

Jiading Museum holds an exhibit on bamboo carvings

Wang's bamboo-carved paintbrush holder featuring a group of literati appreciating a painting scroll



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Yang Yujie and Wang Jie

Jiading bamboo carving was among the first national intangible cultural heritages to be listed in 2006.

Carvers were literati painters who used knives instead of brushes and bamboo as a body, giving the Jiading bamboo carving its distinct charm.

In 2018, the fifth group of national intangible cultural heritage representative projects were given to the artist Wang Wei, who is the representative inheritor of Jiading bamboo carving.

Wang not only inherited traditional Jiading bamboo carving techniques but also infused them with a modern flair, achieving the realms of beauty in material, skill in work, elegance in tools and excellence in style.

The Jiading Museum is currently hosting a solo exhibition of Wang's bamboo carvings. The exhibition includes about 165 pieces of Wang's bamboo carving from various periods, as well as calligraphy and painting, purple-clay teapots, sculpture and porcelain.



Wang Wei's bamboo-carved table plaque featuring Bodhidharma

"Bamboo carving is Jiading's cultural calling card, and I hope that this exhibition will help promote this art form," Wang said.

Visitors are greeted by a display of exquisite and delicate bamboo carvings. These works combine calligraphy, painting, poetry, writing and printing in shallow relief, deep relief, shade carving and round carving.

The strong and ancient brushwork of the knife in Wang's hands would obviously make the viewer feel the natural beauty of the unique material — bamboo.

A bamboo carving could take several months to complete, from sketching to completion using a translucent carving technique.

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The challenge of bamboo carving lies not only in an artist's skill at seal carving, but also in the carver's overall understanding of poetry, calligraphy, painting and seal carving.

Therefore, Wang insists on years of calligraphy and painting practice. "Only as a literati can one carve something with a literati

touch," he adds.

Wang's studio is a world of bamboo carving. He works there all night with a lamp, a pair of glasses and a carving knife.

"I hardly notice the passage of time, especially when I am fully engaged. When I pause for a moment, I discover that it is already late at night. I gradually discover that what I carve is not the thing under the knife, but myself."

Wang and his team have been working hard in recent years to digitize Jiading bamboo carving.

The digital collection of "Bamboo Carving for All Seasons" was finally launched last October, from the initial idea to the design, 3D modeling and then online.

The 3D digital collection series deviates from traditional art appreciation by presenting Jiading bamboo carving works in three dimensions, allowing viewers to zoom in and enjoy the carving details.

"Jiading bamboo carving is a centuries-old craft. I hope to reveal its allure in a comprehensive way by combining handicrafts and digital art, so that more and more people can appreciate its beauty," Wang said.



An exhibition featuring Wang Wei's bamboo carvings and other art creations are on display at Jiading Museum. — Photos by Yang Yujie