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# CHINA PICTORIAL

Vol. 896 July-August 2023

## China on Display at the National Museum



国内零售价：20元

USA \$10.20 UK £6.40

Australia \$18.20 Europe €10.40

Canada \$15.60 Türkiye TL.20.00

ISSN 0009-4420







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**Administrative Agency:** 主管单位：中国外文出版发行事业局  
China International Communications Group (中国国际传播集团)

**Publisher:** China Pictorial Publications 主办、出版单位：人民邮电社

**Address:** 社址：  
33 Chegongzhuang Xilu 北京市海淀区车公庄西路33号  
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**Telephone of the Distribution Department:** 订刊电话：  
86-10-68412660 86-10-68412660

**Legal Adviser:** Yue Cheng 法律顾问：岳成

**Printing:** Toppan Leefung Changcheng 印刷：北京利丰雅高长城  
Printing (Beijing) Co., Ltd. 印刷有限公司

**Overseas Distribution:**  
China International Book Trading Corporation (Guoji Shudian),  
35 Chegongzhuang Xilu,  
Po. Box 399, Beijing 100044, China  
**Telephone:** 86-10-68413849  
**Fax:** 86-10-68412166  
China Book Trading (Canada) Inc.  
**Telephone:** 1-416-497-8096

出版日期 每月1日  
国内零售价: 20元  
国内刊号: CN11-1429/Z  
国际刊号: ISSN0009-4420  
京海工商广字第0121号

In China, subscriptions are available at any post office.

Subscription and distribution agency in Hong Kong, Macao, and Taiwan:  
Hong Kong Peace Book Company, Ltd.  
17/F, Paramount Building, 12 Ka Yip Street, Chai Wan, Hong Kong

Visit *China Pictorial* on the Internet:  
[www.china-pictorial.com.cn](http://www.china-pictorial.com.cn)

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## Express

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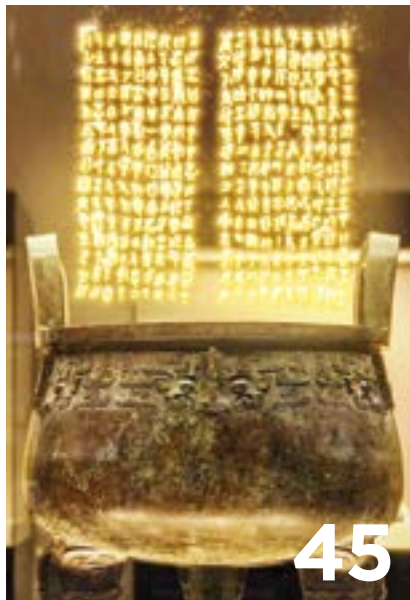
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## Cover Caption

Houmuwu square cauldron.  
(Photo by Guo Shasha/China Pictorial)





Astronaut Fei Junlong emerges from the return capsule of the Shenzhou-15 manned spaceship at the Dongfeng landing site in northern China's Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, June 4, 2023. (Photo by Li Yunxi)

Three Chinese astronauts onboard the Shenzhou-15 manned spaceship returned to Earth safely on June 4 after completing a six-month space station mission.

The return capsule carrying astronauts Fei Junlong, Deng Qingming, and Zhang Lu touched down at the Dongfeng landing site in northern China's Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region. The Shenzhou-15 crew, China's oldest mission crew in terms of average age, successfully completed four extravehicular activities, the most of all Chinese crews to date. The crew also witnessed completion of the country's space station construction.

China launched the Shenzhou-15 manned spaceship on November 29, 2022.

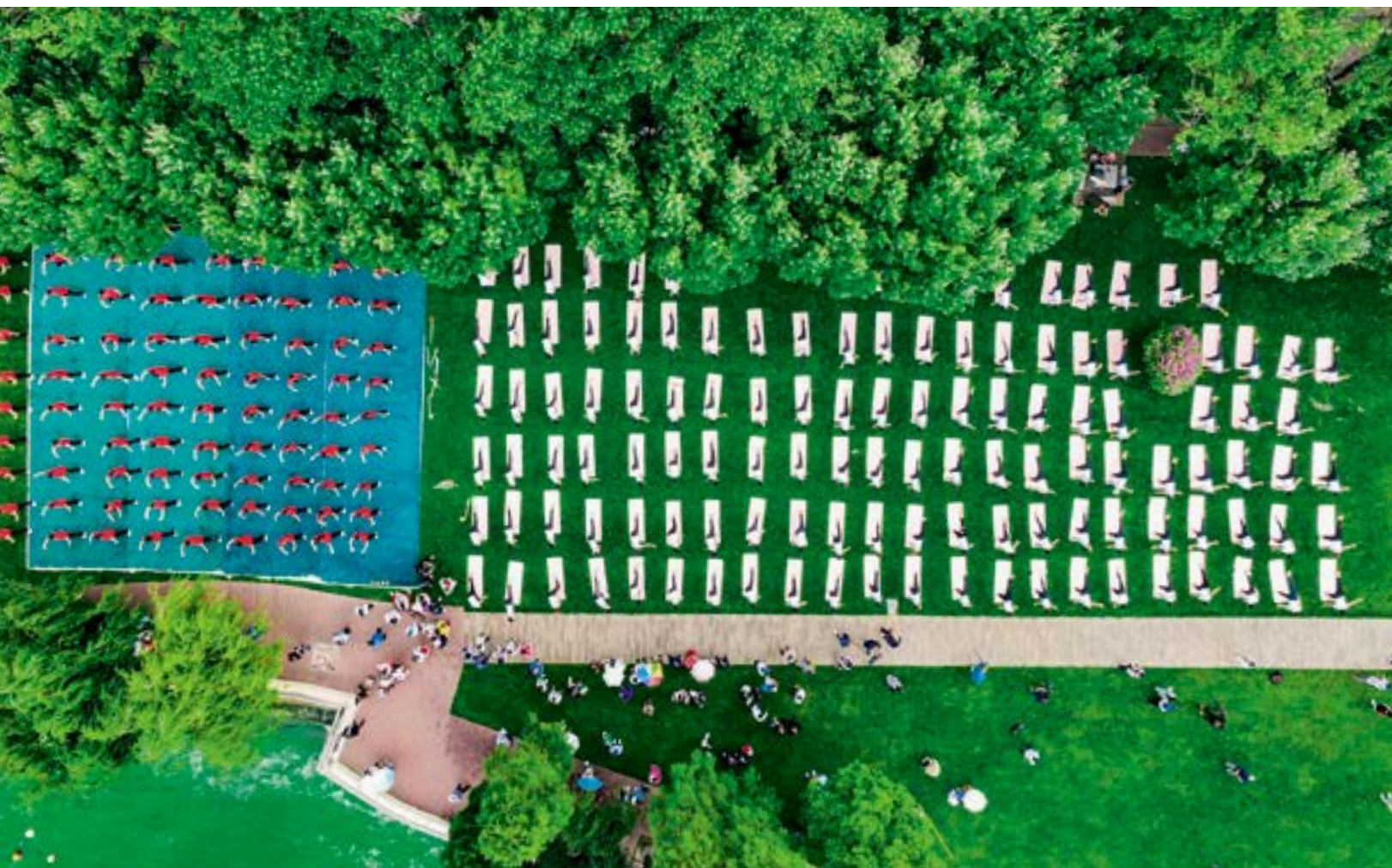
June 10 marks Cultural and Natural Heritage Day in China, and the theme this year is "Strengthening Protection of Intangible Cultural Heritage and Promoting Sustainable Development," aiming to raise public awareness and create a favorable social atmosphere for the protection of intangible cultural heritage.

China has 43 items on UNESCO's intangible cultural heritage lists, ranking first in the world. On June 9, a ceremony marking the 2023 Cultural and Natural Heritage Day was held in Beijing. Activities related to the protection of intangible cultural heritage were also held in various provinces including Jiangsu, Yunnan, and Guizhou.



Wedding boats row along the Grand Canal in the Nanxun Ancient Town, Huzhou City, eastern China's Zhejiang Province. A stretch of over 1,000 kilometers of the Grand Canal was declared a World Heritage site in 2014. (Photo by Zhang Bingzheng)





More than 100 students and teachers from Yunnan Minzu University give Tai Chi and yoga performances in Kunming, southwestern China's Yunnan Province, June 20, 2023. (Photo courtesy of Yunnan Minzu University)

Prior to the 9th International Day of Yoga, the 2023 International Yoga Day & China (Kunming) South Asian Culture and Art Week, China-India Cultural Exchange Events were held in Kunming, southwestern China's Yunnan Province, on June 20, 2023.

Themed "Openness, Integration, Innovation, and Development," the events aim to strengthen cultural exchange between China and India, enhance people-to-people ties and mutual learning between Yunnan Province and South Asian countries, and accelerate construction of Yunnan as a gateway to South Asia and Southeast Asia.

With its festival-like atmosphere and free-scoring, free-flowing action, a village soccer tournament in Rongjiang County, southwestern China's Guizhou Province, has captured the attention of fans, media, and even overseas stars.

Organized and played by locals, the amateur tournament has been dubbed Cun Chao, or Village Super League, by Chinese netizens. From May to July this year, 20 teams from Rongjiang County participated in Cun Chao, with matches played on Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays. The players hailed from diverse backgrounds. Vendors, farmers, tilers, butchers, and factory workers from a variety of ethnic groups including the Miao, Dong, Shui, Han, and Yao all laced up cleats for matches on weekends.

According to the local government, the average attendance of Cun Chao matches exceeded 10,000, ranking it near the country's top professional football league, the Chinese Super League.

Spectators watch a "Village Super League" football match in Rongjiang County, southwestern China's Guizhou Province, June 10, 2023. (Photo by Qu Honglun/China News Service)





# Chengdu: Where Phoenixes Soar

Text by Wang Yige

**This is a new *Tale of Two Cities*, where the phoenixes are soaring above China's southwest.**



The author is a research fellow and high-end foreign expert at Chengdu University, and former director of the Confucius Institute of the University of New Hampshire.

When Chengdu is mentioned, its hot pot and pandas instantly spring to many minds. However, as a city with over 3,000 years of rich history, Chengdu has much more to offer. After visiting the Giant Panda National Park and tasting the famous hot pot, visitors should venture deeper and discover places such as the Wuhou Shrine and the Thatched Cottage of Du Fu. If they venture a little deeper still, the gateway to a realm of poetry awaits.

Like many other historical metropolises, Chengdu has also experienced its share of triumphs and losses, heroes and cowards, love and sorrows, evoking images of past riverine verandas and the lingering fragrance of plum blossoms. In this revered poetic place, it is easy to envision Lu You, a Chinese poet from the Southern

Song Dynasty (1127-1279), strolling tipsily among rioting blossoms, or Du Fu, the sage poet of the Tang Dynasty (618-907), anxiously awaiting dawn after a night of spring rain, as he described in one of his poems: "Twilight illuminates the wet reds, and flowers cloak Brocade City." And don't forget Li Bai, a poet with celestial talent in the Tang Dynasty, whose exhilarating chants resounded from the lofty Flower Scattering Tower, where "its stairway leads into azure clouds where the distant view dissipates sorrow."

The poetic tradition of Chengdu is rich and vibrant. I thought I knew a lot about Chengdu after translating over a hundred classic poems for the book titled *Chengdu: The Land of Poetry and Abundance—One Hundred of the Most Beautiful Poems of Chengdu*. However, my perspective shifted when I began translating *The Compendium of*

*Chengdu*, one of the most important books about Chengdu from the late Qing Dynasty (1644-1911). It was like stepping into a time capsule from the late 1800s. Pushing open the creaking door of history, brushing away the dangling spider webs, and blowing off a thick layer of dust, I saw a different Chengdu—a less glamorous city filled with suffering and struggling with agony for change around the turn of the 20th century.

Historically, Chengdu owed its peace and abundance to two key factors. The first was the Dujiangyan Irrigation System built by Li Bing of the ancient Qin kingdom during the Warring States Period (475-221 B.C.). The irrigation system ensured a perpetual fragrance of bountiful rice permeating the vast Chengdu Plain, and the other was the Shu Pass of Jiange, an important passage in and out of the plain in ancient times. A well-known idiom perfectly captures its value: "A single soldier can guard the pass while a force of ten thousand strong laments." While the strategic terrain helped protect the Chengdu Plain from external invasions in the past, it also limited access to the outside world. In the early 1900s, Chengdu had fallen far behind the coastal regions of China. Lawless warlords, bandits, persistent famine, and continuous waves of refugees plagued the once-prosperous land. Its economy eventually became weak and malnourished. Local entrepreneurs and domestic workshops, if any, were ruthlessly crushed by an overwhelming influx of foreign goods arriving through the ports of southern China's Guangdong



Quanyechang Building (a market for local goods) was established in Chengdu, southwestern China's Sichuan Province, during the late Qing Dynasty (1644-1911). It marked the beginning of modern commerce in Sichuan and even southwestern China. (Photo courtesy of Centennial Chunxi Album)



Sichuan's history, culture and art can be found in Chengdu Wuhou Shrine Museum. (Photo courtesy of Chengdu Wuhou Shrine Museum)



By incorporating natural elements such as tiles and water, Zhi Art Museum near Chengdu City embodies the Eastern philosophy of "learning from nature" and integrates with its surrounding elements harmoniously. (Photo courtesy of Zhi Art Museum)



Province.


Change was necessary, and the resilient people of Chengdu again demonstrated their perseverance and tenacity. Instead of remaining idle or migrating elsewhere, they organized one of the earliest promotional markets for local goods in China and various vocational training centers aiming to protect and promote products made in Sichuan. And Chengdu took a broader approach by training the unemployed to be self-reliant.

Chengdu's economy took off in the 1970s. After over four decades of development, the city emerged as an economic hub in southwestern China, with a population exceeding 20 million people. No longer held back by its location, geography is what makes Chengdu an important hub of China's Belt and Road Initiative. Chengdu's culture, practices, and way of life have garnered praise from around

the world. For instance, an article from Chicago-based *PR Newswire* endorsed Chengdu's practice of sustainable development, while Hong Kong-based *South China Morning Post* named Chengdu one of the most fashionable cities. *The Daily Telegraph* of Britain even published an article titled "Chengdu: Discover a City Chock-full of Culture."

With interconnected zero-carbon concept parks and recreational areas stretching for miles, Chengdu has consistently been named one of the happiest cities in the world. Since 2018, more than 20,000 China-Europe freight trains carrying various goods and products have traveled between Chengdu and Europe. Now, with trains connecting to Laos as well, Chengdu is rapidly emerging as a new center for trade with Southeast Asian nations. From its desperate attempt to establish

a promotional market for local goods and vocational training centers in the late 1800s, Chengdu has come a long way to reclaim its former glory.

This is a new *Tale of Two Cities*, with phoenixes soaring above China's southwest. The legendary birds obtain new life by rising from the ashes of their predecessors. Since ancient times, they have been believed to descend and gracefully dance as a symbol of auspiciousness in China. The trees on which they tend to nestle and perch are therefore called phoenix trees, known for their vigorous growth. A line from the earliest collection of Chinese poems *The Book of Songs* goes: "The phoenix calls from the ridge yonder. Lush phoenix trees thrive, facing the rising sun." It is fitting that Chengdu has a mountain shaped like a phoenix spreading its wings, with numerous phoenix trees atop it. 



The Thatched Cottage of Du Fu is the former residence of Du Fu, a famous Chinese poet of the Tang Dynasty (618-907). He composed over 240 poems reflecting the misery of the poor people during his four-year stay in the thatched cottage. (Photo by Wang Fei)

## Demons in *Journey to the West*



In the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) fantasy novel *Journey to the West*, Buddhist monk Xuanzang and his three disciples endure many troubles brought by various demons with unique skills and powerful weapons during a pilgrimage. Among those "evil" characters are many with both real strength and distinctive personalities.

Although the novel features gods and demons, it ultimately shines light on the rules and philosophy of secular society in ancient times. Behind the personality of the demons are the social trends of thought at that time. Their yearning for mortal life reflects the voice of the times calling for the liberation of human nature.

*Chinese Heritage*  
June 2023

## Distance from History



In recent years, the publication of works on micro-history has become increasingly popular in China. These books differ from traditional works on grand history, and they are not magnificent biographies of heroes or celebrities, but focus on ordinary people who were unknown in history. Instead of narrating merits of emperors and generals, they are committed to exploring stories about "nobodies" in the past.

In fact, along the evolution of the study of history and historical works, this is a change from macro perspectives to specific ones. By focusing on the stories of specific historical figures, we gain new ways to approach history.

*Sanlian Life Week*  
June 12, 2023

## Here Comes Bill Gates



Not long after Elon Musk left, Bill Gates, co-chair of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, also came to China.

Bill Gates has visited China many times. He views China's success as an opportunity to promote global development. Unlike his fellow billionaire Elon Musk, Gates doesn't think going to Mars is all that important and chooses to focus on some pressing earthly problems like climate change.

"Solving problems like climate change, health inequity, and food insecurity requires innovation," posted Gates on Twitter before landing in Beijing. "From developing malaria drugs to investing in climate adaptation, China has a lot of experience in that. We need to unlock that kind of progress for more people around the world."

*China Newsweek*  
June 19, 2023

## Off the Phones



The mobile phone, a window to intelligent society that has evolved into a medium that engages people perpetually, functions as a life assistant and even an organ of the body while having become a black hole of time and a swamp of information.

Today, Chinese people spend an average of nearly five hours a day on their phones. According to a survey, only 19 percent of respondents could tolerate 72 hours away from their mobile phones. Instead of being online all the time, we should put down the phone to embrace real life, especially when human connections are needed more than ever.

