記懷



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Fig. 1. 'Hair-combing Lady'. © A-Cheng.

‘Inked-food’

Tasting Macao Through



A-Cheng's Water-painted Caricature

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INTRODUCTION

Food is a primary need and an expression of individual tastes, but is also the construct of a specific cultural identity and the mirror of community lifestyles. Presenting food means presenting a culture. A-Cheng therefore proposes a new aspect of Macao customs and suggests a different experience to his audience; that of processing food not by a gustatory perception but by the gaze and by recollected memories recollected.¹

A-Cheng is mainly known as a cartoonist, however his paintings are quite popular at least in Macao and are an example of simple and free sketch-style compositions, depicting human subjects as common people involved in simple activities, like for example in his ‘Hair-combing Lady’ (*liu toufa* 梳头发) (Fig. 1)² which depicts a lady who is gently combing a young girl's long black hair while she is breastfeeding her baby.

His brushwork is meticulous and fine and fixes on paper many memories in a fresh, lively and coloured



form. The elements depicted in his works are executed with ink-and-wash mixed with double lines techniques. A-Cheng's creations hint towards a quite conservative attitude which is rather descriptive and retrospective.

His art represents one of the main forms of mediating the memory of a vanishing³ Macao. The aesthetical power of memory, already studied by Leo Spitzer and Marianne Hirsh, is but one of the key aspects of A-Cheng's artistic production where food is an important ‘point of memory’ opening a window to the past, with moments frozen by memory and becoming alive through painting ‘points of intersection between past and present, memory and post-memory, personal and cultural recollection’ (Hirsh and Spitzer, 2006). The realm of memory is normally connected to something we have lost and is normally preserved in the *lieux de mémoire* (Nora, 2003), which is a symbolic space where the memory can be fully or partly recognised in objects, pictures, monuments, names, colours, smells, etc. by a nation, a family, an ethnic group or an individual. The place of memory is traditionally organised into a museum, an archive, a library, a cemetery, or a monument, but can also be connected to a specific place, a city or a *lieux topographiques* (Valensi, 1995, p. 1271; Nora, 1978, pp. 398-401). A-Cheng's individual memory is frozen on paper, a common support for Chinese traditional painting culture, using a brush-and-ink technique. In A-Cheng's painting there is a persistence of antiquity and tradition presented through a burlesque style. A-Cheng's caricatures are depicted as a blend of first-hand observations of the daily life in popular Macao and in fantasy. The caricature is

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conveyed by both the use of colours (see Fig. 2),⁴ and disproportion of the objects and figures.⁵ In fact, A-Cheng's style focuses especially on the facial expressions of his characters that are depicted in order to convey to the reader specific caricature *pathos*. The caricatures presented by the artist are part of a unified whole presented with a specific 'cinematic sensibility' on the daily life of common people in Macao. The category 'Macanese culture' has no fixed meaning and belongs to a community that goes far beyond the physical borders of Macao.⁶ Consequently the emergence of Macanese cuisine is but a fragment of a more

complex general process, which has established and legitimised the Macanese national culture in the last five centuries. On the other hand, calligraphy and painting are two closely related forms of Chinese art but in Macao, a place where East has been meeting the West (namely Europe) since the Ming dynasty, art has undergone a sort of hybridisation process. Chinese food has always been considered an art and the centre of daily life and ritual, yet it has seldom been depicted in art as a main subject. In fact, Chinese painting can be divided into three main areas: landscape, portraits (especially those linked to the ancestor worship), and flowers and birds. The Macao Special Administrative Region still contains fine examples of Sino-Portuguese architecture, although they are now hidden behind huge casinos and extravagant buildings. Once one reaches the Macao Ferry Terminal the skyline is dominated by the flaming and shining new Hotel Lisboa and the birdcage-like casino.⁷ The visitor is captured by a sort of optical illusion very similar to that of a kaleidoscope. Macao is a 'cultural Janus' (Cheng, 1999) and, like the Roman god, it always looks in two opposite directions: East and West, past and present, old and new, etc. After the first impact, Macao can give another impression and, once one reaches Senado Square and walks down in the direction of São Domingos Church, one can have a typical Portuguese breakfast based on a real 'bica'⁸ accompanied with a delicious 'pastel de nata'⁹ at Ou Mun café. Ou Mun [Macao in Cantonese] café is a famous restaurant and bakery in Macao. Located down an alley off Senado Square, Travessa de São Domingos, the smell of freshly baked pastry simply invites one to enter the coffee shop. In this very small space one can meet a sketch of Macanese culture: Filipinos serving

