



**Right: Solving lantern riddles is part of the fun to mark the traditional Lantern Festival. Inset: A riddle inspired by the Chinese idiom *bai shou qi jia* (starting from scratch), designed by Danny from the Netherlands.**



# Glowing lanterns, exchange of ideas light up historic Zhouqiao Old Street

Li Fei

On February 12, Zhouqiao Old Street in Jiading District came alive with the glow of lanterns and the sounds of laughter as a Lantern Festival celebration was hosted for over 20 expatriates from around the world.

The gathering fostered a global exchange of ideas and experiences, leaving participants with cherished memories and a deeper understanding of this vibrant tradition.

Foreign guests engaged in crafting fish lanterns, playing lantern riddles, and tasting *tangyuan* (glutinous rice dumplings). The mix of cultures brought new life to the age-old traditions.

Danny, an IT manager and artist from the Netherlands, has called Shanghai home for over 12 years. He brought a creative twist to the festival by designing visual interpretations of Chinese idioms.

"These paintings are kind of an idea to put Chinese idioms in my own creative way. Not so much explaining, but the feeling when I first hear about them, and sort of visualizing it. Keeping a little bit to let people try to figure out what the idiom is," he told Shanghai Daily.

His favorite piece, inspired by the idiom *bai shou qi jia* (starting from scratch), reflects his own journey in Shanghai.

"When I first came here, it was like

starting with nothing," he said. His artwork combines personal elements with traditional motifs, creating a bridge between his Dutch roots and his life in China.

The festival offered hands-on activities, with artisans dressed in *hanfu* (traditional Chinese attire) guiding international guests in creating their own fish lanterns. Finland's Anna Maija Rissanen found the process challenging. She joked: "You need four hands to do this, not just two."

Alejandro Davila, a student from Colombia, expressed enthusiasm about his first Spring Festival experience.

"It's really good because it allows me to learn more about your culture, which I really try to do," he said, acknowledging his novice attempts at lantern-making.

As night fell, the old street transformed into a bustling marketplace of intangible cultural heritage. The fish lantern parade, featuring performers in colorful attire, wound its way through the historic route, engaging spectators along the way.

The event marked the first "World Intangible Cultural Heritage" edition of the Spring Festival, drawing participants from around the globe to partake in traditional Chinese festivities.

"I feel really happy and lucky to know this culture up close," said Ketaki Charekar from India, noting the similarities between Indian and Chinese celebrations.



◀ **Jonatan, from Spain, beams with his finished fish lantern.**



▶ **Anna Maija Rissanen, from Finland, worked hard on making her own fish lantern.**



**A fish lantern parade was held at Zhouqiao Old Street to celebrate the festival. — Courtesy of Jiading Converged Media Center**