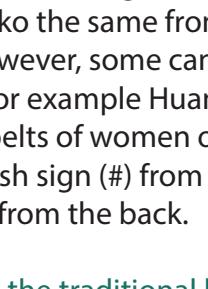




INTERVIEW

I'd Rather Knot

Interview with Chinese knot artist Cheung Bo Yin



What are Chinese knots?

Chinese knots originate from China. Most of the knots look the same from the front and back side. However, some can be different on both sides. For example Huandai knot (a knot fixed on the belts of women of ancient China) looks like a hash sign (#) from the front and an equal sign (=) from the back.

How are the traditional knots named?

Each knot should be given a name that brings good luck or conveys a meaningful message. Each traditional knot has its own name, and should not be randomly re-named. For example, "Kat Hing Jau Yu" (吉慶有餘) is a knot that consists of three different knots: Auspicious knot, hing knot, and fish knot.

Hing means "celebrate (慶)". A Hing knot actually looks like the Chinese musical instrument Hing 鋸 but it shares the same pronunciation with Hing (celebrate 慶). Therefore Hing knot is used to represent the word "celebrate" (慶).

The three knots represent different words in the name and combine to be "Kat Hing Jau Yu" (吉慶有餘).

How do you design and name your work?

If I am going to make a large-sized knot (which is formed by lots of knots), I need to think about the composition of the knot first. Therefore I draw a design draft to arrange the positions and the combination of knots. By doing this, I can achieve an aesthetic design of the

work. Lastly, I will make up a name for the work. Sometimes I work the other way around and consider the meaning of the work first. Suppose that I want to give my work as a birthday gift, then I will choose the knots with lucky wishes affiliated with birthdays.

I always think that the knot plays a supporting role in the whole work. Instead, the accessories such as beads should be the center of the work.

Have you encountered any obstacles in your career throughout the years of making Chinese knots?

When I just started learning, there were not many people that made this kind of handicraft. People admired my work a lot and business was quite good. However, due to the opening of the mainland, many handmade-craft has flooded into Hong Kong. And people from the mainland do not really care for these crafts. As a result, my business suffered from a hard time.

I learned computer and Photoshop later on and realized that the techniques did help me a lot in my career such as making handouts to my students. Although I was very downcast during the decline in business, it opened another path for my career, and being able to learn and use the computer to create new teaching materials has brought a great sense of satisfaction. And thus this way I have continued for more than thirty something years.

FULL INTERVIEW

中文版



CULTURALHERITAGECHINA.ORG

NEWS

CCSC is pleased to announce the launch of culturalheritagechina.org, a new website that has compiled all National-level and provincial-level lists of Intangible Cultural Heritage elements of China. The website also contains the most complete online English translations of the National-level lists.

Folk literature, music, dance, operas, theater, sports and acrobatics, art, traditional skills and craftsmanship, medicine, and folk customs--go and check it out!

HIGHLIGHTS

『縫補生命, 修復藝術』是我家族代代相傳的八字真言, 還有三句話, 就是『接活如同父母道, 做活如撫養嬰兒, 出活如同兒女行』。

“‘Mend life, restore art’ is a saying that has been passed down through the generations in my family. We also have a three-part saying, ‘Receive the job with filialness, work the job like you raise a child, finish the job like you send off your children.’”

-Wang Laoxie
Words from his juci presentation at CCSC, 14 July 2016

Wang Laoxie, master craftsman of the traditional Chinese ceramic repair method of juci, learned his trade as it was passed down generation from generation in his family, starting with his ancestor who worked in the Imperial Workshop of the Qing dynasty. His family's philosophy on juci centers on the knowledge that their work is more than just merely mending broken pieces of ceramics to restore the face value of the piece. What they are working with are objects imbued with sentimental value for the owner, and thus they “heal it” to restore its “life” value. Wang Laoxie says, “I remember all the pieces I have ever worked on. And when I give the completed piece back to the owner, I am giving happiness to others.”



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