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Forum Expanded



I first entered the lec Long Firecracker Factory led by my father. Times were difficult and children had to help support their families. It was tradition, it was like that back then... And it still is in some regions of China. Some of us were only six years old... It was hard work. We rolled the paper several times around a sort of long headless nail and pressed it with a wooden tool called *chó pau ká*, to obtain tubes. I could make more than 3000 tubes a day. Then, we would cover the tubes with colorful paper, especially red, an operation known as *kó hong pei*, and cut them with the *chit pau cheong ká*, a special tool which looked like a lever. We would group the small tubes in packs, roughly octagonal in shape (*mái kók*), and pierce them one by one with a nail, tapping one of the extremities of each tube to close them (*tchók pau*). After which the tubes would be filled with white gunpowder, the most dangerous and explosive. This gunpowder, a mixture of potassium nitrate, potassium chlorate and sulphur, was prepared by men who, rain or shine, always worked in thongs, in isolated bunkers in the banks of canals or artificial lakes. The whitish coloration of their hands contrasted with their sun-tanned skin. Their

IEC LONG

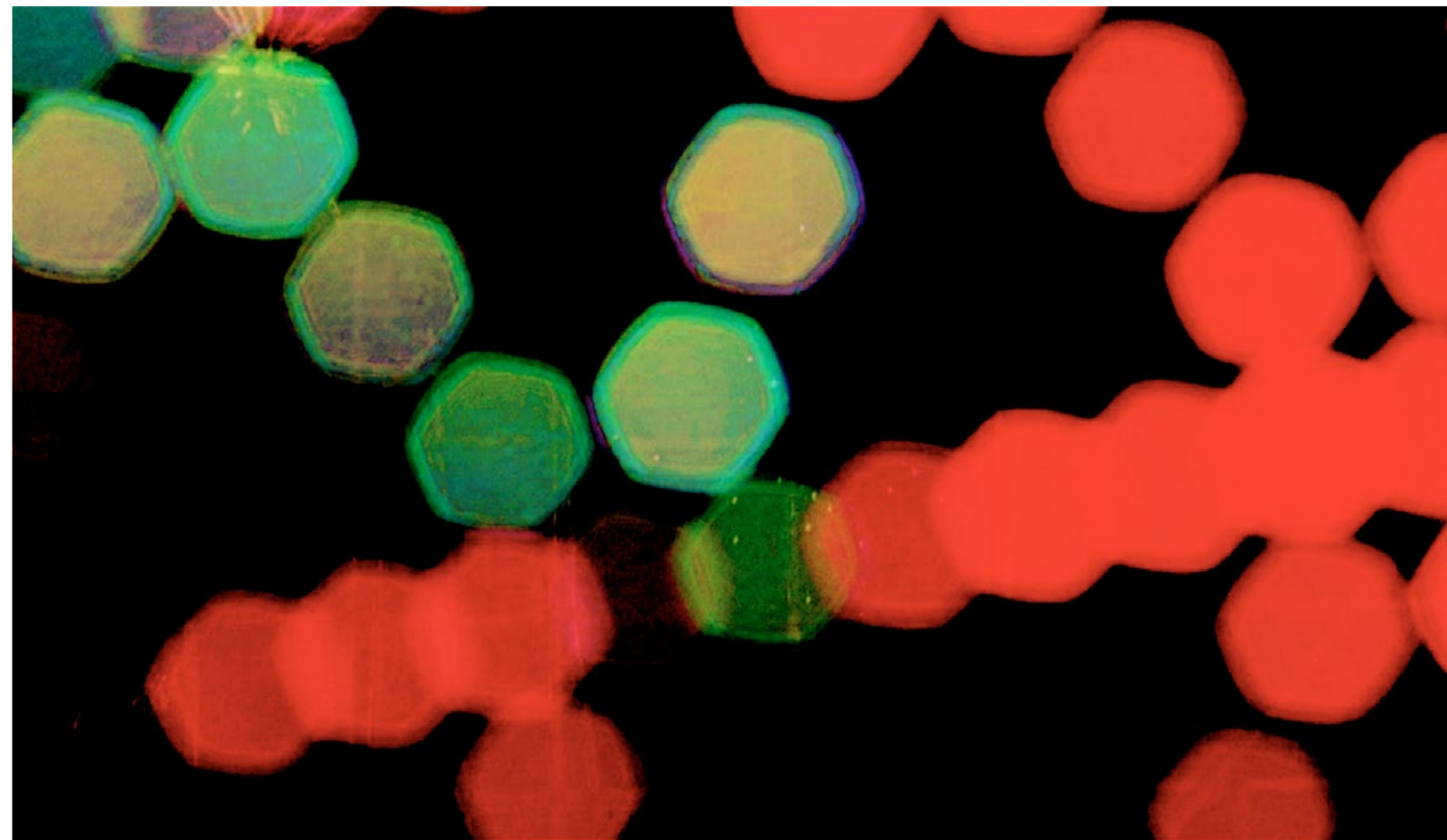
finger and toe nails were cut very short, to prevent any attrition that might cause an explosion. Those hands immediately gave away their occupation. We worked on tiny stools, around tables with piles of firecrackers: each pile had about five hundred to a thousand crackers. We were very quick and able, closing the extremities of the crackers filled with gunpowder with a tool which resembled a small punch. Our tiny agile fingers were shorter than the firecrackers and thus adequate to put the fuses in. Once finished, the firecrackers were packed in parcels and ribbons with beautiful colored labels bearing the factory's name... It was a dangerous work, there were many explosions. One of the largest I remember occurred on September 25th, 1954. There were lots of dead people, many of which children, and dozens of injured. Throughout the years, many people died... I lost many friends. Yes, these memories haunt me like ghosts.

