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**THE YOUNG REP•RTER**  
**magazine**

February 2016



*The Michelin Kiss of  
Death*

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## Letter from the Editor

The Michelin star is without a doubt one of the most prestigious accolades for a restaurant. Widely recognized as the go-to guide for gastronomic excellence, restaurants featured in the annually published Michelin Guide often bask in fame and fortune.

Being on Michelin's radar however, has been dubbed by Hong Kong's media as a "kiss of death" after several restaurants suffered devastating rent rises for being recommended by the French guide book.

Our cover story features two owners whose restaurants were recommended by Michelin as they talk to us about how their businesses had been affected and whether it really is all harm and no good.

There is no better way to complement a cover story about restaurants than to include an article about food, antibiotics-tainted food, that could potentially be a massive threat to our health.

You will also find an assortment of stories, including a feature of a man who decided to ditch the hasty

city of Hong Kong to lead a life of serenity in the nearby outskirts.

Also in this issue is a story about a former journalist who dedicates much of her time to help Nepal rebuild after an earthquake brought much of the country to ruins.

On a lighter note, we introduce to you a local newspaper in Tuen Mun that aims to bring the community closer together. Last but not least, we present to you a stunning photo story on handcrafted mahjong in Hong Kong, which also is the last of its kind.

This marks the first of many issues that our new editorial board is going to produce. To keep up with technology, we are going to be producing a lot of digital stories so tune in to our Facebook page for videos and exclusive content not available on print. We strive to keep you informed and entertained in the long time that is to come.

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# THE MICHELIN KISS OF DEATH?





Not all Michelin-awarded restaurants in Hong Kong this year are rejoicing in the hope that the accolade might bring business. Some face the pressure of rising rent which may lead to closure. This phenomenon was coined by the media as the “Michelin’s Kiss of Death”.

The Michelin Guide has been an index for excellent restaurants and food stalls since the 1900s.

The 2016 edition of the Hong Kong and Macau Michelin Guide awarded 58 local restaurants and recommended 23 roadside food stalls. Since then at least two of those food stalls have been told by their landlords that their rents would go up immediately.

Among them, Chiu Wing-yip, the owner of Kai Kai Dessert.

“After we got the stars, the landlord increased our rent in the new contract by 120 per cent. That means we need to sell 5000 more bowls of sweet soups to cover the cost and I don’t think we can make it!” Mr Chiu said.

He said that the rising rent is definitely linked to Michelin but he is still happy to get the compliment.

“We are very grateful to see people enjoying our food and Michelin has put a halo around our products.”

Mr Fu, a customer, goes to Kai Kai Dessert every week. He was shocked when he learned that the rent shot up. “I guess an increase of 15 or 20 per cent would be acceptable. But isn’t 120 per cent a bit too much? No shop can afford this!”

He is also concerned about the diminishing choice of local small food stalls. “I really don’t know what to eat when all the shops near my home are McDonald’s, Café De Coral and Maxims. I miss the fish balls and Cha Chaan Teng we used to have in Hong Kong.”



Although the Michelin star appears to have brought more harm than good to some restaurants, Suen Kei, the owner of a Michelin-awarded food stall, Cheung Hing Kee Shanghai Chinese Buns Snack Shop, didn't think Michelin was responsible.

"Neither the landlords nor the Michelin stars are to blame for the rent increase, but the government," Mr Suen said.

"Before 1997, there was rent control in Hong Kong and it was easier for small enterprises to survive. Now, the market is monopolized and we can see restaurants owned by big companies every five minutes down the road everywhere. The government has done nothing to help us," he said.

One of the Michelin-recommended branches of Cheung Hing Kee suffered the same fate as Kai Kai Dessert and was forced to close down. Suen said the rent of Cheung Hing Kee in Tsuen Wan went up by 60 per cent and they can hardly afford to pay.

He is also concerned about the diminishing choice of local small food stalls. "I really don't know what to eat when all the shops near my home are McDonald's, Café De Coral and Maxims. I miss the fish balls and Cha Chaan Teng we used to have in Hong Kong."

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Kai Kai Dessert though is less fortunate. The owners have yet to find a new place in the neighbourhood they can afford. People waited in line late into the night on December 27, the last day of opening of the Tsuen Wan branch, just to savour the Chinese buns once more.

Mr Chiu said the future of small enterprises would not be affected despite rampant monopolies in Hong Kong, because each business has different target customers.

Mr Suen said the the government's inability to put a lid on rent is the ultimate cause of their increases.

He believed high rent is killing small businesses. The dwindling number of local and traditional food stalls, he added, is a threat to local culture.

He further expressed that there are not much choices in Hong Kong and questioned who could bear the high rent to open his or her own business. He also said that the market situation is killing the small businesses and causing the decrease in number of local and traditional food and that can probably threaten local culture.

By **Tiffany Lui**  
Edited by **Catherine Xu**



## SOCIETY

# Newspapers exclusively for local residents:

## District media publishes “trivial” news to bring neighbourhood closer

It is 9 p.m. on a weekday when a group of post-80s and post-90s gather at in a narrow store room in a public estate building to discuss on ideas for their next issue of Tin Shui Wai Bimonthly Newspaper.

After working for a whole day in urban areas, these young reporters spend up to two hours to returning to their hometown to start their night shift – to present the telling stories from about the place they sleep in.

“Tin Shui Wai is doomed as a ‘bedroom city’, in which inhabitants only take naps between their two sections of long working hours,” said Ms Chung Yuen Yi, an experienced social worker and the chief executive of Tin Shui Wai Community Development Network.

But the group of youthful residents are doing more than hibernation in the kingdom of Sleeping Beauty. as They want to re-establish the link between the people and the place where they live in. Back in 2014, when the network receive subsidies from a permaculture foundation, they were thinking of a way to build and present stories of a sustainable city. They decided to start a local post written by the neighbourhood themselves as people did not even know what Tin Shui Wai have has.

The press have publication has covered stories on market, entertainment, handcraft shops and farming in the areas surrounding areas of the residents’ tiny flats.

Readers find see the newspaper as a useful guide to explore exploring their close-yet-unfamiliar district, and some even collect every volume of the publication.

Editors of the bimonthly, who are also local residents, said preparing the reports producing the newspaper was a learning process to for them too, making them sensitive to the community’s issues.

Ms Leung Lai-yan, a cultural studies graduate and the organising officer of the post, said this it was a success which that has made them to try publishing investigative reports.

The latest issue of Tin Shui Wai Bimonthly Newspaper includes an article on the use of planters, quoting the cost amount that the Yuen Long District Council is spending every year on the mini-gardens.

They suggest farming at these spots to save money, encourage local production and consolidate the neighbourhood, causing residents to wrongly believe that they could really plant at roadsides.

“Surprisingly, this somehow achieves our goal,” said Ms Chung Yuen-yi, “We want people here to re-imagine the possibilities of the place in which they are living in.”

Ms Chung hopes that one day people in Tin Shui Wai will be conscious to of their own ability to realise their ideal community and to take up their own responsibilities, rather than relying on social workers and representatives to solve their problems.

In contrast to Tin Shui Wai’s case, residents of Western District already have a good sense of belonging in the face of the rapid changes in the region that neighborhood brought by the development of the West Island Line.

“Western District is growing briskly with an influx of residents of different ages, nationalities and incomes,” said Ms Winnie Tse Wing-lam from Ho Sai Lane, the local newspaper of the area Western District, also called known as Sai Wan.

Before Ho Sai Lane, the neighbours formed Sai Wan Concern Group to monitor redevelopment plans, and to organise events to introducing the culture and stories background of Western District, for example, the its historical stone-wall trees.



Ms Chung Yuen-yi (left) and Ms Leung Lai Yan (right) of Tin Shui Wai Community Development Network with Bimonthly Newspapers at their office shared with four other community organisations, which was originally a store room in Tin Yuet Estate.





Tuenmunity's team of ten from a variety of ages and occupations, including full time students, teacher, IT technician and even retiree, come together after a suggestion on an online forum.

Group members then realised they may need an offline platform for residents from different backgrounds to interact and to update what was happening in the district, so they published the first issue of Ho Sai Lane in November 2015.

Ms Tse once interviewed a foreign couple doing buying groceries at a historic mom-and-pop shop who said they are willing wanted to be engaged in the native local community despite the language barriers.

“To conserve does not mean to mourn,” Ms Tse said, “we hope the new can accept the old, and that the old can adapt to the new with the quintessence of our community preserved.”

While Ho Sai Lane targets all kinds of neighbours, Tuenmunity from Tuen Mun wants to cover all news that matter to the community.

As a district newspaper also run by volunteered residents, Tuenmunity believes they it could can report and follow-up news that large media organisations oversee overlook.

The team said they wanted it wants people in Tuen Mun to know more

about local issues and the reasons behind the news, even if it was only an traffic accident of Light Rail, accident involving the Light Rail Vehicle, a form of public transport commonly used in the area.

“There are conflicts and misunderstandings,” said a member of the editorial board, “but we believe people are reasonable. What they know is what causes the difference.”

Aiming to build a knowledgeable and thoughtful community, Tuenmunity think the wordings terminology used by mainstream media are too hard for ordinary citizens to understand.

Besides using simpler presentations language, the team writes a glossy column to explain describe difficult concepts, for example, they explain “procedural justice” by using the case example of choosing the head prefect in a school.

Members of Tuenmunity even finance themselves to print the 2,000-3,000 easy-to-read copies every month since their debut issue in February 2015. in order to pursue their ideal community.

Professor Mr Ip Iam Chong, a cultural studies scholar at Lingnan University and the co-founder of the independent media InMediaHK, said district newspapers have always existed.

“In the past, people might publish a few issues when a community crisis arose, but now they think they need continual effort to care about the neighbourhood,” Mr Ip said.

He said such media normally did not last long even there was financial support, yet new local presses would still be founded as people were being becoming more concerned about community consolidation.

After reading copies of Tuenmunity, independent District Councillor Mr. Au Chi-yuen from Tuen Mun Town Centre constituency said local newspaper could provide new angles on community issues and boost discussions.

Mr. Au believes the newspaper will become popular among in Tuen Mun, considering its recent publications fair and sensitive to hot district topics.

## PEOPLE

# A man harvests happiness in the wild

A nature lover leaves concrete jungle for the wilderness

His military haircut and worn-out clothes suggest a primitive living style. A man with a small farm and a house full of second-hand furniture, 33-year-old Mok Ho-kwong redefines the meaning of wealth and fame.

Mr Mok, also known as Wild Man, does not choose the usual way of living after his graduation from the University of Hong Kong.

Inspired by his teacher, Wild Man left the rat race about ten years ago and has since lived in the outskirts of the city.

Being the founder of Natural Network, Mr Mok lives with the humble earnings he makes from holding environmental workshops and eco-tours that mainly targeted students.

“Nature has given me another option. People solve problems with machines in the city while in the countryside, I overcome challenges in life by tuning into the nature,” he said.

Everyday Wild Man collects dry leaves and wood to build fire for cooking. He plucks sweet potato leaves fresh from his backyard to be served along vegetarian dishes.

Despite living on only \$3000 a month, Wild Man has introduced another way of living to those who invest all their savings into shabby, cage-sized bed space – a rural way that revives the rustic joys of life.

“I feel happy after clearing a patch of grass or seeing my plants growing. You don’t need reasons or purchases to be happy. Happiness is not a privilege of the rich,” he said.

But not everyone in the city feels the same. The recent Hong Kong Happiness Index Survey done by Lingnan University reveals that people’s level of happiness is at all-time low.

On the other hand, citizens are not leading a greener life as well.

“When people live in the city, they’re forced to lead a wasteful lifestyle,” he said. “They dump their leftover to landfills while at the farm, you can use them as compost.”

Mr Mok did not start off to be an environmental activist. As a child, he was told that being close to nature means getting mosquito bites on his legs and dirt on his hands.

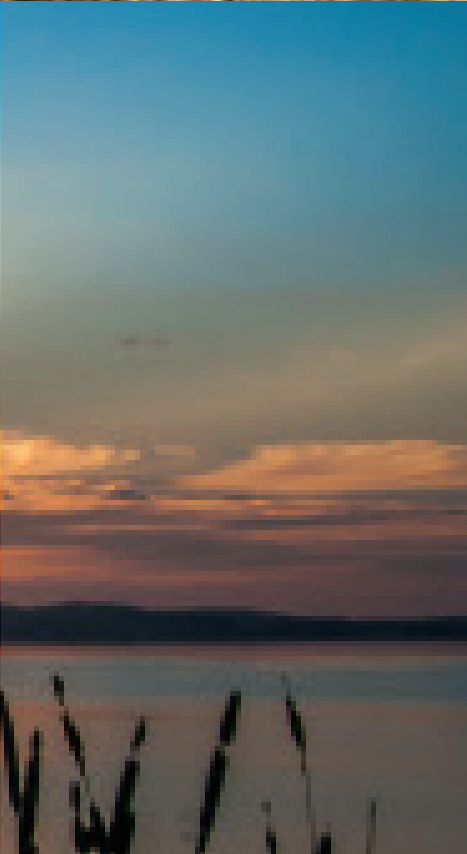
It was not until he learnt that the landfills were running out of space that he started developing an interest in studying about the environment.

“What sets me different from other people is that I think environmental protection is very important. When I feel so at ease in the nature, I ask myself what more I can do for it,” he said.

He added that although people have stronger environmental awareness in recent years, they’re not taking enough action.







He puts the blame on government structure, which clearly divides the work between the bureaus of education and environment.

Even though the Environment Bureau is responsible for setting regulations, it does not conduct education that asks citizens to take practical action to cope with climate change.

“Being environmentally-friendly doesn’t just mean practicing the 3Rs. It means you can plant your

own food, breathe fresh air and make good use of stream water,” he said.

The name Wild Man does not only speak about Mr Mok’s environmental ambitions but a bigger belief that you can chase your dreams and live by doing something meaningful.

When asked about what his family thought about his decision to go primitive, Mr Mok says he received fierce criticism in the first few years.

“In a society that only asks their youth to make money, it’s normal that people would criticize you for being different,” he said.

Wild Man is not only a nature specialist but also a life mentor who often encourages students to pursue their dreams while spending time with them in the wild.

“If you can persevere in something, you can change the belief of many people,” he said.

By **Crystal Tai**  
Edited by **Joanthan Chan**



## PEOPLE

# Shining light on Nepal

Former journalist sets up charity to fund Nepal reconstruction



Pink Lee Wai-ki was a financial reporter, but a trip to Tibet in 2006 made her rethink the purpose of her life.

She felt a calling to help people in need, so she quit her job and used her savings to travel and volunteer in different countries, such as Colombia, Mongolia and India.

After years of travelling, she realised that real happiness and the meaning of life lie in helping others without expecting anything in return. "You do it just because you want to," she said

Pink grew up in a single-parent family with an extremely quiet, violent and

mentally abusive father, so she left home immediately after she graduated from The Chinese University of Hong Kong and found a job as a journalist.

A 7.8-magnitude earthquake hit Nepal on April 25, 2015, killing nearly 10,000 people.

Pink Lee was a long-term volunteer in Nepal. When she went to the mountainous epicenter of Gorkha, she was the leader of a group of volunteers in Kathmandu, the capital of Nepal.

Soon after the earthquake, Pink raised over \$400,000 for relief work. That was used to send over eight tonnes

of supplies to the victims and helped 700 families.

To better manage the funding and relief work, Pink then founded Light On with her friends. It is a non-profit-making organization whose goal is to build at least two schools in the local community.

Though Nepal received donations from around the world after the earthquake, Pink says Nepal has serious corruption and bureaucracy issues. If she did not start the reconstruction projects, people there might have to wait for at least two years.



Pink is not paid for her charity work. She writes columns and teaches yoga for a living.

Profits from Light On Cafe on Cheung Chau Island used to help fund the organization's work.

"In the cafe, you see a lot of kind-hearted people. Although we are not professional baristas, guests are willing to pay several times the price to buy a cup of coffee, so as to contribute to the reconstruction work in Nepal," Pink said

But the cafe shut down in December 2015 because it could not meet the property owner's profit share target. After that, Pink was offered half a DIY stall space in Discovery Bay for five months in 2016 for free.

"Through our participation in this DIY market, I want to promote Light On's work, recruit volunteers and expand my network of organizations that may be interested in our charity work," Ms Lee says.

Her current projects also include bringing volunteers from Hong Kong to Nepal to help with school reconstruction.



A 7.8-magnitude earthquake hit Nepal on April 25, 2015, for which the death toll reached nearly 10,000. As a long-term volunteer who happened to lead a volunteer group in Kathmandu, the capital of Nepal, Pink Lee went to the mountainous epicenter, Gorkha.



Pink Lee is dancing with Nepalese children and fellow volunteers.

"I hope to create a win-win situation: bring hope to the Nepalese and help volunteers from Hong Kong transform by learning to live like a local while volunteering overseas without expecting anything in return," she says.

"I'm optimistic that volunteering will be accepted by more and more Hong Kong people. Our team now has 11 people. We have the same goals. I believe more and more people will get to know our work and philosophy," Ms Lee says.



## HEALTH&amp;SCIENCE

# Antibiotics tainted food: safe to eat?

Hong Kong should regulate antibiotics use in food processing

Antibiotics were once seen as the miracle drug that saved lives. But today an expert calls for an antibiotics free period before animals are slaughtered due to years of abuse.

"A withholding period during which livestock are not fed any antibiotics for 10-14 days before they go through food processing should be implemented," said Professor P. Reichel, Dean and Chair Professor of School of Veterinary Medicine, City University of Hong Kong.

The World Health Organization, which recently organized the World Antibiotics Resistance Awareness Week, warned of a looming post-antibiotic era in which common infections and minor injuries may once again kill.

"The concern of a post-antibiotic era is that we will eventually run out of effective antibiotics to treat diseases," said Prof Reichel.

Medical researchers suggest that the Hong Kong government should ensure that antibiotics in food production are used in "the most effective and responsible manner".

He explained that excessive use of antibiotics in animal feed have led to humans developing resistance to the drugs.

"Antibiotic-resistant bacteria have been increasing dramatically and their resistant genes are transferred to other bacteria," said Dr Albert Yu, Chairman of the Hong Kong Biotechnology Organization.

"The media (of spread of antibiotic-resistant bacteria) can be anything. We cannot get rid of the infection and we will run out of drugs," Dr Yu said.

Around half of the antibiotics produced globally are used in agriculture, most of it used to promote growth and prevent illnesses rather than to treat diseases, according to the concern group Consumers International.

Joining hands with the WHO, the Hong Kong Consumer Council has called on nine restaurants chains, including McDonald's, KFC and Subway, to disclose whether they use meat from animals fed on growth-promoting antibiotics.

McDonald's Hong Kong responded that it has implemented the "McDonald's Global Policy on Antibiotic Use in Food Animals" since 2003 to ensure the use of antibiotics is limited to "medical purposes only".

However, it did not mention the amount or the frequency of antibiotics use in its food production process.

Ms Yau Wai-Shan, a regular customer of fast food restaurants, said she is used to eating in McDonald's. "It is cheap and I haven't felt sick yet, but of course, companies have the responsibilities to phase out the use of antibiotics."

However, Ms Yuen Tsz-Ying, who also dines regularly at fast food restaurants, said she will probably visit these

restaurants less often than she used to since the chemicals added to the meat are unhealthy.

In Europe and Australia, there are national database that trace the use of antibiotics. "These help to prevent the spread of antibiotics resistance nationally and globally," said Prof Reichel.

But there is no official data collection on the use of antibiotics in Hong Kong.

"Since 95 per cent of Hong Kong's food is imported, checking imported meat can be hard because that depends on the countries of origin of the products," Prof Reichel said.

Experts from the pharmaceutical industry suggest that antibiotics used in food industry and those for treating humans should be categorised separately to avoid the transfer of antibiotic resistance strains.

"People can reduce their chance of receiving drug-resistance bacteria by maintaining personal hygiene," Dr Yu said.

About 25,000 people die of antibiotic-resistant bacteria in the European Union every year, according to the World Health Organization.

"Although antibiotics use has been rising in recent years, there is no real cause for alarm or panic at this stage," Prof Reichel suggested. He said the development of antibiotic resistance is accelerating but effective antibiotics are still available.

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## PHOTO ESSAY

# Handcrafted mahjong

The remainants of a cultural heritage

Ho Sau-mei polishes and refines her newly made piles of mahjong with the custom-made tools in her tiny shop in Hung Hom.

“The society might not need this handcrafting skill anymore, so it is inevitable that it will be lost to technological advancement,” Ho said.

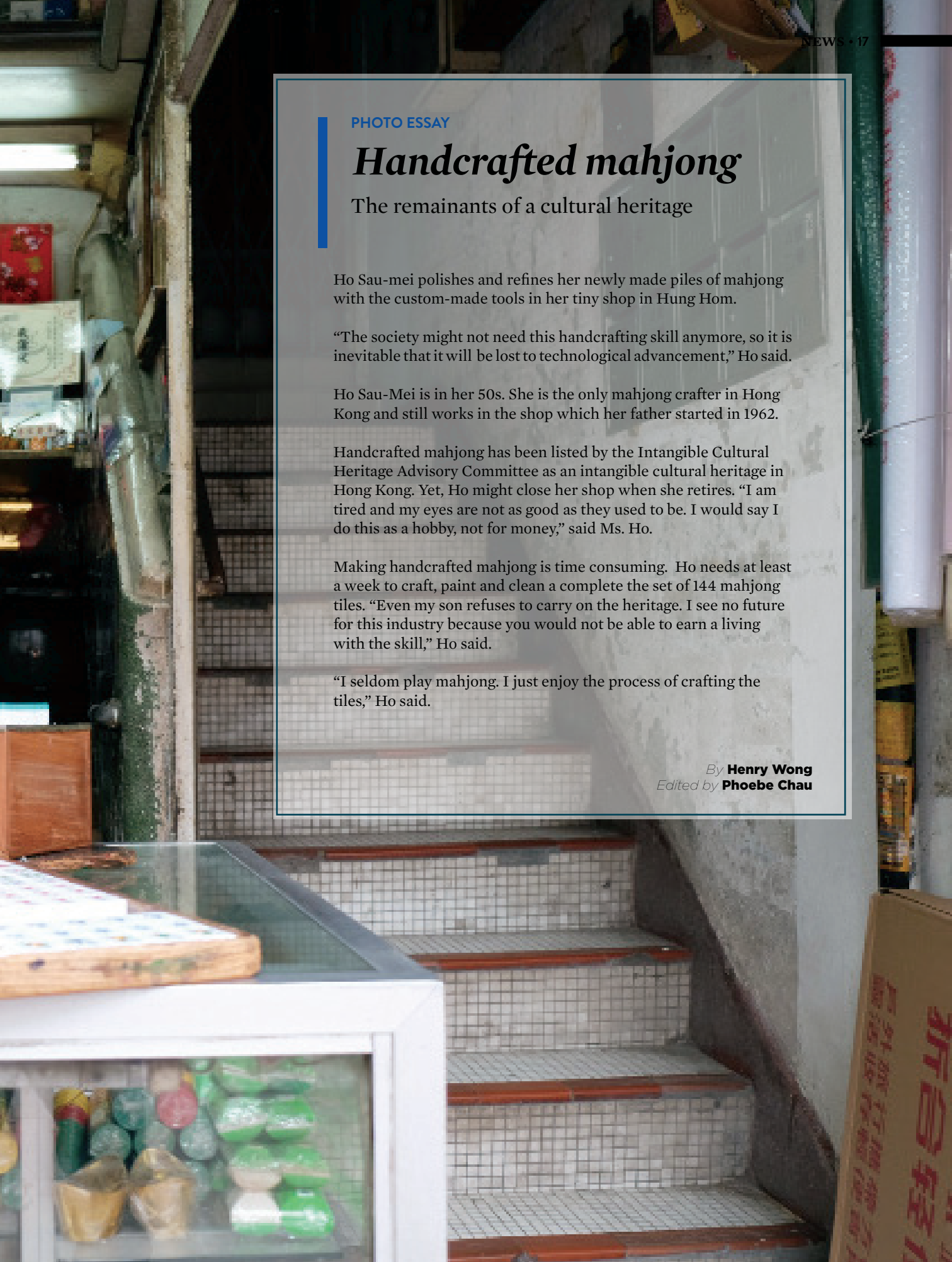
Ho Sau-Mei is in her 50s. She is the only mahjong crafter in Hong Kong and still works in the shop which her father started in 1962.

Handcrafted mahjong has been listed by the Intangible Cultural Heritage Advisory Committee as an intangible cultural heritage in Hong Kong. Yet, Ho might close her shop when she retires. “I am tired and my eyes are not as good as they used to be. I would say I do this as a hobby, not for money,” said Ms. Ho.

Making handcrafted mahjong is time consuming. Ho needs at least a week to craft, paint and clean a complete the set of 144 mahjong tiles. “Even my son refuses to carry on the heritage. I see no future for this industry because you would not be able to earn a living with the skill,” Ho said.

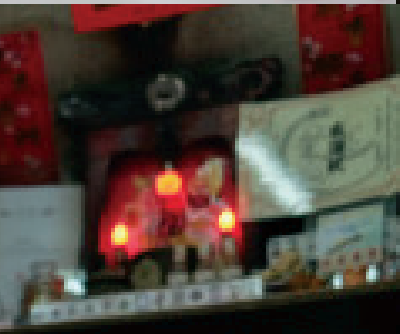
“I seldom play mahjong. I just enjoy the process of crafting the tiles,” Ho said.

By **Henry Wong**  
Edited by **Phoebe Chau**









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