

YOUTH

Kenyan lawyer serves up menu of success with TikTok food videos

NAIROBI — Quick camera transitions, with muted trendy sounds accompanied by Juliet Kane's calming instructive voice, characterize her captivating brief food videos. The 24-year-old lawyer has found success in her venture by showcasing her culinary skills in an educative, sensational format on the popular Chinese video-sharing app TikTok.

"I joined TikTok eight months ago. Since I started posting my food videos on a regular basis, I have seen my following grow considerably. Most of my customers have found me online," Kane says.

TikTok, which is popular with the younger generations, is fast catapulting individuals into their desired careers. Budding dancers, comedians and makeup artists in Kenya and across the world have had a breakthrough in their ventures by presenting their work on the app. Well-established professionals are also finding themselves increasingly using the app to give their trades mileage.

The self-taught cook whose food videos have well over 200,000 "likes" cites TikTok as an avenue that has propelled her to financial stability while providing an outlet for her creative personality.

"Aside from cooking, I have interest in drawing, painting and music, and so TikTok became ideal as it allowed me to fuse my love for food with my personality. I can match the beats of TikTok sounds to the sizzle of meat or other food sounds," says Kane.

She joined the TikTok bandwagon when the world was in the throes of the pandemic and staying at home was the order of the day. At the time, she joined as a consumer, only intermittently sharing her cake videos.

In a shift, at the beginning of this year, she committed herself to being more deliberate with creating videos around food.

Her resolve saw her shelve her legal career to focus fully on her food business, which she concedes rakes in the lion's share of her earnings.

The lawyer-turned chef enjoys making chicken recipes, as well as popular dishes such as pilaf and biryani. She also draws inspiration from cultures outside her own to execute scrumptious meals.

Kelvin Tayo, an upcoming dance artist based in Nairobi, says he cannot do without a dose of the app. The 20-year-old was introduced to it by his younger brother who became engrossed last year.

"My brother would always be on that app laughing and imitating dance moves, which he failed miserably to copy but surprisingly he did not see a backlash. People loved him actually," says Tayo.

He says people can be themselves on the app. "You can record from wherever and nobody will come to scrutinize you because everyone understands that we are all just having fun."

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A visitor walks by a Douyin booth at an expo in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province, in 2019. The video-sharing app is known as TikTok outside China. LONG WEI / FOR CHINA DAILY

'Cave dwellers' guard ancient cliff paintings

GUIYANG — What is it like to live in a cave once inhabited by ancient civilizations? Zhang Youbin and his wife have the answer.

Squatting on the ground, using a lighter to ignite a pile of leaves, 44-year-old Zhang is ready to fix lunch in the cave, which is not very big and is located deep in the mountains, about a two-hour drive from Zhenfeng county, Southwest China's Guizhou province.

Zhang is from a village in Zhenfeng. Six years ago, the local government entrusted Zhang and his wife with the care of the ancient Hongyan cliff paintings, which decorate the cave.

The cliff paintings were first noticed in 1991 and have a history of more than 6,000 years, according to Li Wenxin, director of the county's heritage administration.

In 2015, the area was listed as a provincial-level protection site. The paintings cover a cliff area of 110 meters in width and 0.5 to 20 meters in height. Most patterns have become blurred over the years. Those still recognizable show cows, palm prints, pigs and people.

"It is suspected that the paint is cinnabar," Li says, adding that the paintings are specific and have certain artistic and ornamental value.

"In particular the porcine patterns, which were first found in the surrounding areas along the Beipan River, indicating high research value," he adds.

In 2015, the couple settled there to protect the paintings.

The road leading to the site was extremely narrow and dangerous in some sections. Visitors needed to lean tightly into the cliff to pass

them. Due to that, Zhang was determined to widen the road. It took him two months to dig using hoes and build the roadbed with stones.

"The road is now much easier for people to walk on," he says.

The couple's principal responsibility is preventing those without authorization from entering the protected area in case the paintings are damaged.

"My wife and I take turns guarding the paintings every day, rain or shine," Zhang says.

To save their commuting time, the couple established a temporary home in a cave near the paintings. They have some daily necessities, including a bottle of insecticide, two pots, a chopping board, a kitchen knife and a simple bed made of thin wooden planks.

"The insecticide is to keep mosquitoes out and snakes," Zhang says.

The couple have placed their cooking oil, salt and rice in a plastic bucket and hung it on the wall of the cave in case rats appear.

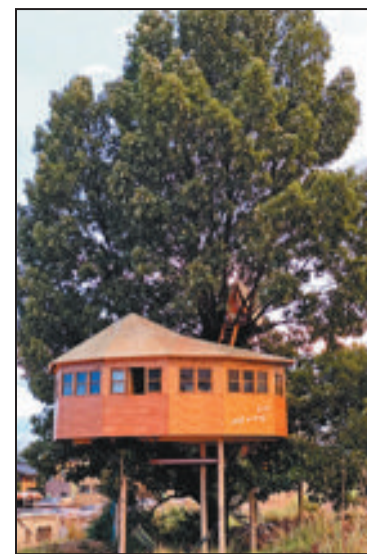
They also use a small piece of land in front of the cave to grow chilies. They fetch fresh water from a cave at the bottom of the cliff.