Statement by an ancient worker of Macao's lec Long Firecracker Factory.

Taipa's population was surprised by a violent blast that, for a moment and to those far from the site, seemed like an earthquake. The police, as well as officers and soldiers of the 6th Indigenous Infantry Company and the on-duty personnel of the Maritime Aviation immediately went out looking for the cause of the blast, finding out there had been an explosion at the Long Firecracker Factory (...). The ensuing fire propagated to some houses, shipyard and cordage manufacture in the vicinity of the factory, the inhabitants of these and other nearby houses, knowing the quantity of potassium chlorate stored in the factory, fled the site of the fire, in panic and heedless of those in need of help. Given the insufficiency of personnel and fire-fighting gear in this village, and the shortage of water caused by

the drought and the low tide, (...) the victims were the workers, most of whom had a sudden death. (...) The injured were only found under the debris because of their cries, such was the darkness surrounding everyone. (...) As to the corpses, they abounded, scattered throughout, some quite far from the disaster area. (...) The body parts found and gathered by the personnel involved in the extinction of the fire were then collected and buried in Taipa's cemetery. (...)

Excerpts from the Taipa and Coloane Military Command's Report of December 18th, 1928, from the Public Salvation Corps Commander's Report of March 10th, 1930 and from the Island Council Administrator's Report of September 25th, 1954.





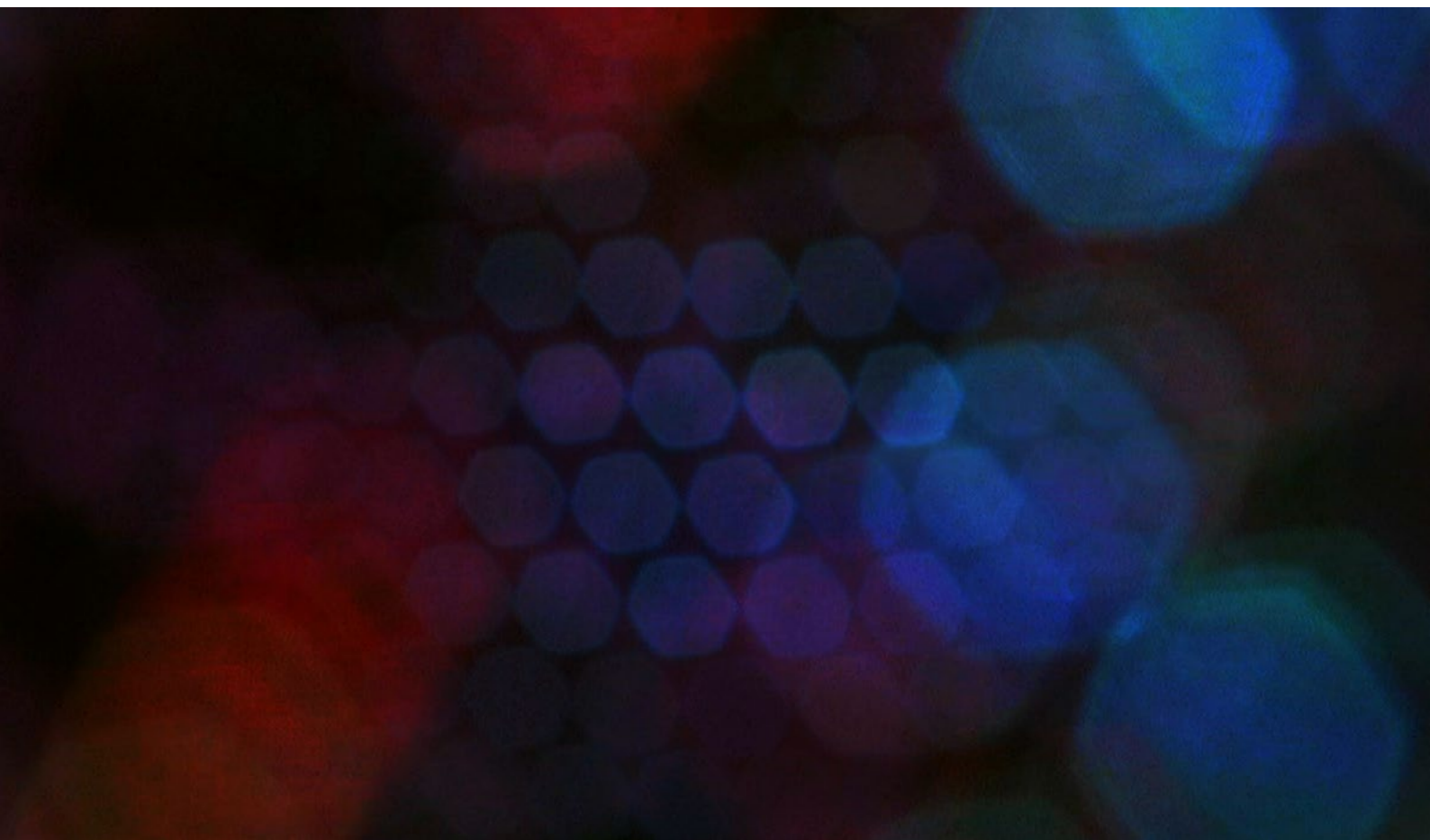
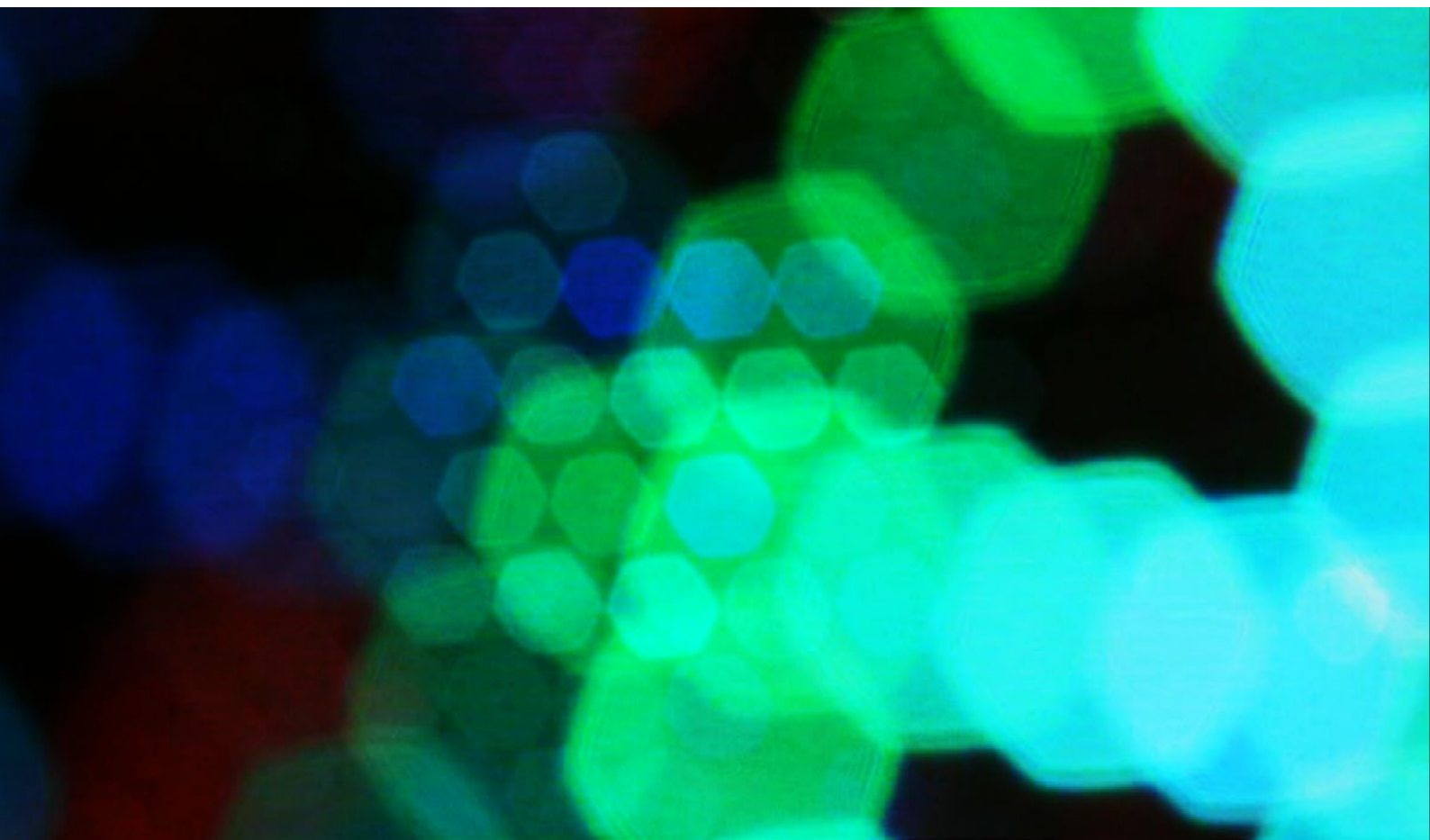
The word “panchão” was first heard in Macao. From the Chinese “pan-tcheong” or “pau-tcheong”, dictionaries define it as a Macanese regionalism also known as “China cracker” or “Chinese rocket”. Firecrackers have been going off in the skies of China since the Han Dynasty (206 B.C.E. - 220 C.E.). At first, green bamboo stems were thrown on bonfires to crack; then came gunpowder which, as the story goes, was discovered by Chinese alchemists who, in search for the immortality elixir, accidentally mixed potassium nitrate and sulphur. Then came fuses, paper rolls and the long red strings of cartridges. The Chinese have always used firecrackers to keep away bad luck. According to legend, crackers scared the monster Nian, which ate people and cattle, or woke the dragon which brought Spring rain to fields. But some people believed that such cracks served to burn sins. The red and the sparks were good presages, smoke created a favorable atmosphere. This combination made crackers and rockets into a universal means of celebration, especially in the Chinese New Year.