*New Weekly*  
June 1, 2023



The National Museum of China not only showcases the inheritance and development of Chinese civilization, but also manifests the broader integration and mutual learning between civilizations.

# China on Display at the National Museum

Concept by China Pictorial

Visitors watch the Houmuwu square cauldron at an exhibition featuring ancient China at the National Museum of China. Weighing 832.84 kilograms, the cauldron is the biggest and heaviest bronze ritual vessel unearthed in the world so far, as well as a masterpiece of bronze culture from the Shang and Zhou dynasties (1600-256 B.C.). (Photo by Guo Shasha/China Pictorial)



Museums open windows. At the center of Beijing, the capital of China, is Tian'anmen Square, the largest city square in the world, and the magnificent structure standing east of it is the National Museum of China (NMC).

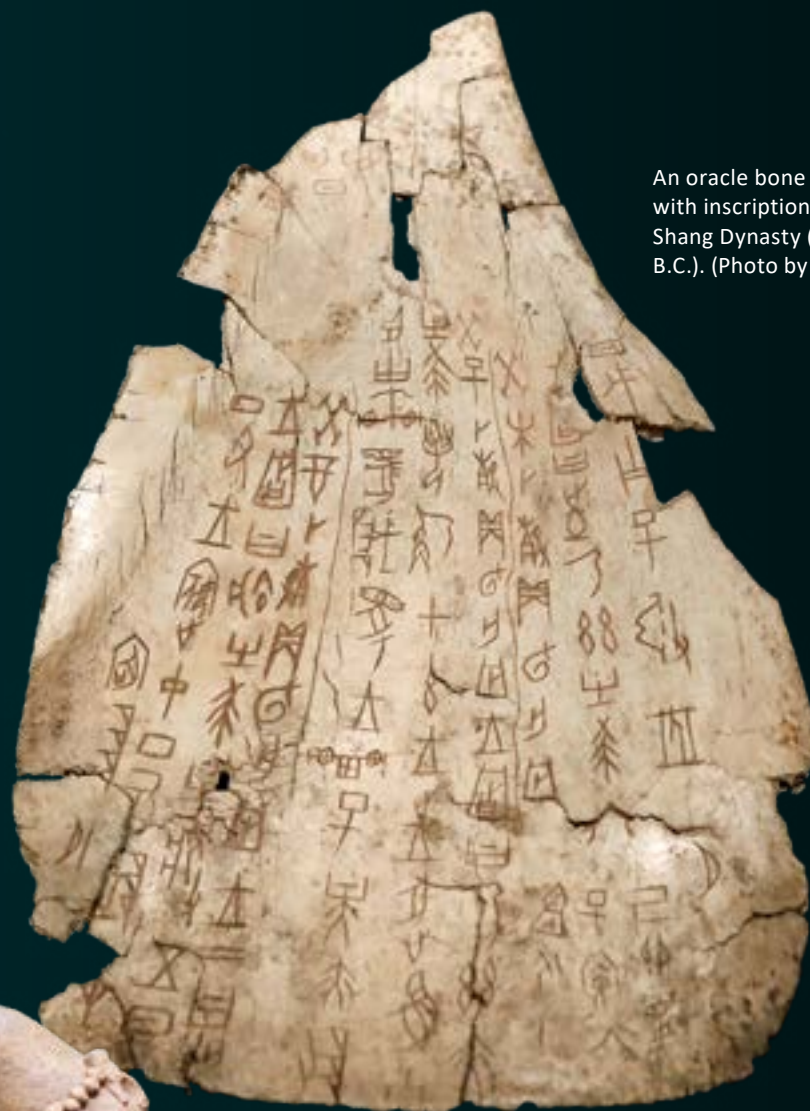
As China's most prestigious institution of history and culture, the NMC preserves the collective memory of the Chinese nation. It strives to record the nation's path of cultural development and document the revitalization and prosperity of the country throughout different historical periods—from the early days of Chinese civilization of slash-and-burn farming to the unified, inclusive and prosperous feudal dynasties and modern drives to resist invasion and oppression and secure national independence. Newer exhibits showcase the contemporary new look of the people as masters of the country and recent achievements on the road to national rejuvenation.

The NMC is also the “foyer” of the country and an important base of cultural exchange with other civilizations. It cooperates with museums around the globe to organize various international exchange events to promote the concept of respecting and cherishing the beauty of different civilizations through mutual learning. A magnificent palace to showcase human civilization, it has also sought out alliances with major international museums and organized the Global Museum Directors Forum to promote unity in cultural diversity.

At the NMC, one can see China's history, development, struggle, and future, as its director Wang Chunfa once said. EP



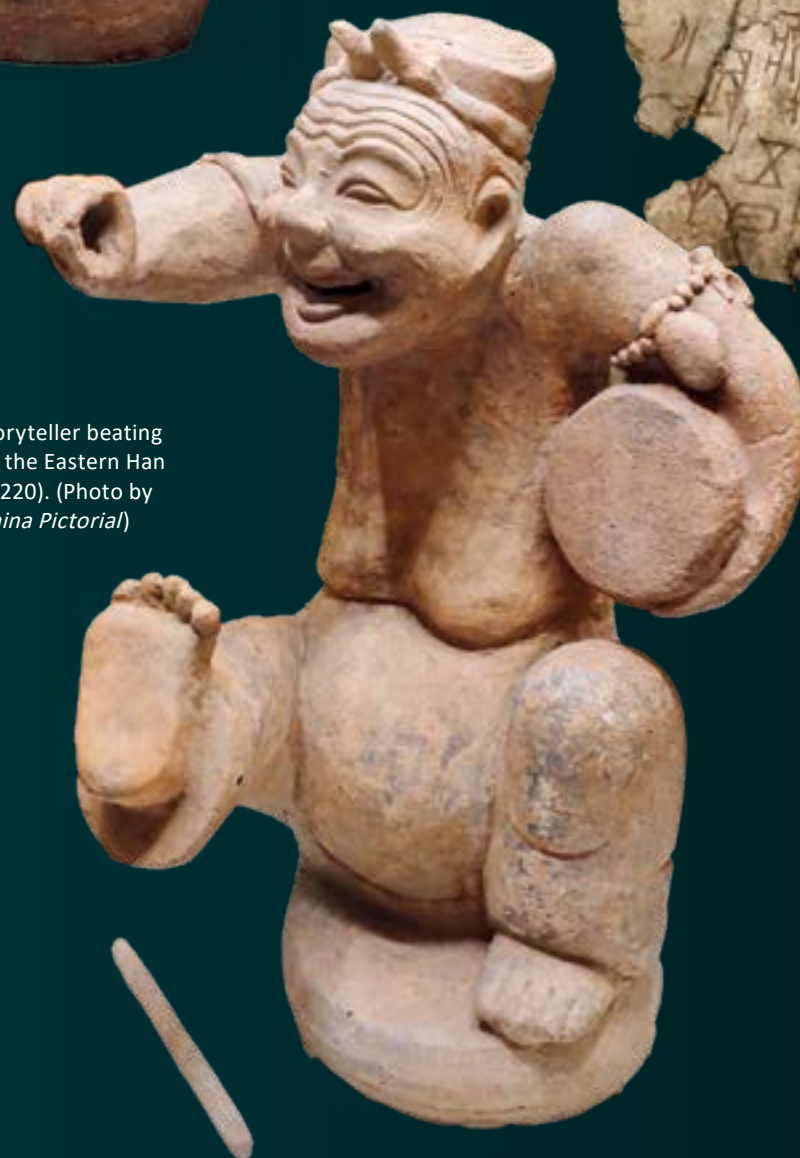
A pottery urn painted with stork, fish and stone axe patterns from the Neolithic Period. (Photo courtesy of the National Museum of China)



An oracle bone carved with inscriptions from the Shang Dynasty (1600-1046 B.C.). (Photo by Pu Feng)



The bronze rabbit head of the Old Summer Palace from the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911). (Photo by Guo Shasha/China Pictorial)



A pottery storyteller beating a drum from the Eastern Han Dynasty (25-220). (Photo by Chen Jian/China Pictorial)



A bronze rhinoceros-shaped zun (wine vessel) decorated with cloud patterns from the Western Han Dynasty (202 B.C.-8 A.D.). (Photo by Guo Shasha/China Pictorial)



# The Warehouse of Chinese Civilization

Text by Ren Hua

For 111 years, the National Museum of China has been chronicling the narrative of national rejuvenation and the revival of Chinese civilization.

As the first rays of the morning sun spill onto Tian'anmen Square, the National Museum of China (NMC) on the eastern side of the square awakens under the warm glow and prepares to embrace visitors

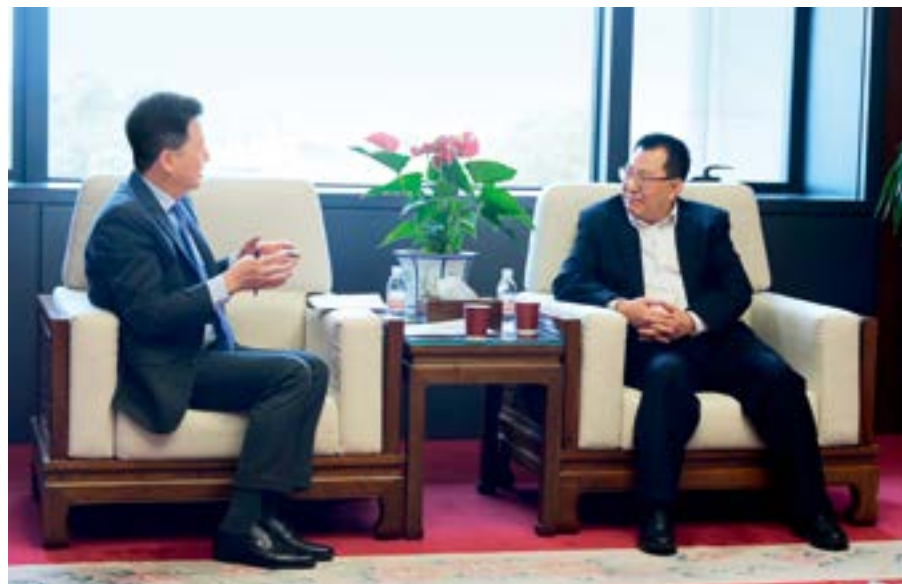
from all corners of the world.

The history of the NMC can be traced back to July 9, 1912, when the Preparatory Office of the National Museum of History was founded. Its current form took shape in 2003 through a merger of

the former National Museum of Chinese History and the National Museum of Chinese Revolution. It has endured a remarkable journey in 111 years while chronicling the narrative of national rejuvenation and the revival of Chinese civilization.

Colored terracotta warriors from the Western Han Dynasty (202 B.C.-8 A.D.), unearthed in Xianyang City, Shaanxi Province in 1965. They were arranged according to real army formations at that time. The terracotta warriors include over 1,800 infantry figurines, 580 cavalry figurines, and models of chariots. (Photo by Guo Shasha/China Pictorial)





Wang Chunfa (right), director of the National Museum of China (NMC), is interviewed by Jiang Yonggang (left), president of CICG Center for Europe and Asia (China Pictorial Publications), May 5, 2023. (Photo by Wan Quan/China Pictorial)

### Cultural Relics: Presenting an Integrated and Multifaceted Civilization

The NMC currently houses a collection of over 1.43 million artifacts as a vivid testament to the uninterrupted and glorious legacy of Chinese civilization spanning over 5,000 years.

“When it comes to museum operations, organizing exhibitions is still the most pivotal means of cultural communication,” said Wang Chunfa, director of the NMC. “How it plans exhibitions is the very essence of a museum.” In his view, only when cultural relics are incorporated into exhibitions can their historical, cultural, aesthetic, technological, and contemporary value be fully and accurately demonstrated. And displaying the artifacts to the public is the best way to tell the stories concealed within them.

“For a long time, the NMC has

endeavored to present the overall history of Chinese civilization spanning over 5,000 years and showcase the integrated and multifaceted essence of China’s fine traditional culture,” added Wang. The museum presents both permanent displays and temporary exhibitions. The permanent exhibitions include “Ancient China,” “The Road of Rejuvenation,” and “The Road of Rejuvenation: New Era,” as well as thematic exhibitions such as “Ancient Chinese Culture: Costume and Adornment,” “Ancient Chinese Porcelain Art,” and “Ancient Chinese Currency.” Temporary exhibitions usually focus on significant themes, historical and cultural narratives, archaeological discoveries, scientific and technological innovations, classical fine art, and international exchange. The permanent displays and thematic exhibitions highlight the

cohesiveness of Chinese culture while temporary exhibitions emphasize its multifaceted aspects, allowing for a balanced and comprehensive portrayal of the interconnectivity between tradition and modernity, between regional and central influences, and between tributaries and mainstream developments, as well as the relationship between history and culture.

Strolling the halls of the NMC leads to fluidly unfolding captivating scenes. Meticulously arranged and composed, a multitude of cultural relics create a majestic aura in the permanent displays while also providing a rich and varied tapestry for the temporary exhibitions. This combination adheres to a fundamental mission and internal logic: Tell stories through exquisite artifacts to kindle tangible evidence of history. Moreover, as the artifacts testify to history, they depict the inevitable convergence of countless historical currents.

### Digital Exhibitions: Optimizing Cultural Relics

Wang Chunfa believes that getting the most out of cultural relics requires bringing them out of store rooms, into exhibition halls, and onto displays, especially online displays.

He considers digital management of museums a breakthrough in terms of optimizing cultural relics, and emphasizes the need to digitize cultural resources on a large scale. Leveraging cutting-edge technologies like big data,



Attendees at the Global Museum Directors Forum, which opened at the NMC on April 11, 2019. Over 40 esteemed museum directors or representatives from 24 countries across five continents along with more than 50 museum directors and representatives from China exchanged views on functions and missions of museums along the Silk Road. (Photo courtesy of the NMC)

cloud computing, and artificial intelligence, efforts should be made to establish intelligent museums that foster open sharing of cultural heritage information to satisfy the diverse demands of the public in terms of research and appreciation. Regarding data acquisition, Wang has set standards: Three-dimensional data must be collected, collection must achieve an information loss rate less than 0.05 percent, and replication-level precision must be achieved. So far, the NMC has collected three-dimensional data for nearly 7,000 items in its

collection.

Since 2018, the NMC has been steadfast with its efforts to create online exhibitions, resulting in increasing attention. Many exhibitions have moved online, ensuring that they can show in perpetuity. According to incomplete statistics, in conjunction with the development of the “Smart NMC” initiative in recent years, the official website of the NMC has launched 76 virtual exhibition halls, set up over 140 exhibition-themed web pages, and created more than 50 short videos. The

NMC App, mini-programs, and smart guide systems have also made “NMC in the Cloud,” “NMC Online Exhibitions,” and “NMC Cloud Live” regular offerings.

### International Exchange: Mutual Learning Across Cultures

In 2019, the NMC hosted the Global Museum Directors Forum. This event brought together over 40 esteemed museum directors or representatives from 24 countries across five continents along with





The exhibition "Compilation of Classics in the Flourishing Age" opens at the NMC, September 29, 2022. With the help of images, text, and new media, 1,600 pieces of art and literature were displayed to comprehensively trace the development of ancient Chinese paintings over 2,000 years. (Photo courtesy of the NMC)

more than 50 museum directors and representatives from China. Together, they signed the *National Museums Consensus*. The consensus aimed to bolster high-level global dialogue among museums and paved the way for crucial agreements in areas such as collection acquisition, preservation, and collaborative research. The event exerted a profound impact on the international museum community.

The NMC remains committed to hosting foreign exhibitions and loaning its own collection around the world. According to Wang Chunfa, the NMC has not only organized diverse exhibitions in countries such as France, New Zealand, and Australia, but

has also welcomed exceptional exhibitions from overseas. Collaborative efforts with partner institutions have resulted in remarkable joint exhibitions. One noteworthy example was the highly acclaimed "A History of the World in 100 Objects" presented in 2017 in collaboration with the British Museum. The collaborative endeavor fostered a cherished and enduring memory of cultural exchange between China and Britain.

After the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, international cultural exchanges were severely disrupted. However, the NMC proactively sought avenues to overcome the challenges. It proposed the global online displaying activity "Hand

in Hand: Museum and Me." During a live broadcast, Wang Chunfa personally presented five remarkable treasures from the NMC's collection including an eagle-shaped pottery tripod, a painting of Fuxi and Nuwa, and a bronze figure model for acupuncture and moxibustion. The initiative garnered an enthusiastic response from 16 national museums across 15 countries in five continents. Through various online platforms, museum directors have showcased their own collection of treasures, giving viewers a captivating visual feast.

The NMC has pioneered advocacy to establish international organizations such as the BRICS Alliance of

Museums, the International Alliance of Museums of the Silk Road, and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization Museum Alliance. Under the leadership of Wang Chunfa, the NMC has realized fruitful achievements in high-level international exchange. "Guided by President Xi Jinping's call to champion the common values of humanity in the Global Civilization Initiative, the NMC's international exchange has been a collaborative endeavor with its peers worldwide, aiming to achieve a more precise understanding of broader human history," said Wang. "In essence, it is an appreciation of beauty and a pursuit of goodness." 



