



MARTIAL ARTS ≠ KUNG-FU

In fact, as Kah Joon has learned, martial arts is not synonymous with kung-fu. Martial arts is a form of combat, but kung-fu is something bigger. "The taxi driver who zips around the streets with zero accidents in 20 years has kung-fu. The chef who whips up mouth-watering delicacies is also practicing kung-fu," explained Kah Joon. And in Shaolin, one of the greatest kung-fu is to avoid physical combat altogether.

THE WORLD IS HIS OYSTER

Born and bred in Singapore, Kah Joon made his mark in China from 1994 to 2002 as a business and marketing expert in the satellite and broadcasting industry. Three years ago, Kah Joon decided to leave a cushy job as the chief representative of various American and European television companies to move to Canada. His aim – to understand and produce children's books for the North American market.



He started a company called Silk Road, symbolising the connection between the East and the West in his books. Starting from scratch, Kah Joon's first book was a success by all counts. Titled *A Musical Journey: From the Great Wall of China to the Water Towns of Jiangnan*, the book has sold more than 2,000 copies since it was published six months ago in Canada. Currently, the book is distributed and sold in North America, Australia and Ireland. Last autumn, *A Musical Journey* was nominated by independent bookstores in the US as an

American Bookseller's Association Book Sense Children's Pick. The book has also been recommended by Skipping Stones, an award-winning multicultural magazine, and has been mentioned in the November 2004 issue of New Yorker Magazine.

THE SPIRIT OF SHAOLIN

For Kah Joon, the spirit of Shaolin may have been with him from the very beginning. Kah Joon has one clear strategy about how to produce Asian books for the Western audience. "People react to a book not because you are telling them about another culture, but because it is something that fits directly into their lifestyle. To reach out to the West, you need to tell the story that fits into their culture, without losing the authenticity and accuracy of the content," said Kah Joon. In other words, it has to read like an American book. "When they read without stopping to ask where the book is from, then we would have succeeded in selling Shaolin kung-fu to the hearts and minds of the international audience." Now, that is Shaolin food for thought.

For more information on Chinese symbols and culture, log on to Kah Joon's website at www.living-chinese-symbols.com.

About Frankfurt Book Fair

Frankfurt Book Fair is the largest marketplace for trading in publishing rights and licenses. This annual event is also the largest trade fair for books, multi-media and communications.

To heighten Singapore's publishing sector's profile, the MDA will be leading a contingent of nine publishing companies to the event this year; giving these companies an opportunity to network with their overseas counterparts, as well as securing new collaborations.

Highlights to look out for at the Singapore Pavilion are *Book Soul; Soulprints Series* which include *The Strife* and *Rough Life, Rich Life; The Little Red Dot*.

The Singapore Pavilion will be at Frankfurt Book Fair from 19 to 23 October 2005 at Hall 6, Stand D914.

