O Lam

Secretary for Social Affairs and Culture of the Macao Special Administrative Region Government

The Venice International Architecture Biennale is a world-renowned event celebrating architectural, artistic and cultural exchange. Since its debut in 2014, Macao, China has showcased its unique cultural charm and architectural wisdom at the Biennale, contributing new voices to the international architectural dialogue.

This year's Biennale theme – "Intelligens. Natural. Artificial. Collective." – explores how contemporary architecture addresses challenges from globalization and digitalization while preserving cultural characteristics. Macao, a city where Eastern and Western cultures intertwine, boasts heritage sites visible on nearly every corner. These structures, more than just buildings, stand as a testament to the cultural exchange between East and West. They witness the journey from initial encounters and understanding to mutual appreciation and integration within cultures. As a constantly evolving city, Macao continuously explores "intelligence" (wisdom), "nature" (the environment), "artificiality" (cultural creativity) and "collectivity" (social harmony), offering compelling interpretations of the Biennale's theme and bringing engaging contents and perspectives to the international creative dialogue.

In recent years, Macao has actively pursued its vision of becoming "one center, one platform, and one base," leveraging its advantages as a cultural crossroads between East and West to strengthen internal connections, foster external communications, and enhance multicultural exchange and integration. The 19th Venice International Architecture Biennale provides an invaluable platform for the city to showcase its urban character and promote international exchange and cooperation, further solidifying its role as a key gateway for China's high-level opening up and a vital window for exchange and mutual learning between Eastern and Western civilizations.

The Macao Exhibition at this year's Biennale is curated by renowned architects Professor Wang Shu and Professor Lu Wenyu, with contributions from numerous artists and architects. They use photographs and installations to transform Macao's multifaceted urban landscape into a poetic narrative of architectural language. I extend my sincere gratitude to the curatorial team and the participating artists and architects. Through their efforts, the "Exhibition from Macao, China" will open itself to the world like an intricately carved Lingnan window, revealing the charm of integrating Eastern and Western elements in Macao's architecture and urban development, profoundly inspiring a global audience.

I look forward to the Macao Exhibition shining brightly at this Biennale, showcasing the city's unique charm on the stage of architectural art, promoting intercultural dialogue and sharing engaging stories of China with the world.

I wish the exhibition great success.

Deland, Leong Wai Man

President of the Cultural Affairs Bureau of the Macao Special Administrative Region Government

With the theme “Intelligens. Natural. Artificial. Collective.” this year’s Venice International Architecture Biennale is a profound reflection on architecture’s role in globalization. The urban fabric of Macao presents a complex “cultural landscape,” where historical buildings and modern urban spaces create a parallel narrative of time and space. Here, tradition and modernity coexist while also engaging in dialogue and interaction, forming a unique urban realm that responds to the theme of this Biennale.

For this year’s edition, we have the distinct honor of having internationally renowned architects Wang Shu and Lu Wenyu as our curators. Their unique perspective will transform the multiple facets of Macao’s cityscape into a poetic architectural narrative. They divide Macao into four “parallel worlds”: the depth of the historical town; the symbolic meanings of casino architecture that blends East and West; the geometric order of the modern city; and the future projection of a digital, intangible city. These four parallel worlds resemble four mirror images, reflecting the ways in which Macao maintains the foundations of its culture in the waves of globalization while embracing the future with an open attitude.

Among the exhibited works, renowned architectural photographer Iwan Baan captures pieces of memories and the contemporary vitality of Macao’s urban spaces through his highly narrative imagery. Furthermore, architecture students and professors from the China Academy of Art and the University of Saint Joseph in Macao have transformed their academic ideas into spatial experiences that actively engage in dialogue with the audience through installations.

Macao is a model of harmonious coexistence and the integrated development of different civilizations, boasting a unique cultural advantage that blends both Eastern and Western influences – making the city a platform for promoting international cultural exchanges, narrating compelling Chinese stories, and facilitating mutual learning between Chinese and Western civilizations. Participation in the Venice International Architecture Biennale demonstrates Macao’s commitment to this cultural mission on an international stage.

This exhibition from Macao weaves cultural memories and imagination of the future into a dynamic spatial narrative, allowing audiences to re-examine the relationship between architecture and culture at the interstices of history and modernity. We believe that under the curation of Wang Shu and Lu Wenyu, and with the collaborative efforts of Iwan Baan and architectural teams from both regions, this exhibition will deliver another brilliant interpretation of multicultural integration for the Biennale, further highlighting Macao’s role as a bridge between cultures and enhancing the brand of the international city of “Macao, China.”

I would like to extend my best wishes for the successful participation of Macao, China at the Venice International Architecture Biennale 2025. I look forward to seeing Macao radiate even more brightly internationally, showcasing its diverse architectural wisdom and cultural narratives.

Wang Shu & Lu Wenyu

Macao is a city on the south coast of China that is exceptional. It is known to the outside world as the "Las Vegas of the East," but for its residents it is an old, sixteenth-century trading port. Fortunately, the old city has been almost completely preserved. What is often overlooked by tourists, and other visitors from China and around the world, is that this seemingly small city also has a huge new "twin."

After Macao's return to China in 1999, it underwent a round of leapfrogging development. It can be said that because of its special history and location, Macao is not only an East Asian tourist hotspot, a node for cultural exchanges between the East and the West and a platform for cross-cultural cooperation in the region but, beyond all this, it is facing confusion and encountering challenges. In the face of successive huge waves of globalization and the evolution of digitalization and intelligence, is it still possible for Macao to maintain its own cultural characteristics? How can globalized development and digital intelligence solve its various social contradictions and problems? Besides being swept along by urban development, is there any room for creative development in Macao?

In our opinion, the most confusing and interesting thing about Macao is that this not-so-big city seems to be composed of several cities side by side. These multiple cities are so different in character that they seem to have nothing to do with each other; nonetheless – and incredibly – they coexist peacefully. A visitor who had been here before Macao's return to China in 1999, who had frequented the old Casino Lisboa, would surely be shocked by the huge contrast between the new tower of the Grand Lisboa and the old city of Macao. And a visitor who was familiar with the history of Macao would also be shocked by the scale and size of the new city on the island of Hengqin, because it seems to come from some completely different world in parallel time and space.

If we call the old city of Macao, this area where time seems to flow slowly, "World 1: Old Town" (it can, in fact, almost be called a kind of "nature"), then the series of newly built, huge casino buildings represented by MGM and the Grand Lisboa tower, a kind of "collective" of a backdrop-style city representing the powerful forces of capital, can be called "World 2: Casino City." The new city on Hengqin Island represents the whole world's obsession with and overconfidence in "modern" cities and buildings since the turn of the twentieth century – and it displays a super-cultural, super-human construction model, scale and lifestyle. This we can call "World 3: New City," but what is easily overlooked is that the digital operation in the new city is invisible: like all cities in China, Macao is also a cashless city – and we can call this invisible city "World 4: Digital City."

This coexistence of four worlds is what makes Macao so extraordinary. It could be argued that across Asia, reality is often more shocking than fiction. Macao's cultural influence is immense; it can be said that not only is it named the "Las Vegas of the East" but also that hundreds of cities throughout China and Southeast Asia are the result (to co-opt Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown's famous phrase) of "learning from Las Vegas." The harmonious coexistence of several completely different cities serves as the secret code to the region's history and culture, while the uncertain collision between parallel worlds implied by these cities may stimulate all kinds of creative forces.