



Prince Dom João de Orleans e Bragança

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EXCLUSIVE



BLUE -BLOODED BRAZILIAN

BY JOANN CHIA

In this exclusive *MillionaireAsia* interview, a member of the imperial family of Brazil, Dom João de Orleans e Bragança, shares his love for art, the environment, and his home.

A descendant of the last emperor of Brazil, Dom João de Orleans e Bragança was born into the aristocratic upper crust of society, yet on any given day, this is a man who'd trade his crown for a Nikon camera or joy-heralding tambourine.

Dom João's great grandmother, Princess Isabel, signed the Lei Áurea (the Golden Law) to free the slaves back in 1888. Her father, the Emperor Pedro II was the last ruler of the Brazil empire for despite being at the pinnacle of his popularity, he was overthrown in a coup d'état in 1889, after a 58-year reign.

Fast-forward to modern day Brazil, the royal imperial bloodline may be devoid of political powers but the legacy of Pedro II – often regarded by historians as one of the greatest Brazilians – lives on in his descendants.

No place like home

Some of the royal family's antiques can be found in Dom João's 200-year-old

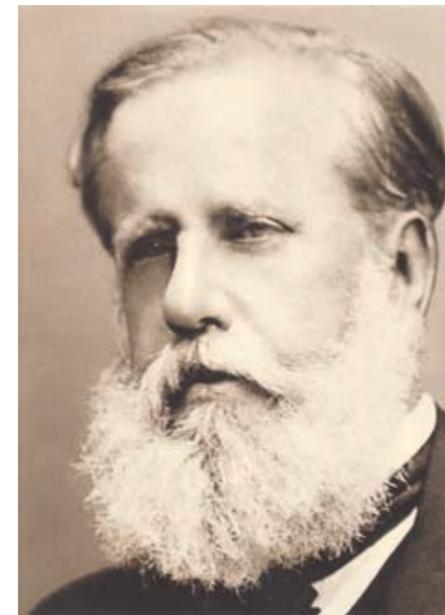
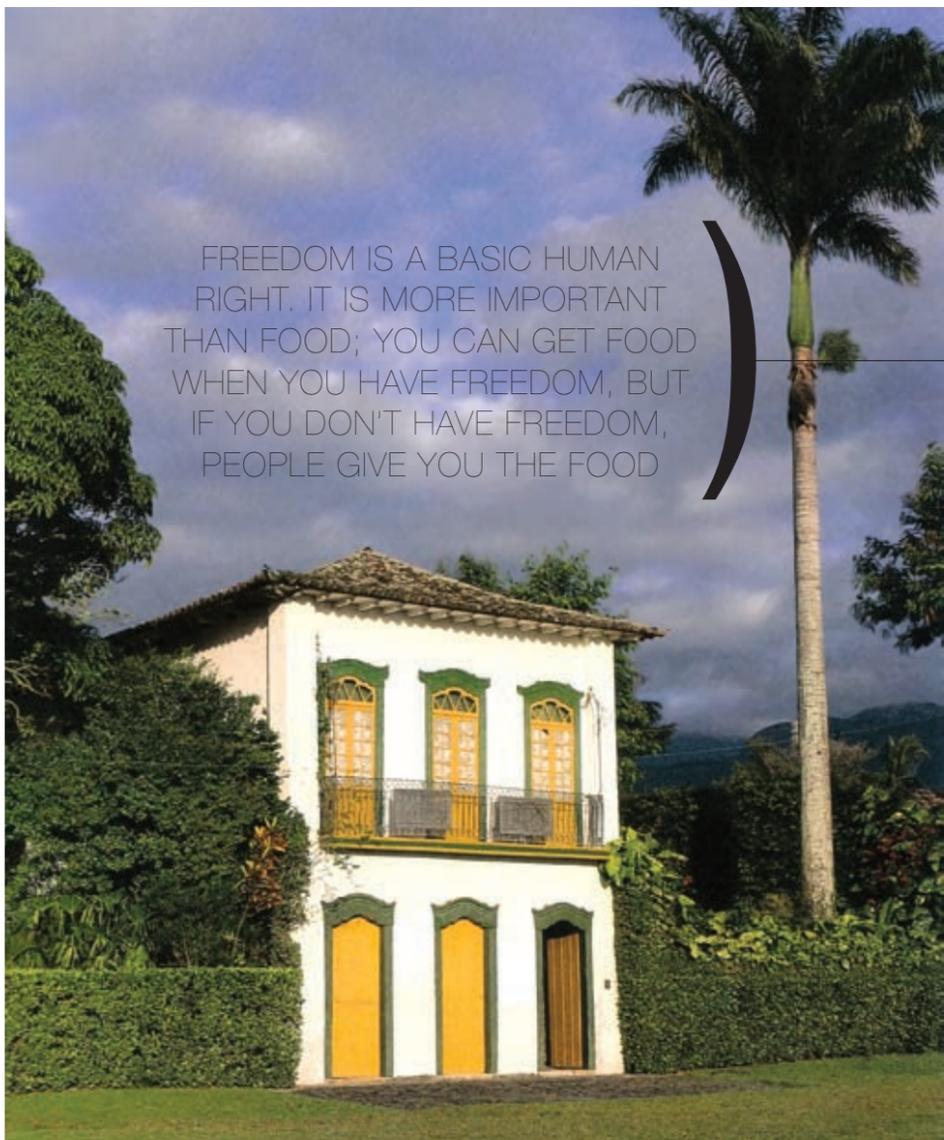
home in Paraty, Brazil. An ardent art collector, particularly ceramic art, Dom João has, over the years, amassed an array of native and popular artwork from Brazil and beyond.