Visitors inspect porcelains displayed at the exhibition "Ancient Chinese Porcelain Art" in the NMC, May 6, 2023. The production of porcelains was first introduced to the world by China. (Photo by Duan Wei/China Pictorial)

A visitor at an exhibition titled "Self-Portrait Masterpieces from Uffizi Galleries Collections" at the NMC, May 6, 2023. The exhibition was presented by the museum in partnership with the Italian Embassy in China and the Uffizi Galleries. (Photo by Duan Wei/China Pictorial)





# Cultural Relics: Glimpses Across Millennia

Edited by Mo Qian and Zhang Jingwen

**The genetic code of Chinese civilization is embedded in the cultural treasures of each era.**

The Four-goat Square Zun (wine vessel) displayed in the permanent exhibition "Ancient China" at the National Museum of China (NMC). (Photo by Guo Shasha/China Pictorial)

Cultural relics embody the splendor of civilizations, preserve the heritage of

historical culture, and sustain the essence of each nation. The genetic code of Chinese civilization is embedded in each precious artifact of the nation.

The National Museum of China (NMC) boasts a remarkable collection of over 1.43 million artifacts, exhibiting a rich diversity and unparalleled excellence.

They include some 815,000 ancient relics, 340,000 modern and contemporary artifacts, and over 240,000 volumes of ancient books and manuscripts. These treasures serve as a testament to the unending flow and continuous evolution of Chinese civilization and showcase magnificent inclusiveness. Notably, the collection features more than 6,000 first-grade cultural relics, representing

a tangible embodiment of China's esteemed traditional, revolutionary, and socialist cultures.

The exquisite collection of cultural relics on display tracks the enduring heritage of China over five millennia, the tireless struggles of the Chinese people over the past 180 years, the challenging explorations in more than 70 years since the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, particularly the reform and opening-up efforts over the past four decades, and the fortitude and hard work in the new era. This captivating assortment profoundly captures the balanced relations between the past and the present, between the tributaries and the mainstream, and between history and culture. Within these artifacts, one can discern the perseverance and courage of the Chinese nation. These artifacts also serve as a reminder of the original aspiration and mission of the Communist Party of China (CPC), which remains dedicated to the well-being of the people and the rejuvenation of the nation.

As visitors meander in the museum, they will be bathed in the profound cultural heritage and relentless pursuits that define the Chinese nation. The perpetual vitality and immense depth of Chinese civilization can be felt there, resonating with the indomitable spirit of its people. Through the treasures showcased in the NMC, one can gain an understanding of China.



## PRESERVING AND SHOWCASING CHINA'S TRADITIONAL CULTURE

The splendid tapestry of Chinese civilization, rising from multiple origins, illuminates the vast land of China. The evolution of means of production has brought about changes of the times, and intricately crafted ceremonial artifacts bear witness to the zeniths of many dynasties. A diverse array of cultural relics from various ethnic groups, displaying a harmonious blend of vibrant uniqueness and converging styles, serves as a testament to the collective journey of the Chinese nation. Historical cross-cultural exchange between the East and the West gave rise to magnificent artistic milestones. Within the NMC, the flames of China's esteemed traditional culture burn brightly, with its legacy carried forward from one generation to another.

A bronze vessel displayed in the permanent exhibition "Ancient China" at the NMC. (Photo by Guo Shasha/China Pictorial)

## An Ancient and Illustrious Civilization Spanning the Ages

The NMC houses the meticulously carved "First Dragon of China" from the Hongshan Culture, China's best-known Neolithic culture which dates back 5,000 to 6,500 years, the majestic Houmuwu *Ding* (cooking vessel) of the late Shang Dynasty (1600-1046 B.C.), the "Li" Bronze *Gui* (ritual vessel) that records King Wu of Zhou's conquest over the Shang Dynasty, the vivid Pottery Storyteller Beating a Drum of the Eastern Han Dynasty (25-220), a vibrant tricolored glazed pottery camel with musicians of the Tang Dynasty (618-907), and captivating porcelains, calligraphy, and rare ancient books from the Song (960-1279), Yuan (1271-1368), Ming (1368-1644), and Qing (1644-1911) dynasties. The plethora of archaeological artifacts and literary documents unearthed or preserved, like shimmering pearls, string together the narrative of Chinese civilization's development, radiating the brilliance and profundity of Chinese culture.



A visitor examines a painted pottery jar carved with a nude figure from the Majiayao Culture of the Neolithic Age, which was unearthed from Qinghai Province in 1974. (Photo by Xiao Jiang)

A painted pottery basin with fish and human face designs from the Yangshao Culture of the Neolithic Age, unearthed from Shaanxi Province in 1955. (Photo by Xiao Jiang)



A father and his son watch the "Zilong" bronze tripod from the Shang Dynasty, displayed in the permanent exhibition "Ancient China" at the NMC. (Photo by Guo Shasha/China Pictorial)





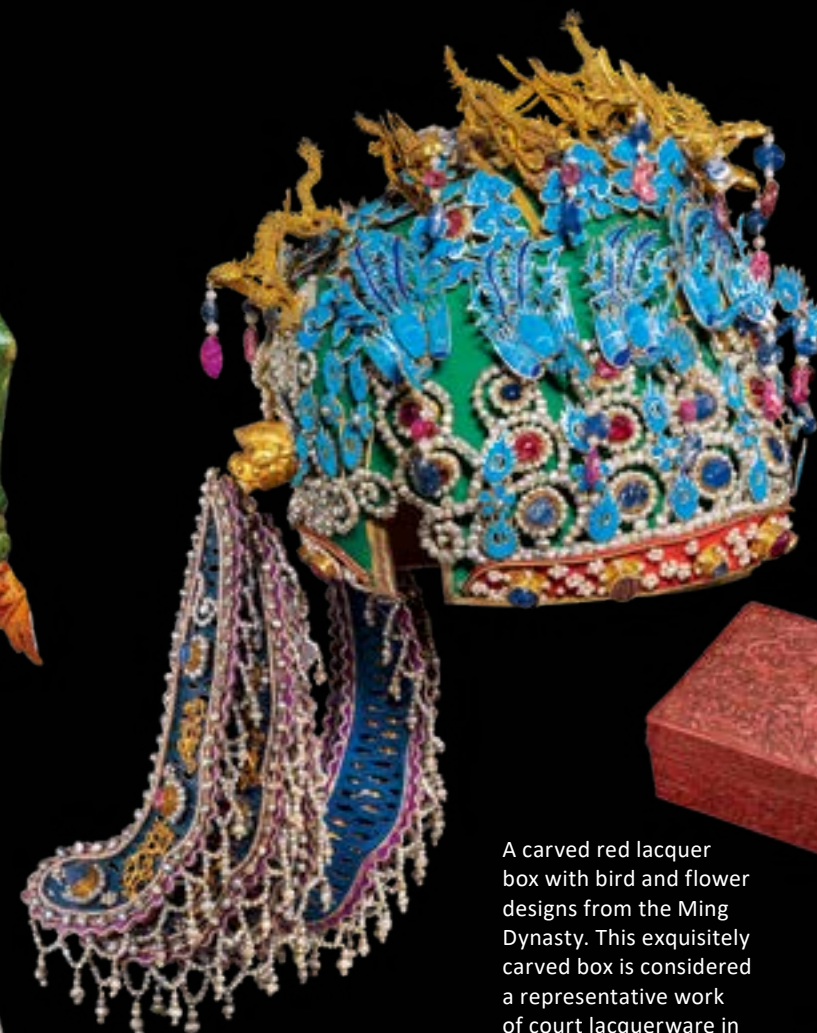
A set of jade pendants from the early Warring States Period (475-221 B.C.), unearthed from Henan Province in 1955. (Photo courtesy of the NMC)



Terracotta horses and figurines from the Qin Dynasty (221-207 B.C.) in the permanent exhibition "Ancient China" at the NMC, which were unearthed from Shaanxi Province in 1974. (Photo by Xiao Jiang)



A female figurine of tricolored glazed pottery of the Tang Dynasty, unearthed from Shaanxi Province in 1957. (Photo courtesy of the NMC)



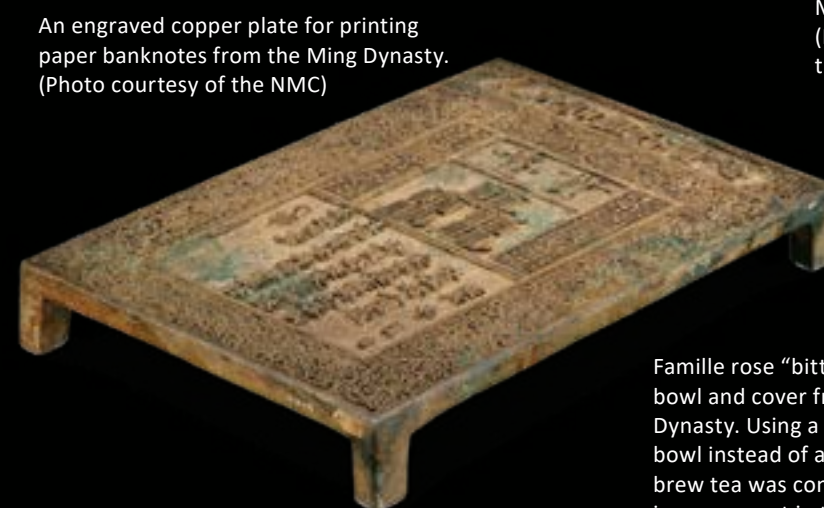
Phoenix crown worn by Empress Xiaoduan of the Ming Dynasty, unearthed in Beijing in 1957. (Photo courtesy of the NMC)



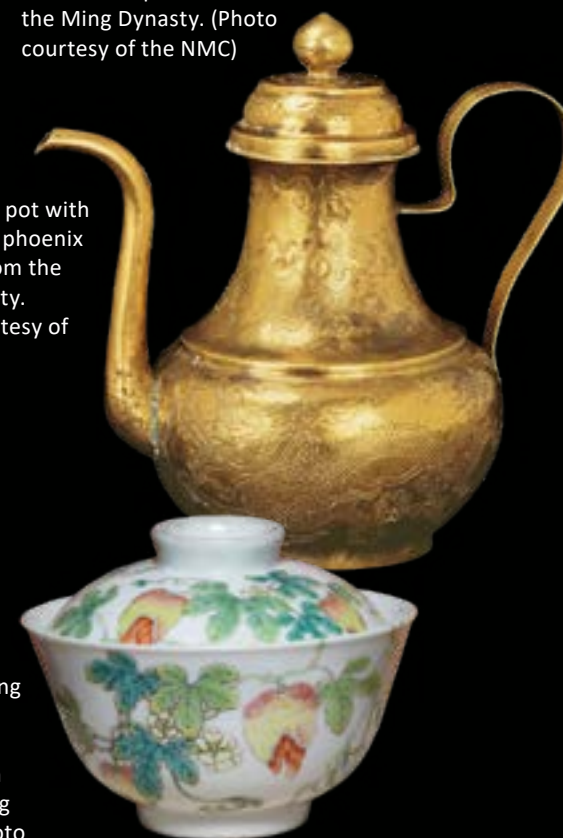
A carved red lacquer box with bird and flower designs from the Ming Dynasty. This exquisitely carved box is considered a representative work of court lacquerware in the Ming Dynasty. (Photo courtesy of the NMC)



A bronze cowry shell container with the scene of a sacrificial ceremony (part) from the Western Han Dynasty, unearthed from Yunnan Province in the 1950s. (Photo by Guo Shasha/China Pictorial)



An engraved copper plate for printing paper banknotes from the Ming Dynasty. (Photo courtesy of the NMC)



A gold wine pot with dragon and phoenix patterns from the Ming Dynasty. (Photo courtesy of the NMC)

Famille rose "bitter melon" bowl and cover from the Qing Dynasty. Using a covered bowl instead of a teapot to brew tea was considered an improvement in tea-drinking tableware at that time. (Photo courtesy of the NMC)





A gilt bronze mirror with Chinese characters such as “Zhongguo Daning” (meaning “Universal Peace in China”) from the Xin Dynasty (9-25), radiating wishes for national unification, stability, and prosperity. (Photo courtesy of the NMC)



A bronze head in the permanent exhibition “Ancient China” at the NMC, unearthed from the Sanxingdui Ruins in Sichuan Province in 1986. (Photo by Guo Shasha/*China Pictorial*)



A green-glazed porcelain flask with cloud and dragon designs from the Liao Dynasty. (Photo courtesy of the NMC)

### The Chinese Nation: Harmony in Diversity

The NMC also holds the Bronze Water Container with Three Wheels of the Spring and Autumn Period (770-476 B.C.), the Gold Seal for King of Dian Kingdom of the Western Han Dynasty (202 B.C.-8 A.D.), the miniature stone stele by Master Zhenghui commemorating a pagoda dating to the Liao Dynasty (907-1125), engraved edicts from the Western Xia Dynasty (1038-1227), the book *Hundred Family Surnames* written in the Phags-pa script during the Yuan Dynasty, and the scroll painting *Pacification of the Dzungars* from the Qing Dynasty. Each artifact serves as a tangible reflection of the multifaceted development of the Chinese nation. They vividly demonstrate that China’s vast homeland, enduring history, resplendent culture and great national spirit are attributed to collective efforts of all ethnic groups in the country.



Tricolored glazed pottery of a camel and a dancing group in the permanent exhibition “Ancient China” at the NMC. (Photo by Qin Bin/*China Pictorial*)



An oval green glass bottle of the Sui Dynasty (581-618), unearthed from Shaanxi Province. (Photo courtesy of the NMC)

### Inclusiveness of Chinese Civilization

From the tricolored glazed pottery camel with musicians from the Tang Dynasty, glassware made using Western techniques to a stone Buddha plinth inscribed by esteemed Chinese monk Xuanzang, each artifact evokes a profound appreciation of the prosperity and harmony along the Silk Road and the remarkable cultural inclusiveness of Chinese civilization. These treasures provide tangible evidence that the thriving development of Chinese culture owes much to exchange and mutual enrichment among civilizations. They also exemplify the Chinese nation’s belief in equality, mutual learning, dialogue, and inclusiveness within the realm of civilization.



A colored cloisonné bowl with a high foot from the Ming Dynasty. (Photo courtesy of the NMC)





## EXHIBITING GENES OF REVOLUTIONS

Exhibits from modern times testify to major events such as burning opium at Humen Beach in Guangdong Province in 1839, the Jintian Uprising of 1851, the Boxer Rebellion of 1900, the relentless pursuit of revolutionary efforts since the Revolution of 1911, the resounding call by the revolutionary magazine *New Youth* (printed from 1915 to 1926), the birth of the CPC in 1921, the revolutionary spark ignited at Jinggangshan Mountains, and the unyielding spirit during the Chinese People's War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression (1931-1945). Within the halls of the NMC is a vibrant portrayal of the history of China's revolutionary culture.



Visitors enjoy a painting at an exhibition titled "Stand in the East: An Exhibition of Classic Fine Art Works Collected in the National Museum of China," February 12, 2021. (Photo by Xu Xun/*China Pictorial*)



Memorial to the throne on completing the destruction of opium at Humen Beach by Lin Zexu, Deng Tingzhen, and others. (Photo courtesy of the NMC)



*The Min Bao*, a revolutionary newspaper in China, founded in November 1905. In the inaugural article of the newspaper, Sun Yat-sen summarized the revolutionary principles of the Tongmenghui (the United League of China) as nationalism, democracy, and people's livelihood, collectively known as the "Three Principles of the People." (Photo courtesy of the NMC)



Manuscript of *International Military Tribunal for the Far East: Judgment* (in English), 1946-1948. The judgment provided strong evidence for the trials of the International Military Tribunal for the Far East. (Photo courtesy of the NMC)



The article "Carry the Revolution through to the End" written by Mao Zedong in 1949. With the triumphant progress of the Chinese People's War of Liberation, Mao Zedong published the article to rally the entire nation to advance the Chinese revolution to its ultimate victory. (Photo courtesy of the NMC)



A gunpowder keg used by the Qing army at the Humen Fort to resist the invading British army during the First Opium War. (Photo by Dong Fang/*China Pictorial*)

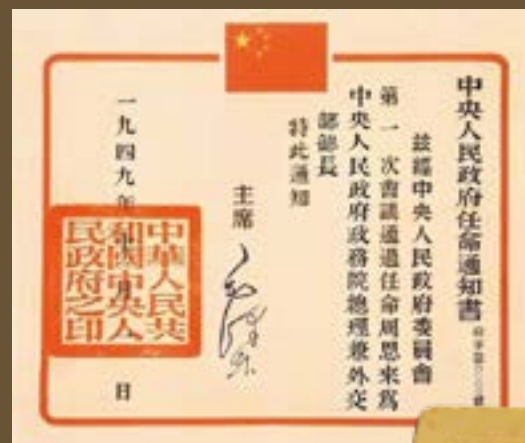


*Liberation of Beiping*, a colored traditional Chinese painting created by Ye Qianyu in 1959. This work portrays the scene of local people welcoming the People's Liberation Army entering Beiping (now known as Beijing). (Photo by Xu Xun/*China Pictorial*)



## SHOWCASING SOCIALIST CULTURE AND CHRONICLING THE NEW ERA OF NATIONAL REJUVENATION

From the resolute fervor of the Chinese people captured in the oil painting *Founding Ceremony of the People's Republic of China* to establishing socialism as China's basic system, from pursuit of a path of socialism with Chinese characteristics through reform and opening up to the tremendous transformation from growing prosperous to becoming strong, the NMC is chronicling the dynamic process of national rejuvenation under the guiding principles of socialist culture. CP



The seal of the central people's government of the People's Republic of China, 1949.  
(Photo by Xu Xun/China Pictorial)



Stationery used to sign the legal documents for China's accession to the World Trade Organization (WTO). On November 11, 2001, the signing ceremony for China's accession to the WTO was held in Doha, capital of Qatar. (Photo courtesy of the NMC)



A *fou* (earthen jar) drum used in the opening ceremony of the 2008 Beijing Olympics, at which a total of 2,008 performers played such drums to herald the opening of the Beijing Olympics. (Photo courtesy of the NMC)



The re-entry capsule of the Shenzhou-5 manned spaceship. In 2003, China became the third country in the world to achieve a manned spaceflight with the completion of the Shenzhou-5 mission. (Photo courtesy of the NMC)



An exhibition of achievements in China's manned space program across 30 years at the NMC in Beijing attracts many visitors, May 9, 2023. (Photo by Dong Fang/China Pictorial)



Visitors enjoy an exhibition titled “Totale Italia: Origins of a Nation,” which kicked off at the National Museum of China on July 10, 2022. (Photo courtesy of the National Museum of China)

# Sharing World History

Text by Zhou Chenliang

Seeing the British Museum’s “Queen’s Harp” collection in person and appreciating the trans-Atlantic civilization is a bucket-list-worthy experience for history and museum aficionados in China.



Museums, bastions of cultural relics, are the main channel of exchange and mutual learning among civilizations, and they contribute greatly to human progress and global peace. The National Museum of China (NMC), nicknamed China's "cultural lounge," operates as a prestigious window to showcase the charm of Chinese civilization and spread the achievements of world civilization.

### Expanding Networking

In April 2019, the NMC initiated the Global Museum Directors Forum as a high-end dialogue mechanism aligned with the Belt and Road Initiative and signed the *National Museums Consensus* with museums from more than 20 countries. In July 2022, the second Global Museum Directors Forum took place online and offline, themed "Challenge and Persistence: Museum's Responsibilities of the Times." At that event, 55 museum directors and representatives from 26 countries exchanged insights and experience.

Today, the NMC is partnering with nearly 100 foreign museums. It actively works with the Shanghai Cooperation Organization Museum Alliance, the International Alliance of Museums of the Silk Road, and the BRICS Alliance of Museums and regularly carries out exhibition exchanges and talks with its counterparts in Japan, South Korea, and other countries. And the NMC's participation in global governance has expanded thanks



Italian Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte (third right) poses with others at "The Journey Back Home: An Exhibition of Chinese Artifacts Repatriated from Italy" at the National Museum of China, April 28, 2019. (Photo courtesy of the National Museum of China)



Ecuadorian President Lenín Boltaire Moreno Garcés enjoys exhibits at the National Museum of China with others from the visiting Ecuadorian delegation, December 12, 2018. (Photo courtesy of the National Museum of China)

to active involvement in activities sponsored by international organizations such as UNESCO and the International Council of Museums.

### Global Perspective

In September 2020, the

NMC joined 15 global partners to organize the "Treasure Hunt Relay: Global Museum Director's Choice" project, themed "Hand in Hand: Museum and Me." Directors of the prestigious museums presented selected cultural relics in person to the global audience during the

livestreamed event.

In July 2022, the NMC partnered with nine top domestic museums and 24 leading foreign museums to launch the Season II of "Treasure Hunt Relay: Global Museum Director's Choice" online, themed "Hand in Hand: Share the Splendor of World Civilizations." Domestic museum directors joined hands to effectively tell Chinese stories to the world, and in partnership with their counterparts at international museums, they showcased the splendid achievements of human civilization by displaying nearly 150 rare cultural relics and promoted a civilizational outlook featuring equality, mutual learning, dialogue, and inclusiveness.

As the first stop of the online relay, the NMC presented a



Poster for Season II of "Treasure Hunt Relay: Global Museum Director's Choice," jointly held by the National Museum of China and 33 domestic and foreign museums from July 6 to 11, 2022. The event showcased the splendid achievements of human civilization by displaying nearly 150 rare cultural relics. (Photo courtesy of the National Museum of China)

livestream themed "A Glimpse into China: Demystifying the Genetic Codes of Chinese Civilization Through Words." Five selected collections were presented via digital technology,

8K photography, and animation technology, vividly showcasing the historical, cultural, aesthetic, and technological value of those cultural relics as well as their significance for the new era.



The National Museum of China joined 15 global partners to launch the "Treasure Hunt Relay: Global Museum Director's Choice" project, themed "Hand in Hand: Museum and Me," on September 6, 2020. This is a poster for the event. (Photo courtesy of the National Museum of China)





Cultural relics displayed at an exhibition titled "The Splendor of Asia: An Exhibition of Asian Civilizations," which kicked off at the National Museum of China on May 13, 2019. (Photos courtesy of the National Museum of China)



A stupa-shaped container of relics of the Buddha (top), a figurine pottery (middle) and a multi-ear vase, among other international exhibits displayed at the National Museum of China. (Photos courtesy of the National Museum of China)



A green-glazed rhyton featuring the face of Hercules in the middle and topped with a double-ear vase. (Photo courtesy of the National Museum of China)

Cultural relics displayed at an exhibition titled "Sharing a Common Future: Exhibition of Treasures from National Museums along the Silk Road," which kicked off at the National Museum of China on April 11, 2019. (Photo courtesy of the National Museum of China)



Weary Hercules. (Photo courtesy of the National Museum of China)

## Cross-border Displays

The NMC also promotes cross-border displays of cultural relics and sends its collections abroad to be shown in Musée du Quai Branly, the Museum of New Zealand, and other museums, while bringing excellent foreign exhibitions to China. Seeing the British Museum's "Queen's Harp" collection in person and appreciating the trans-Atlantic civilization is a

bucket-list-worthy experience for history and museum aficionados in China.

To commemorate its 110th anniversary in 2022, the NMC launched important exhibitions dedicated to international exchange via innovative technological methods such as online handover. At the exhibition titled "Tota Italia: Origins of a Nation," for instance, visitors can enjoy precious cultural relics from the Apennine Peninsula including bronzes, sculptures,

pottery, and coins, which tell the story of blended civilizations with an ancient vibe and humid atmosphere of marine civilization.

"Nothing, not even mountains and oceans, can separate people with shared goals and vision." The NMC is adhering to its new mission to showcase brilliant Chinese civilization and work with global counterparts to celebrate flourishing civilizations. CP

An immersive light-and-shadow show featuring Renaissance paintings, sculptures, and other treasures from the Uffizi Galleries' collection. It is part of an exhibition titled "Self-Portrait Masterpieces from the Uffizi Galleries Collections," which opened to the public at the National Museum of China on April 27, 2023. (Photo by Dong Fang/China Pictorial)





# Museum Across Time and Space

Text by Tian Xiao

Dialogues across time and space are happening in new ways at the National Museum of China.

The inner inscriptions of the Great Yu Tripod are presented by the National Museum of China in a livestream themed “A Glimpse into China: Demystifying the Genetic Codes of Chinese Civilization Through Words” with the support of 8K photography, as part of the Season II of “Treasure Hunt Relay: Global Museum Director’s Choice” in July 2022. (Photo courtesy of the National Museum of China)



In May 2023, the National Museum of China (NMC) launched its first original stage play, *Joyful Songs in a Flourishing Age*, as part of a project seeking to revitalize cultural relics. Inspired by the Pottery Storyteller Beating a Drum, a piece in the NMC’s collection from the Eastern Han Dynasty (25-220), the play presented a fantasy “dialogue” between the cultural relic and the audience while integrating art forms such as drama, musical, opera, dance, and poetry. Dialogues across time and space are happening in new ways at the NMC.

## Living up Cultural Relics

Visitors are often stunned by the bronze exhibits from the Xia, Shang, and Zhou dynasties (2100-256 B.C.) displayed in the “Ancient China” exhibition hall of the NMC, marveling at the wisdom and glory of ancient Chinese civilization. When the NMC acquired a bronze paired *yi* (a ritual wine vessel) in 1977, it highlighted that one side of the square groove was covered with cracks, and the left edge was partially missing. To assess the overall status of the cultural relic, researchers from the NMC used scientific methods such as X-ray imaging to analyze its





Researchers from the National Museum of China used scientific methods such as X-ray imaging to analyze the best historical restoration path and rust types of a bronze paired *yi* (a ritual wine vessel). Their work revealed the chemical composition and distribution of the repair materials and rusts, laying a scientific basis for further protection. (Photos courtesy of the National Museum of China)

historical restoration and rust types, and revealed the chemical composition and distribution of the repair materials and rusts, laying a scientific basis for further protection.

Today, the NMC employs an elite team of experts in detecting, researching, protecting, restoring, and reproducing cultural relics. It protects important Chinese cultural relics with exquisite skills and advanced technologies while inheriting tradition and fostering innovation.