The oldest records about the manufacture of firecrackers in Macao that we were able to find, mention the years 1880/81 as the date of the founding of the first establishment dedicated to the manufacture and selling of crackers in the territory. Crackers were easily manufactured and small illegal factories popped up all over the city, providing many of its inhabitants with their only source of income and soon turning into one of Macao’s main assets. But it was the period between the two great wars that saw the growth of the

most dangerous manufactures, producing firecrackers and matches. Macao’s extreme poverty at the time and the absence of a real employment alternative guaranteed an abundant workforce, among which women and children were the cheapest.

At the end of the forties of the XX century, Macao produced more than 900 tons of crackers. In the sixties, the number of manufactures active in the city and Taipa Island increased substantially, after Hong Kong decreed the total prohibition to produce and publicly own firecrackers, as a consequence of the disturbances promoted by supporters of China’s Cultural Revolution in the summer of 1967. The Chinese that participated in those riots secretly made bombs with gunpowder extracted from crackers, to attack the police and English interests. In the mid-seventies, most of the firecracker manufactures moved to mainland China, driven away by the growing predominance of the much less dangerous textile industry, and ultimately disappeared from statistics in 1990. Salaries in mainland China are much lower and security regulations practically nonexistent. Accidents continue to be frequent and terrible.

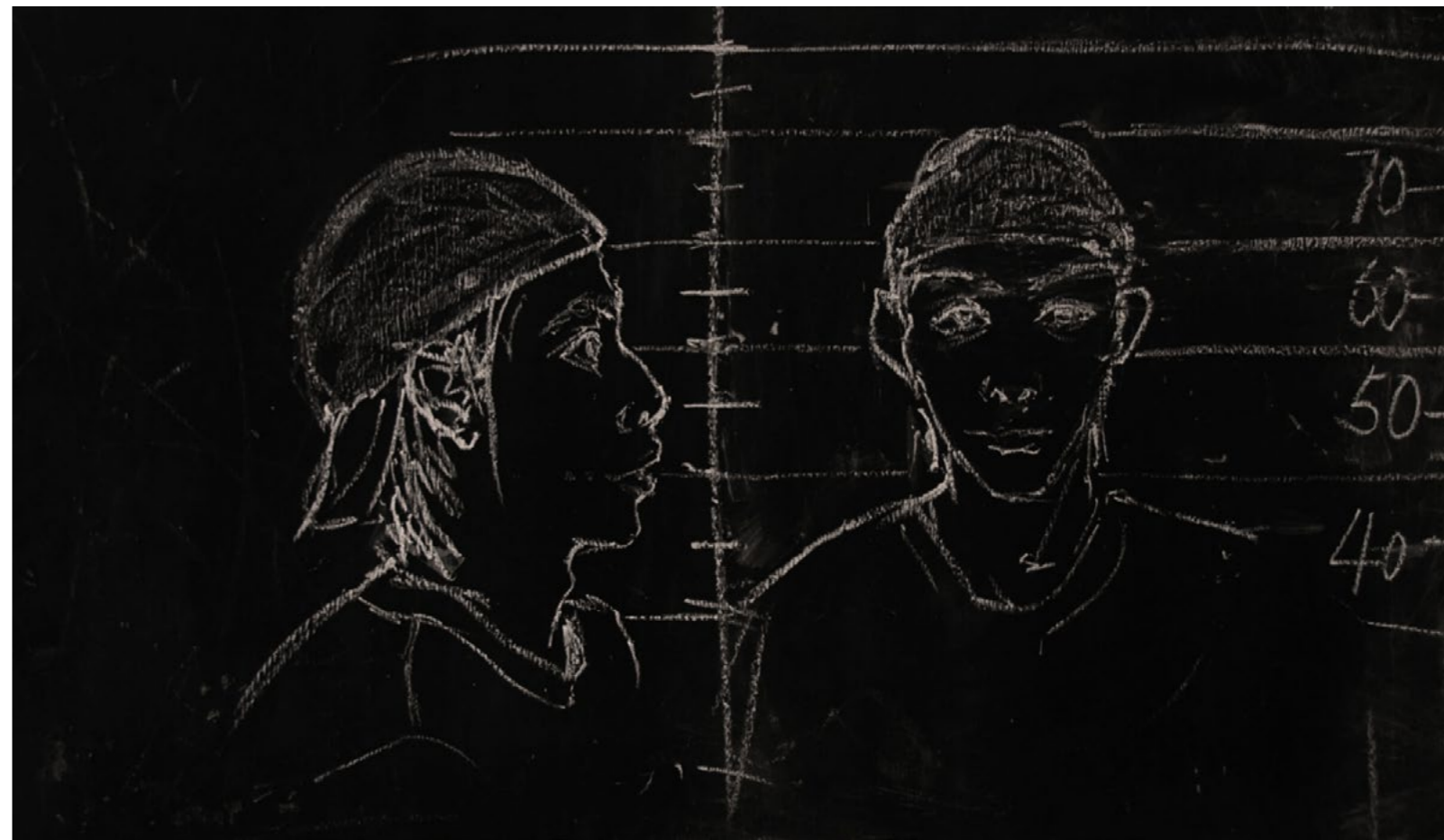
The Lec Long Firecracker Factory was founded in 1923 on the Macanese island of Taipa and operated until the 1970s. Its tragic history counted in numerous accidents and fatal explosions, which killed many men, women and children. Although abandoned for more than forty years, the ancient factory is the only well preserved survivor of industrial heritage in Macao and is now being restored by Macao’s Cultural Institute, with a view to turning it into a tourist attraction.