From family jewels to art to Rio de Janeiro, Dom João turns his thoughts vehemently to the charming historic town he calls home. Paraty is a 17th century town that runs along the coastline of Rio de Janeiro and is one which, in recent years, has become a popular tourist spot known for its rich heritage and mountainous landscape.

"This is the place where you'll find virgin rainforests, environmentally protected places, and one of the most beautiful sea resorts in the world. We have the sea and an old town with plenty of little restaurants and art galleries. It's almost certain to be a UNESCO heritage conservancy site by next year," explained the businessman, who spends a significant portion of his time investing in and developing tourist resorts in Paraty.

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Clockwise from left: One of the beautiful beaches of Paraty; the Orleans e Bragança house in Paraty, built in the late 17th century – the first references to this building date from 1670. Following on the local tradition of painting frames and mouldings in bright colours, Prince Dom João chose the colours of the Brazilian flag for his house; Prince Dom João; Emperor Pedro II; Prince Dom João's great-grandmother, Princess Isabel; the entrance hall to the house at Paraty, where Prince Dom João and Princess Dona Thereza de Orleans e Bragança reside.



Capturing beauty and freedom

When he is not busy with his real estate business, Dom João indulges in his other passion, photography. He has published 11 photography books so far, capturing Brazil and her natural beauty and culture, as well as the locals going about their daily routines.

"I like to shoot people with identity; it doesn't matter if you're rich or poor, the most important attribute in a person is his identity. And what is this identity? The fact that you're proud of yourself, you don't need to copy others; you don't need to have money to show that you have everything. Money is good, money can buy you a lot of things, but identity is more important."

Inherently, you get a sense that Dom João is deeply passionate about his country and the people. The suave light-bearded prince beamed tenderly when asked about his great grandmother who inked a piece of

history by signing the freedom law. "She did something beautiful," he said simply.

"Freedom is a basic human right. It is more important than food; you can get food when you have freedom, but if you don't have freedom, people give you the food," he added. "In Brazil, we have freedom of press, political freedom, and freedom of speech. But, freedom is something very complex to describe because even though you are free, there is still a law to guard the freedom of press, freedom of speech and political freedom. So ultimately, the search for freedom never ends."

Fighting a good cause

The imperial family of Brazil may not be officially bound to serve in public or charitable work to strengthen the national stability, but that has not stopped Dom João from championing several social causes close to his heart. "Members of royal families," he said, "fight for

democracy, normality in our society, and for justice. I fight for an ideology, with all royal families in the world."

Alongside freedom, the prince is an active advocate for sustainability and the environment. He elaborates and airs his frustrations about the increasing perils of the modern society.

"The world today has turned into a consumer-driven, almost decadent, place. When I was 15 years old, I go to the mall because I had to buy something. These days, people may not have anything to buy, but yet they still go to a shopping centre. Young people are not doing sports or going to museums anymore. It's a vicious cycle which has a big impact on the world, because the world cannot support this kind of consumerism behaviours."

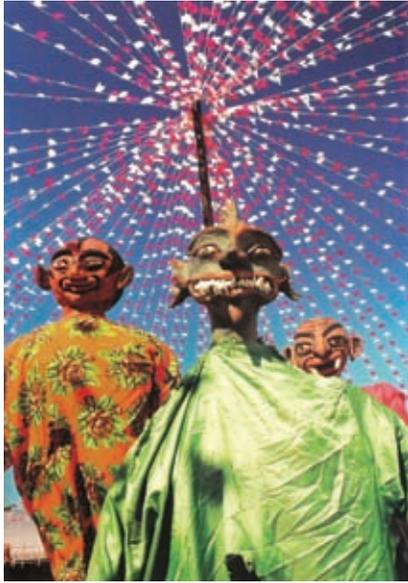
Dom João goes on to state that if 70% of the population in China consumes as much as the United States today, the world would not last more than 10 years

due to a shortage of natural resources. "Everybody aims to have the same standard of living as the American society, but that is totally unsustainable. If your neighbour buys a new car, you too want to buy new car even though your car is not broken. It's an illness."

Brazil is the largest country in South America and fifth largest country in the world with a population of over 190 million people. As one of the leaders in climate change solutions, the country has a strong stance when it comes to protecting the environment.

Dom João recently switched to an ethanol-powered car after his old car, which lasted him for 10 years, had broken down. According to the prince, 85% of cars produced in Brazil are now flexible-fuel vehicles running on sugarcane ethanol.

The prince shared, "We have to change ourselves before asking the other to change. The world is like a ship where



Clockwise from top left:
Centro Histórico; Prince
Dom João; Folia de Reis



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you have various passenger classes. If the ship sinks, everyone drowns, regardless of which cabin class you are in.”

“Let me be clear, I’m not against shopping. I too, like all the things that I have. We have to buy clothes and we all have our needs, but I am against the model of the world; the model and its mechanisms reinforce the spiralling effects of consumerism.”

Making a difference

“Perhaps I’m too revolutionary,” he shrugged but he certainly made no apology for being so. When asked about the changes he’d make to society if he had a chance to, Dom João was quick to reply.

“There are many things to change about our world, and one of them is hypocrisy. Big democracies don’t have relationships with countries that are ruled

by dictatorship, yet they choose to form relationships with other dictatorship-ran countries because commerce and trade values are now more important than human rights. This is hypocrisy and it’s not a good example for the next generation. If our children see the presidents of the world being hypocritical, they end up doing it at home and later on, in their businesses.”

As a citizen of the world (Dom João is of French, Portuguese, Spanish, and Egyptian descent), he is well-versed in global issues and enjoys his fair share of the finer things in life, but at the end of the day, he only hopes to impart a good set of moral values to his two children.

“I always tell them, “Don’t get near someone because of his/her beauty, name, or wealth. Get to know a person because of his/her moral and ethical values.” The world is based too much

on beauty and wealth. Of course, I’m not against these things. I want to earn more money, I have a beautiful house, I like to travel, but these are not the basic values of life. Values are something a lot higher and more important to me.”

This is life

When carnival day comes around in Brazil, you’ll find Dom João in the celebratory crowds, immersing himself in the gaiety of the moment. He mingles and entertains the people with his tambourine, celebrating the freedom of his country.

His patrimony may have been predestined, but his passion of life has most certainly been cultivated. Dom João de Orleans e Bragança is as colourful as the Carnival but it’s his judicious nature that leads the way for his fellow countryman to embrace life to the fullest. 🌟