Portuguese food in China. Downtown, one can visit the historical centre and be completely overwhelmed by huge and extravagant skyscrapers. The centre of old Macao is mainly characterised by Portuguese and Asian culture, but American and British influence is also evident in some small corners of this multicultural city. After crossing the Largo do Senado, paved with the traditional *calçada portuguesa* (Portuguese pavement), with geometrical designs based on sea waves, one can climb the Rua Nolasco da Silva and find the Livraria Portuguesa (Portuguese bookstore). This place represents the liaison with Portugal through temporary exhibitions on display on the first floor and several cultural activities in the basement. The bookstore is especially focused on Portuguese-language books, but also on Macanese culture. This paper is organised as a menu from starter to dessert, in which I create my own succession of dishes according to my own personal taste. Each dish is but an occasion to introduce a new topic, a multicultural fusion of art and food through traditional paintbrushes and ink.

APPETISER: MACAO AND HIS HISTORY

There is not much difference between the history of Macao and a Macanese dish: they both combine the features of Southern Chinese and Portuguese cuisine, and its ingredients and seasonings blend flavours from China, Southeast Asia, Europe and Latin America. The Macanese food shows strong Chinese and wider Asian influences. There are few cookbooks and each one presents a different set of recipes, each claiming to be the authentic recipe of the same dish. Baking, roasting and grilling are the three main cooking techniques used in this area.

There is no doubt that in Macao food is a result of various cultures encountering and melting together in a pot. The cuisine in Macao is a 'pot-pourri' of cross-cultural smells, tastes and colours, and a tradition where one can find the world in a dish.

Once the Portuguese arrived to Macao by sea in the 1550s, Haojing 蚝镜¹⁰ was a little village of fishermen. The strategic location of Macao, on the Pearl River estuary, naturally led to a constant flow of people from and to Southeast Asia, China, and Japan, who seldom settled there. According to historic tradition, Jorge Álvares was the first European to arrive close to Macao from Malacca in 1513. According to Chinese

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sources forty years after that first approach to Ming China, the Portuguese finally settled there and created trading posts and promoted commerce both regionally and globally.¹¹ Moreover, when the Portuguese settled there, commerce prospered and became more globalised. Soon the Portuguese controlled various commercial routes between China and Europe; China and Southeast Asia; China and Japan; and China and the West Indies through Manila.¹² There were and still exist today people from all over the world in Macao, bringing all kinds of different traditions, habits, and customs. Since food is based on tradition and embodies the cultural characteristics of specific people over time, it cannot be considered as a static phenomenon but rather as a category that changes in space and time. When different people from different regions passed through Macao, some of them settled and left their culinary tradition.¹³ Those people created a new cultural dimension that can still be experienced in tasting food. A dish in Macao is a special experience that results from the transition which occurs between the cooker, the ingredients and the eater. These three elements can all be from different origins. It is quite usual to meet well-off Portuguese families with Filipinos cooks, who are able to prepare Portuguese dishes with local ingredients from Macao/South China in a Filipino style. We can also imagine a Chinese woman married to a Portuguese man, who might himself be of Indian origin, with African servants, all of them being involved at different stages in the creation of a Macanese dish. This process is very old, as ancient as Macao itself, and is very complicated to explain in few words. The result of this melting pot can be tasted in dishes like the 'Minchi',¹⁴ a 'Galinha à Portuguesa',¹⁵ or a 'Galinha à Africana' baked with 'piri-piri',¹⁶ garlic in coconut sauce, or still the common entry 'chilicotes fritos', a sort of *hors d'oeuvre* made with meat and fried, and why not finish the meal with a delicious dessert, the famous 'bebinca de leite' (coconut pudding)? The result is a Macanese cuisine that is an 'invented tradition' (Hobsbawm and Ranger, 1983) which belongs to an 'imagined community' (Andersen, 2006) that has been surviving since the 16th century, the Macanese, and has been adapting itself to the taste of the globalised world. If one is not satisfied with a 'bica', one can always have a coffee at Starbucks in the historical centre of Macao.

The term Macanese¹⁷ is normally used to define people from Macao of Portuguese origin, who speak

the Macanese (or Patuá), the Creole dialect that results from a mixture of mainly three identified languages: Portuguese, Malay and Cantonese. This is a dialect that sometimes is very useful in identifying the names of the various dishes. The result of this melting pot, this Babel Tower with a syncretic religious attitude, has been a new ethnic group, identified with a specific language but also with traditions evident in the way of eating and cooking. That is what Christina Cheng has defined as 'racial amalgamation [that] produces different aspects of hybridity including new forms of cultural production' (1999, p. 205).

ENTRÉE: A-CHENG AND HIS MEMORIES

Chen Weihui 陈伟辉 is the real name of the traditional cartoonist¹⁸ commonly known by his pseudonym A-Cheng (Yazheng 亚正).¹⁹ He coordinates

Fig. 2. 'Writing New Year Couplets'. © A-Cheng.





Fig. 3. 'Cane Chair', © A-Cheng.



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projects that are produced by the Creative Industries of the Association of the St. Lazarus Church District (*Aomen wangdetang qu chuangyi chanye cujin hui* 澳门望德堂区创意产业促进会). He is an independent artist, even if linked to many institutions that promote his work. He prefers to keep on working instead of wondering too much about his success.

Chen Wenhui was born in Macao in 1951, into a very simple family of paper sellers. In this environment he discovered his passion for drawing, an enthusiasm that was not really shared by his family and in particular by his father who forbade him from drawing at home. Chen therefore had to practise during the night while everybody was asleep, keeping on drawing up until dawn of the following day. This activity caused him to fall asleep during day classes.

It was not really clear to the artist himself why at that time his father did not want him to draw but, when he became an adult, he suddenly realised that his father was actually worried about the kind of life that Cheng could face if he was an artist. Being an artist is, most of the time, synonymous with a troublesome life. Nevertheless, A-Cheng published his first drawing in a school review in 1968. Most people liked the drawing and this encouraged the young A-Chen to continue in this way. He finally gave up drawing at the end of secondary school because he began to work as an apprentice tailor in a shop downtown. The Cultural Revolution did not affect Macao as deeply as the rest of the People's Republic of China. After the anti-Portuguese '123 Incident'²⁰ in 1966-1967, Macao found itself in a state of anarchy. A-Cheng got a job and had a fixed salary. Meanwhile he was working on his drawings during the night. Many cartoonists had to give up their careers, because in Macao there were few opportunities to show one's work. At that time many people were drawing and writing, but there were few newspapers and only one or two magazines. Therefore A-Cheng could not live on the income from their drawings and, for this reason, in order to support himself, he also had other jobs, which changed quite frequently. The job that occupied him the longest was at the Macao Jockey Club. The artist declared that, when he was working there, he learned how to work in a very pragmatic way by carrying out tasks in due time, and this—he declared—influenced his way of drawing. He was an amateur artist but he was really talented. During the 1980s, he was the author of a column

in the 'Overseas Report'. Between 1998 and 1999 during the Handover of Macao, A-Cheng remained unemployed but the handover of Macao (20 December 1999) represented a turning point for Macao and for his life. He spent most of the time at home wondering what to do and how to carry out his drawing. It was at that time that A-Cheng began to produce the drawings that have made him famous today. Elaborating on the sense of 'saudade'²¹ that most people were showing at that time in many ways, he expressed this feeling by using a brush or a pencil. In this mood of 'saudade', he began giving up pens and chose the Chinese traditional brushes as well as rice paper²² to translate his memories into watercolours. Watercolour is a symbolic means to represent moments that would have faded away if not immortalised by painting. At the very beginning, since he did not have an academic artistic education, he was not really familiar with Chinese traditional scroll paintings, but very slowly A-Cheng learned how to 'read'²³ a picture and to capture the style to produce its own original work. It was during the end of the 1990s that he developed his unique style. His trait did not follow a single trend; rather it changed according to his feelings. He is neither simply a cartoonist²⁴ nor simply a Chinese traditional painter, but both and, in such a way, he has created his own style. When A-Cheng is in front of white paper, the images come naturally onto it as if they are directly projected from his mind. His mind is an archive of memories transferred onto the paper by a mixture of tradition and modernity. The memories of his childhood are particularly alive;²⁵ he has registered details, such as the street vendors in Macao (see Fig. 3),²⁶ or the students playing in the streets. A-Cheng was recording painting by rendering his childhood memories. Having produced around 200 artworks, he decided to organise his first individual exhibition at the Plaza Cultural de Macau, which was inaugurated on May 1999. The exhibition was welcomed by the public in general and the catalogue of the exhibition was a success. By that time he understood that his childhood memories belonged to the collective memory of Macanese people. His art could directly reach the heart of the Macanese people, creating a cathartic moment. A-Cheng's 1999 exhibition provoked much talk about the 'old times', which in turn generated new material for his forthcoming works. Meanwhile, he continued to work also as a cartoonist by publishing many works in magazines like 'Va Kio' 华侨报 and the



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Fig. 4. 'Cha Cha'. © A-Cheng.

'Ming Pao' 明報 of Hong Kong on a weekly basis. His work has become better known and has been published in major newspapers and magazines edited both in Macao and Hong Kong. Meanwhile he has organised exhibitions and participated in different projects. At the very beginning, his style was more connected to the production of cartoons in newspapers, while more recently he has been involved in a different kind of production by depicting Macao daily life. His first ink work was published in 2000 representing Macao and its inhabitants during the late 1950s. It captured a collective memory that has disappeared and soon he combined the cartoon style with the life of Macao, which is quite original in its genre. He has won various prizes, among them the 'Yomiuri Shimbun World Comics Award' (1987), and in 1988 he was selected by the 'British Cartoon Aid Ltd.' for the special issue '88 comics Olympics'. In the following year he won

the 'National Cartoon Competition Award' for a publication in the 'Beijing Worker's Daily'.

Since the 1970s the cartoonist A-Cheng has been working intensively and thus given readers the pleasure to enjoy his comics in Macao. For decades his drawings have belonged to the daily life of many people and have been making readers smile and laugh for a long time. If once he was one of the few cartoonists in Macao, he is now becoming more and more famous for his sensibility in giving shape to shared Macanese memories.

TO CONCLUDE, THE DESSERT: INKED-FOOD

Art is food for our soul, and art that contains food is a nutrient for a collective memory. There are not many examples of water painting representing food in China as presented by A-Cheng, who is somehow the creator of a new subject 'Macanese ethnic-folk painting' within *guohua* 国画 artistic representation. Painting is traditionally considered to be the most representative artistic expression of the Chinese millenary civilisation. Since the systematisation of the Chinese writing system, the artist using the brush has been capable of synthesising calligraphy, poetry and painting in a single masterpiece; all of these characteristics we find in A-Cheng's masterpieces. Chinese painting, in fact, involves many other artistic activities such as seals carving, inkstone shaping and brush manufacturing. All these elements can be found in A-Cheng's work, which present a harmonious compromise between the old and the new ways of life. He re-reads the art depicting new subjects using a traditional Chinese painting style. His style is common to other modern artists such as Lu Fengzi 吕凤子 (1886-1959), one of the individual artists who studied at the famous Nanjing Liangjiang Normal School,²⁷ and in fact they share the same kind of *jiangong daixie* 兼工带写 style, a combination of freehand and meticulous brush that uses both ink and a touch of colour on paper.

The conjugation of painting and calligraphy, image and words,²⁸ is a typical form of Chinese traditional art, but also an outline of comic art²⁹ where words become a 'soundtrack' to the visual support of images (Varnum and Gibbons, 2001, p. 98). According to Michael Sullivan, caricature is quite an old³⁰ form of art, and is actually something very difficult to date. Traditionally, caricature painting in China coincides

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with Luo Ping's masterpieces, and paintings such as those presented by early Yuan painters with a sophisticated political message, like Gong Kai 龚开's *Zhong Kui Travelling* 山出游图.³¹ Gong Kai depicts a 'seemingly innocuous subject' but with a strong political message that is suggested by the inscription. If this was the first attempt of satirical paintings, nevertheless this does not seem the purpose of A-Cheng who seems to be more intent on preserving good memories of his own life through the caricature genre.

A-Cheng's freehand-style calligraphy completes his paintings in a very traditional style. His paintings are the result of a combination of simple brushstroke,³² colour and definite monochrome ink on paper, a style of art that can be traced back to artists like Liang Kai 梁楷³³ and Muqi 牧溪³⁴ of the Song dynasty, but with a new artistic flavour and order that can be found during Mao Zedong 毛泽东's era. At first glance his watercolour seems a mixture of chiselled-looking but still delicate

brushstrokes, which results in harsh and rugged but fluent lines mixed together with beautiful, lively colours, the so called *caimohua* 彩墨画 (colour ink painting). As Michael Sullivan points out, this synthesis of Western colour and Chinese ink was supported by Jiang Feng, who, after becoming the acting president of the Central Academy, created a new department that promoted a controlled revival of traditional painting (1996, p. 139). Similarly A-Cheng produces simple coloured shapes outlined (*miao* 描) with at times light brown and at times black broken and dry brushstrokes that at the end convey a mixture between a cartoon and a Chinese traditional painting. The result is an intercultural form of painting with Western (European) spirit and China's national character.

Here only a 'sample portion' of his whole menu is presented. As to the dessert, a suggestion could be a 'Cha Cha' (*cha zha* 喳咋) (see Fig. 4), a kind of Malaysian sweet soup, made of rice, Chinese red beans, kidney beans, wheat, sago, taro with coconut or condensed milk also being added sometimes. This dessert belongs to the Southeast Asia regions' cuisine and is still common in Macao. The water painting depicts a man carrying two loads full of cups and two colourful receptacles containing the creamy dessert. Big characters on the light blue loads announce that the old man is selling 'Cha-Cha'. This image belongs to the personal memories of the author who recalls the 'dessert with a strange name' (Chan, 2008, pp. 58-59) from a foreign country, but which has for a very long time belonged to the Macanese culture. The calligraphy on the bottom of the painting on the left describes the scene and is marked with a red seal used as a signature. The marking of authorship with a red seal is a very old tradition linked to Chinese art.

The dessert is always followed by a good coffee—a very Portuguese habit that can be found also in Macao—where it is not hard to find a good 'bica'. One of the finest examples of A-Cheng's art is the so-called 'Meng's café' (*café Ming* 咖啡明)³⁵ (see Fig. 5), which includes a caricature of a Western man, very expressive and outlined by a thick black line, which is a typical mark of cartoon drawings. The outlining of forms is characteristic of A-Cheng's brushstrokes. The man is smiling and serving coffee using several traditional local pot heaters on a very common Chinese stove, with flames jumping around in a very lively way, as if some of the elements of the painting were moving

Fig. 5. 'Meng's café'. © A-Cheng.



漢口
六十年代
的担水婆
丁亥年
畫



六十年代

Fig. 6. 'Woman delivering water'. © A-Cheng.

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to the rhythm of multicultural sounds. The image is particularly lively, but framed in a very traditional Chinese way: the picture on the left and calligraphy on the right, with the seal of the artist on the top. The calligraphy is very fluid, written in modern Chinese with traditional characters. The inscription is very simple and describes the scene that took place during the 1960s at the Meng's café stand located in the 'Peach Blossom Hill'; very famous because of the nice girls who used to spend their mornings there (Chan, 2008, pp. 108-109).

Hoping that the reader may have enjoyed the 'meal' as I did, now that we are really at the end of our journey through Macanese memories creatively offered by A-Cheng's brush, the purpose of this paper is to give a very small taste of the huge productions of the artist,

an artist who preserves the memory of the daily life of common people in a fading old Macao. In paintings like for example the 'Woman delivering water' (*dan shui po* 担水婆)³⁶ (Fig. 6), he preserves a history of an old tradition that does not exist anymore except in the memory of the old Macanese, and which constitutes a valuable document for a reconstruction of the cultural history of Macao. **RC**

Author's Note: This paper is mainly based on material that I personally collected by contacting the author—I am grateful for his availability. Most of the images can also be found in the Chan Wai Fai (2008) *Customs of Macao: Inked Memories*, edited by Macao Foundation and were displayed in solo exhibitions in Macao, Hong Kong and Beijing. I also wish to particularly thank Rui Rocha, Christina Lai and Sara Ferreira da Silva for their precious help.

NOTES

- 1 The recollection of memories is connected to the viewer's literacy. During the object's encounters the observer approaches the work of art through different interpretative lenses. This means that the object is the result of a unique experience that involves the intrinsic value of the object itself, the artist and the viewer. The result is a dynamic process that 'wraps and unwraps' the perception and meaning of an art object. (Mrázek and Pitelka, 2008, p. 2)
- 2 A similar image can be found in *Customs of Macao—Inked Memories* and, as the author infers, women were used (and in some areas) to comb their hair during auspicious days and substances like the *chazi bing* 茶籽饼 (tea-seed cake) were used to turn their hair glossy and perfumed (Chan, 2008, pp. 146-147).
- 3 Vanishing is an adjective used to convey the idea of a transforming reality, which is not completely accepted but perceived with a melancholic sense of nostalgia of the past.
- 4 This painting that was entitled by the author 'Writing New Year Couplets—*xie huichun* 写挥春' depicts an old man, dressed with—apparently—the 'Mao's suit' painting 'prosperity' on a red paper holding the brush in the traditional way. Afterwards these New Year couplets were sold to a very high price during Spring Festivals in Macao. A young mother holding her child on the back is staring at the man, most probably waiting for her New Year Couplet.
- 5 See figure 5.
- 6 The Macanese community is spread all over the world, mainly in the United States, Canada and Brazil. They define themselves as a Eurasian population characterised by people born in Macao or descending from people born in Macao.
- 7 Each building has a strong mixture of new technologies, materials and old traditions. Each casino contains a lot of symbolic elements to protect gambling and players and to grant fortune. Everything respects, where possible, the architectural rules imposed by *fengshui* 风水: colours, shapes and positions.
- 8 'Bica' is a Portuguese term used for a cup of coffee.
- 9 'Pastel de nata' is also known as 'Pastel de Belém' from the location where they have been traditionally produced since the 19th century. It is a typical Portuguese egg tart pastry probably created by Portuguese

- nuns from the Jerónimos Monastery in Lisbon. The so-called 'Casa dos Pastéis de Belém' is the place where they have been produced since 1837, after the closure of the Monastery. They are really tasty, especially if eaten warm and sprinkled with cinnamon and ice sugar powder. They are very popular throughout the Lusophone world.
- 10 Lit. 'Oyster Mirror', which is one of the toponyms given to the region that most probably corresponds to today's Macao. Nevertheless, according to a certain historical tradition the name of Macao has originated in the name of A-Ma (temple). A-Ma was the goddess worshipped by fishermen and sailors because she was believed to protect them at sea. Therefore, Macao is the name given by the Portuguese to the village of Haojing (The mirror of the oyster). This village of the former district of Xiangshan, today's Zhongshan, had various names along the centuries and seems to have been founded during the Song dynasty. For further details on the toponym of Macao, see Jin Guoping, 2007, p. 570; Barreto, 2006, p. 59. On A-Ma temple, see Müller and Ptak, 2009; Ptak, 2012.
- 11 For further details, see Ptak and Haberzettl, 1995; Barreto, 2006.
- 12 For more details see Ptak, 2007.
- 13 On the culinary tradition of Macao see Doling, 1996; Cheung and Tan, 2007.
- 14 A sort of minced beef or pork cooked with potatoes, onions, and soy sauce, sometimes with eggs, normally eaten with white rice.
- 15 A Portuguese-style fried chicken.
- 16 This is the Portuguese name given to a kind of chilli pepper (*Capsicum frutescens* var. 'red devil')
- 17 Quite often the term Macanese refers to people from Macao, the so-called 'filhos da terra'.
- 18 A-Cheng (Chan Weihui) is referred to as being a cartoonist by Ying Tao 英韬 together with other artists from Macao such as for example: Li Chan 李阡, Zheng Songji 郑松继, Luo Qingzhong 罗庆忠, Hui Huiquan 会惠泉, Wu Meiji 吴美玘, Xiao Xiaosheng 笑笑生, Ling Qun 凌群, Huang Zhihong 黄志鸿, Cheng Weiquan 陈渭泉, whose work has been displayed together with Chinese (mainland) cartoon exhibitions since 1993. For further details on this topic see Ying Tao, 2001. According to Michael Sullivan, Zhang



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Guangyu was considered 'the first artist-cartoonist' whose drawings began to appear in Shanghai and became a 'dominant influence on the cartoon movement for many years' (1996, p. 119). However, the caricatures proposed by A-Cheng are completely different in style and theme to those of Zhang Guangyu 张光宇 and his followers of the 'Shanghai sketch' (*Shanghai manhua* 上海漫画). A-Cheng's are much closer to another cartoonist movement that became linked to the 'Modern Sketch' (*Shidai manhua* 时代漫画), in fact *manhua* 漫画 like those drawn by Shen Yiqian 沈逸千 or by Zhang Leping 张乐平 are much closer to A-Cheng's style. For more on this topic see Lent, 2001.