THE DIRECTORS

João Pedro Rodrigues and João Rui Guerra da Mata have been working together in cinema since 1995. In 1997, Guerra da Mata starred in Rodrigues' second short, HAPPY BIRTHDAY!. From then on, Guerra da Mata has been art director in all of Rodrigues' films, as well as assistant director and co-writer of most of his scripts. In 2007, they decided to co-direct the short film CHINA, CHINA, based on an original idea by Guerra da Mata. This fiction, spoken

mostly in Mandarin, was the first approach to a territory that had long interested them: China and East Asia. After this first short, they co-directed the feature THE LAST TIME I SAW MACAO (2012) and the shorts, RED DAWN (2011), MAHJONG (2013) and now IEC LONG (2014), a body of work they like to call their "Asian films".



IEC LONG

a film by João Pedro Rodrigues and João Rui Guerra da Mata

Macao, Taipa Island, 2014.

The word “panchão” was first heard in Macao. From the Chinese “*pan-tcheong*” or “*pau-tcheong*”, dictionaries define it as a Macanese regionalism also known as “China cracker” or “Chinese rocket”. Who inhabits the ancient Iec Long Firecracker Factory?

WITH UNCLE KAN AND THE CHILDREN CASPER, NICOLINO, DANIEL, WARICK WELLS, TONY CANTONESE VOICE TENG MAN CHEANG SCREENPLAY, CINEMATOGRAPHY AND DIRECTED BY JOÃO PEDRO RODRIGUES AND JOÃO RUI GUERRA DA MATA
EDITING TOMÁS BALTAZAR, JOÃO PEDRO RODRIGUES, JOÃO RUI GUERRA DA MATA DIRECT SOUND NUNO CARVALHO, CARLOS CONCEIÇÃO SOUND EDITING AND MIX ELSA FERREIRA
ASSISTANT DIRECTOR LEONOR NOIVO COLORIST MARCO AMARAL PRODUCTION ASSISTANTS CRYSTAL CHAN, RODRIGO CANDEIAS, LEONOR NOIVO PRODUCTION MANAGER LYDIE BÁRBARA LITERARY CONSULTANT LUÍS ARAÚJO
A BLACKMARIA PRODUCTION with the financial support of ICA, RTP EXECUTIVE PRODUCER IVO FERREIRA PRODUCER JOÃO FIGUEIRAS DIRECTED BY JOÃO PEDRO RODRIGUES AND JOÃO RUI GUERRA DA MATA

Portugal 2014 / 31min / HD / 1.77 / color / 5.1

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