"The cave is cool in summer and warm in winter," Zhang says.

Having spent six years guarding the paintings, Zhang has lost count of how many nights he has spent in the cave. But he is getting familiar with the paintings.

"I can tell you the exact location of each and every painting," he says.

XINHUA



The Land of Wilderness features more than 20 houses and installations created by Qiao Xiaodao and his team in Lijiang, Yunnan province.

Building a dream

Self-taught architect makes miniature structures, turning wasteland into a charming tourist attraction, **Xing Wen** reports.

Between the vast sky and the boundless earth, rows of stylish log cabins appear, as wild grass bend to the wind. In addition, a colorful watchtower, cottages on wheels, an A-frame greenhouse, tree houses, stilted houses, animal-shaped huts, transparent houses, a haystack-like slide and an irregular-shaped auditorium, the exterior of which embraces minimalism design, are all scattered on the untamed stretch of land in the suburban areas of Lijiang in Yunnan province.

A peculiar airship-like vehicle made of metal scraps sometimes crawls by on a narrow cemented path that connects the buildings and installations, blowing bubbles from its "mouth".

Each building there has a name and function — a grocery store, coffee shop, concert room, bookshop or temporary dwelling. The modernity, colorful accents and whimsical quality the playful place exudes may make visitors feel like they are circumnavigating a land from a fairy tale.

The place has been built from scratch by Qiao Xiaodao, 43, who has never received formal architecture education.

Most of the time, instead of sketching the layout of the prototype beforehand, he would fall back on his instinct and experience when constructing a building or an installation.

However, designing and constructing stylish houses is just among many accomplishments of the tall, lanky man with sun-tanned skin.

Born in a poor family, he used to help his father to build houses brick by brick and do some woodwork in his boyhood, which made him a handy person and someone who doesn't shy away from hard work.

Although Qiao dropped out of high school during his teen years, he never stopped learning new skills on his own and has set foot in different fields.

After he moved to Beijing from Heilongjiang province in 1998, he became a welder, house painter, visual designer of a website, owner of a printing studio, editor of an indie magazine and a curator.

In 2006, he bought a guitar and learned how to write folk songs with the instrument. Soon he formed a band with his 9-year-old niece.

The next year, they released their first album, titled *Xiaoshide Guangnian* (Disappearing Lifetime).

Their debut in the music circles was successful as the album won



Qiao Xiaodao (first from right, front row) and his team pose with one of their creations, a bookshop made with recycled materials.

several awards and enjoyed popularity among folk music lovers. He continued exploring music until he moved to Yunnan in 2013.

When Qiao wandered the streets there, a tricycle, with tools such as saws, hammers, nails, hatchets and chisels, drew his attention. The items belonged to a local carpenter who had just died.

The tools reminded Qiao of his younger days when he helped his father with manual work.

"When I was young, most people around me built their own houses. I also got to join my family members to construct our home and make furnishings," he recalls.

"However, as I grew up, I tended to be attracted by new things one after another and gradually left my boyhood memories behind. Then (in Lijiang) I decided to pick up the memories again."

He restarted by making chairs and tables, and constructing small houses. Qiao equipped himself with different skills to ensure he could

cover the entire process of constructing a house: laying bricks, welding the steel framework, mapping the domestic electric circuit, painting the exteriors and woodwork.

After he posted online photos of small-sized houses he made, his designs attracted many who asked Qiao to make such houses as decorations for commercials and other events such as a music festival.

"He is highly focused on what he does," says Zhen Zhen, Qiao's wife, who assists him in his business and social interactions, which gives him the time to throw himself into the construction activity.

Qiao decided to turn a wasteland of some 40,000 square meters in Lijiang into a tourism venue, calling the area Land of Wilderness, where 100 tiny houses or installations of different shapes and styles are being built for adults and children to stroll about and play.

More than 20 houses and installations are already in place. When the



"I hope visitors can embrace a fresh experience every time they step into Land of Wilderness."

Qiao Xiaodao, folk singer and self-taught architect

site had a soft opening in June, groups of artists and children visited the place. Their feedback inspired Qiao to upgrade his work.

"I found that I should make facilities that can better interact with our young visitors," he says, adding that he is making a locomotive that can be used to "pull cottages".

"That will allow children to stay in the cottage and make a joyful circuit of the zone."

Besides, he also plans to set up a big stage for musicians to hold gigs.

Most raw materials he uses to build the houses are scraps abandoned by other people.

Recently, he shared photos of timeworn desks, old television sets and obsolescent stereos on social media with excitement, saying the things were donations from his friends and neighbors. "They are useless in others' eyes, but are treasures in mine."

Now, Qiao has several assistants who also have the passion to build such houses. The group is working together to enrich the tourist spot.

"I hope visitors can embrace a fresh experience every time they step into Land of Wilderness," he says.

Qiao's daughter was born last year. The couple say they hope their daughter will enjoy her childhood there.

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The stylish miniature houses have turned the wasteland into a playground. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY