

Catarina Pinto

# Macau lacks spaces for young artists to paint, says Denis Murrell

**A**USTRALIAN artist Denis Murrell is convinced that Macau has "a lot of untapped [artistic] talent". However, the city is currently lacking studio spaces for young artists to develop their skills.

Rental prices, he recalled, have increased at such a rapid pace that aspiring artists face hurdles when trying to find a suitable place to paint.

Based in Macau since 1989, Denis Murrell has been teaching some of his students a self-developed technique that combines the use of acrylic paint and absorbent tissue. Some of his works, along with those of his students, are now on display at the Rui Cunha Foundation.

The exhibition, entitled "Starting Point: Denis Murrell and His Young Artists' Paintings," will be on display until January 31.

"We have a group of people who have just started painting for enjoyment and have so far managed to do this very well. They can become artists, but they need to keep painting. And that's the main problem in Macau: there are no longer places for painting because of rentals," he stressed.

Mr Murrell revealed that rental prices have increased to such an extent where "nobody can



Denis Murrell (center)

afford to get a studio, even as a group." He added that a while ago, a group of artists would collaborate and pay for a space in an industrial building. However, now that owners of old factories have realized the

surge in demand for such places, rental prices have gone up.

"Owners suddenly realized that artists were looking for empty factories. Prices went up and now they have no one renting them," he added.

The exhibition at Rui Cunha Foundation combines artworks by Denis Murrell and several of his students, some who were enrolled in painting workshops he conducted at the Macau Museum of Art.

Although relatively inexperienced, Murrell's students have managed to learn and apply his technique. The Australian painter said that "the standard of the painting series [on display] is very high, as they've achieved

great things in a short period of time."

Helen Leong, one of his students, said she had always been intrigued by his technique, and therefore enrolled at the Macau Museum of Art workshops as soon as the opportunity arose. The freedom such a technique permits was what attracted her. "I knew Denis for many years and I knew he had a special painting technique. It was easy for me because this technique is very free, I didn't have to think about what I wanted it to become, we can do anything we want," she said.

Candice Chi Lok, one of Murrell's English language students, said this is the first time she has attempted painting. "I think it's quite easy for beginners, because I had no previous experience and still managed to learn the technique," she said.

Dennis Murrell concluded by saying that this is "a very unusual exhibition" due to the limited opportunities available for students and teachers to display their work together.

# English beef promotion to last one month

João Pedro Lau

**B**EEF may be considered a very common ingredient. But if the cattle are raised in the right conditions, it can result in an excellent quality of beef ideal for a variety of dishes.

Collaborating with 13 restaurants in Macau and Hong Kong, EBLEX, the English beef and lamb industry association, will be organizing a month-long English beef promotion between January 12 and February 12.

"English beef has made a comeback and is now featured in some of the finest establishments in Hong Kong and Macau. We're encouraged by the response we've received and especially pleased that the two restaurants in Macau are now part of our efforts," said Jean Pierre Garnier, head of export services at EBLEX.

Besides delicious meals, the promotion includes a "Shoot-Check-Win" feature. Restau-



Poached English beef brisket with organic tofu, glass noodles and red miso broth (Jing Ying - City of Dreams)

rant guests are encouraged to take photos of the promotional dishes, upload them to a specially created Facebook page ([www.facebook.com/Englishbeef](http://www.facebook.com/Englishbeef)) and invite their friends to like them. The pictu-

res with the most likes will be the running to win restaurant vouchers of up to HK\$4,000.

The Times has talked to Chef Calvin Soh, the director of culinary operation, food and beverage of Melco Crown En-

**English Beef has made a comeback and is now featured at some of the finest establishments in Hong Kong and Macau**

JEAN PIERRE GARNIER

tertainment. He said that the difference between English beef and other beef available on the market is its flavor. "You can really taste the beef's flavor. Some beef [is good for their] texture and tenderness" he said.

Chef Soh said the beef's texture can be softened using a variety of

techniques. "But the taste, you can never create a beef taste", he said. "So, for English beef, it is the taste and flavor that I like the most."

The Jin Ying in the City of Dreams Macau, alongside the Ying in Altira Macau, are the two restaurants that will participate in this promotion. Chef Soh has introduced to the Times the dish "poached English beef with organic tofu, glass noodles and red miso broth" from Jin Ying. He said that due to the excellent quality of English beef, they have decided to poach the beef slowly at a low temperature. "It's a little bit like the Vietnam boiled beef", the chef said. "So you can really taste the softness of the meat".

Currently, there are three English beef brands in Hong Kong - Ashdale, C&K Meats and Stapleton Park. All are from cattle raised entirely on grass and kept outdoors most of the year. They are from the English part of the UK - from Cornwall in the southwest to Kent in the southeast all the way up to Northumberland and Cumbria in the north - bordering on Scotland in the north and Wales in the west.