- 19 In 2010 the artist told me that at the very beginning his name was *Dong* 东, East. He thought it was somehow limiting and quite far from his real artistic nature, and he therefore decided to change it into Asia (*ya* 亚), a term that, according to the artist's own opinion, lies in the middle of the octagon. The octagon is the symbol of the *bagua* 八卦, the template of the Chinese tradition linked to Daoism and the Yin and Yang doctrine. In the middle of the octagon lies the *Taijitu* 太极图, the diagram of the ultimate power. The choice of the artist is charged with a mystical meaning full of creative power, as if the power needed to create the universe were at the same level as the power needed to develop artistic work. There are not many studies about this artist; for more details visit also 'Macauartnet', an official site by the Instituto Cultural de Macau (ICM)—Cultural Affairs Bureau of Macao S.A.R. Government. The artist released an interview to Cristina Mio that can be read online <http://www3.icm.gov.mo/gate/gb/www.macauart.net/artistofmonth/chanwaifai/biographyC.asp>, [Accessed 4/01/2013].
- 20 The incident is connected to the Chinese Cultural Revolution.
- 21 This is a specific term in the Portuguese language, sometime translated vaguely as nostalgia, without transmitting the real meaning of this word born in a particular historical context. It is the feeling provoked by the separation and distance from a beloved person and land, and means homesickness and nostalgia.
- 22 The paper for calligraphy is a very special paper. There are many kinds of paper, one of the best being the 'xuan' paper (*xuan zhi* 宣纸) traditionally produced in *xuanzhou* 宣州, in today's Anhui province. This type of paper is made of the bark of the wingceltis tree and rice straw. After being treated with lime and bleached in the sun, the fibres are made into pulp. *Xuan* paper is white, delicate, soft, vigorous and resistant to insects. Also, it keeps colours for a long time. Due to the paper's strong absorption quality, the ink on the paper demonstrates a variety of appearances. If a brush soaked in water ink moves quickly, the stroke will be dark in the centre, and the ink around it will show lighter layers.
- 23 'Reading a painting' was a phrase used during imperial China to identify a specific action: the way imperial artists simply scanned a text or a surface of a painting and calligraphy, moving their eyes across the surface. This interpretation was typical during Ming times when the idea of visuality could not be taken in all at once (Clunas, 1997, p. 119).
- 24 A quite common art in China (Sullivan, 1996; Wu, 1994).
- 25 In fact children are very present in his masterpieces (see figures 1, 2 and 6).
- 26 This image depicts a man fabricating chairs with canes. Products that can still be found in Macao especially—as the author himself informs us—in 'Rua da Palha' (lit. Straw Street). This activity brings the painter back in time when his father used to sit on these chairs after supper, while enjoying the evening, a scene that is not available anymore and gave Macao the 'atmosphere of a little town' (Chan, 2008, p. 168).
- 27 The *Liangjiang shifan xuedang* 两江师范学堂, founded by Li Ruiqing 李瑞清 (1867-1920) in 1906, is considered the first art school founded in China that offered a complete curriculum on western art (especially painting), handicrafts and music. The School closed in 1909.
- 28 The words, due to the specific characteristics of the Chinese language, have a very strong symbolic and iconographic impact on readers. From an iconographic point of view, Chinese characters are not a complement but stand at the same level as all the other elements depicted in the painting.
- 29 With the *Dagongbao* 大公报 (Great Public Newspaper) the modern Chinese cartoon was reaching its maturity, and in fact this newspaper is considered the first one to carry cartoons in colour. Between 1934 and 1937, the so-called 'first golden age' of modern Chinese cartoon and satire, many magazines of this genre were published in China. For more details see Sullivan, 1996, pp. 119-125.
- 30 If according to Michael Sullivan, 'caricature has a long history in China, but with some rare exceptions the cartoon with a political or social message in Western import, dating from the 19th century' (1996, p. 119), on the other hand Jiang Yihai believes that the caricature was born around the 18th century and Luo Ping can be considered a pioneer in this genre (1995, pp. 72-73). For further details see Karlsson and Luo, 2004, especially note 28. See also Jiang Yihai, 1989.
- 31 Zhong Kui was a demon and has the 'apotropaic functions, protecting houses from baleful influences, but they could also carry sophisticated political messages' (Barnhart, 1997, p. 142).
- 32 Strokes and their texture (*cun* 皴) are the backbone of Chinese paintings and represent the ability and sensitivity of the artist. They represent the central narrative of the whole painting. This aspect is evident for example in painting manuals such as the *Jiezi yuan hua pu* 芥子园画谱.
- 33 See for example his painting 'The Sixth Patriarch Chopping Bamboo, *Liuzu jie zhu tu*' 六祖截竹图 (Hanging scroll, ink on paper, 72.7 x 31.5 cm, Tokyo National Museum).
- 34 See the Six Persimmons (ink on paper, 36.2 x 38.1 cm) preserved in the Daitoku temple in Kyoto.
- 35 Ming, is the pronunciation in Mandarin Chinese.
- 46 Literally means carry. I kept the translation proposed in Chan, 2008, p. 150.





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