Sikaomu *Jia* (a wine vessel). The National Museum of China has restored and replicated many precious ancient bronze wares over the years. (Photos courtesy of the National Museum of China)

### Creative Cultural Relics

The fun of immersive archaeology and the blessings for global peace radiate from the NMC's cultural and creative products such as chocolates and incense burners shaped like the Four-Goat Square *Zun* (wine vessel) and the Haiyan Heqing *Zun*, respectively. And collectible cards featuring images of the museum's cultural relics have been quite popular with visitors.

"A museum can move people with rich cultural heritage," said Zhu Xiaoyun, deputy director of the NMC's Sales and Development Department. "Cultural and creative products

can bridge potential gaps and help visitors relate to hidden culture."

A kaleidoscope of creative products themed on cultural relics collected in the museum help connect the NMC with the public, kindle cultural memories, and spread Chinese stories.

### Educational Purposes

"Exhibitions at the NMC helped me understand China's progress from poverty to prosperity and the ups and downs of the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation," said Gong Yuying, a primary school student from Beijing's Pinggu District. "I am quite confident that China's

future looks rosy."

The continuous development of China's public cultural undertakings has inspired museums to meet increasingly diversified and individualized social education needs. "Every citizen in modern society must have certain scientific and cultural knowledge," said Wang Chunfa, director of the NMC. "Schools are the main contributors in this regard but off-campus education is also gaining momentum, echoing the popular concept of lifelong learning. Museums have become an important channel of off-campus education."



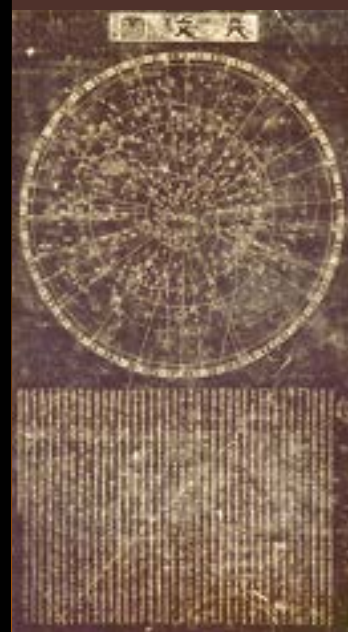
Visitors gather at the entrance of the "Ancient China" exhibition hall at the National Museum of China, May 5, 2023. (Photo by Chen Jian/*China Pictorial*)



Previously, an affable museum guide was a central facet of the memories of visitors to the NMC. Today, the museum has formed a diverse social education system integrating offline explanations, smart tour guides, museum-school cooperation, and voluntary services. The NMC



A creative calendar (above) featuring cultural relics at the National Museum of China, including the painted wooden statue of Guanyin Bodhisattva from the Song Dynasty (960-1279). (Photos courtesy of the National Museum of China)



Tablet inscriptions of an astronomical map in the Southern Song Dynasty (1127-1279) (above) and a creative product featuring a night lamp with stars changing in positions. (Photos courtesy of the National Museum of China)

is performing like a university, seeking to impart knowledge and inspire wisdom through history.

### Digital Development

So far, the NMC has developed 76 virtual exhibition halls, more than 140 themed web pages, and over 50 short videos.

Visitors can enjoy cultural relics and boutique exhibitions online, which have helped millions of people taste the charm of Chinese culture without the need to leave their homes.

Since 2018, the NMC has been moving towards construction of a smart museum via cutting-edge information technologies covering fields such as relics protection, management,



Creative ice cream shaped like the Four-Goat Square Zun (wine vessel) and the Pottery Storyteller Beating a Drum (right), among the cultural relics housed at the National Museum of China. (Photos by Duan Wei/China Pictorial)



The Four-Goat Square Zun (wine vessel) and the Pottery Storyteller Beating a Drum (right). (Photos by Chen Jian/China Pictorial)

exhibitions, and other services. By doing so, it seeks to achieve acute perception, ubiquitous interconnection, intelligent integration, autonomous learning, and iterative improvement.

In 2022, the NMC partnered with 33 domestic and foreign museums to launch the program "Treasure Hunt Relay: Global

Museum Director's Choice." The NMC's special exhibition under the program presented visitors an immersive experience thanks to digital technology, 8K photography, and a high-definition presentation, allowing them to understand the important role of Chinese characters in Chinese civilization

across more than 5,000 years and the exchange and mutual learning among world civilizations.

In the future, the NMC will introduce smart exhibition halls to let visitors witness how its staff collect data on cultural relics and monitor their status to better appreciate the diverse display of cultural relics.



The inner inscriptions of the Great Yu Tripod consist of 291 characters in 19 lines, showcasing the artistic calligraphy of the early Western Zhou Dynasty (1046-771 B.C.). (Photo courtesy of the National Museum of China)



# The Beauty of Traditional Chinese Clothing

Text by Gong Haiying

Traditional Chinese clothing exemplifies rich cultural heritage while expressing the aesthetic and philosophical essence of Chinese civilization.

Yuanmingyuan Park in Beijing, the main venue for a series of activities celebrating the 5th Chinese National Costume Day, April 22, 2023.

*H*ua fu, or traditional Chinese clothing, not only represents the essence of classical Chinese aesthetics but also contains profound philosophical ideas rooted in Chinese culture. It

embodies a concept that reveres nature and adheres to the principles of the heaven as well as a moral code that emphasizes integrity and upright conduct.

Activities to celebrate the 5th Chinese National Costume

Day (which falls on the third day of the third lunar month every year) were jointly organized in various places including Beijing, Shandong Province, Jiangsu Province, and Hunan Province from April 22 to 23, attracting



a multitude of *huafu* enthusiasts who immersed themselves in the beauty of traditional Chinese attire and delved deep into the allure of China's rich cultural heritage.

"This is my first time wearing *huafu*, and it feels quite intriguing," said Quan Jingyi, a reporter from *China Pictorial*. "The final effect exceeded my expectations, and I was surprised by how beautiful and captivating it looked." On the afternoon of April 22, Quan visited Yuanmingyuan Park, also known as the Old Summer Palace, the venue for the Chinese National

Costume Day celebrations in Beijing. With the help of a makeup artist, she donned a strikingly red *huafu* that accentuated her facial features and complemented her sleek, short hair, resulting in a remarkable display of elegance and confidence. Her appearance attracted considerable attention from visitors seeking a picture with her. "Actually, the round-collar robe I'm wearing is a traditional attire for men in the style of the Tang Dynasty (618-907), and it happens to align well with my hairstyle and overall demeanor," she beamed.

The main venue in Beijing featured four distinct exhibition areas: "Traditional Costumes," "Interactive Experience," "Cultural Performances," and "Cultural Lectures." The "Traditional Costumes" section presented a captivating display of traditional garments and accessories. With the help of traditional Chinese makeup and recreated street scenes, visitors could try *huafu* and immerse themselves in the resplendent atmosphere of ancient China. In the "Interactive Experience" section, *huafu* enthusiasts

Qiu Tong (left), a seasoned *huafu* enthusiast, designs makeup for Quan Jingyi.



Quan Jingyi looks dashing in traditional male attire from the Tang Dynasty (618-907). (Photo by Ma Yue/China Pictorial)



This round-collared robe was originally worn by men in the Tang Dynasty but gradually evolved into women's attire. (Photo by Zhang Ye/China Pictorial)



This women's attire from the Tang Dynasty gradually evolved into ceremonial clothing for women during the Song Dynasty (960-1279). (Photo by Zhang Ye/China Pictorial)



A Taoist robe was a popular choice for everyday casual wear during the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644). (Photo by Zhang Ye/China Pictorial)





In the section “Traditional Costumes,” a variety of accessories attract many *huafu* enthusiasts.



Young musicians deliver a performance of traditional Chinese music for visitors.



*Huafu* includes not only the traditional clothing of the Han ethnic group, but also the traditional attire of ethnic minorities such as the Mongolian, Manchu, and Hui people. Pictured are university students from a traditional cultural society participating in a show of Chinese ethnic clothing.

experienced a wide range of traditional Chinese pastimes including *cuju* (an ancient Chinese ball game), *touhu* (an ancient pot-throwing game), chess, tea tasting, the ancient art of sugar painting, and more. They could also participate in activities such as riddle games and poetry competitions.

In the “Cultural Performances” section, a diverse array of captivating shows unfolded. These included selected segments from Kunqu Opera, ensemble performances of traditional Chinese musical instruments, children’s choruses, and ethnic fashion shows. Over 20 traditional cultural societies from universities, children’s organizations, and young vocalists presented brilliant performances. In the “Cultural Lectures” area, esteemed experts and scholars from institutions such as the Palace Museum and Beijing Normal University joined *huafu* connoisseurs to revisit Chinese classics, discuss the origins of Chinese civilization, and share insights from traditional Chinese culture.

After making her way through each exhibition area, Quan could hardly contain her excitement.

“It was really fun, and I gained a wealth of knowledge about traditional culture,” she said. She was particularly taken by her experience with *cuju*. “The ball was actually crafted from animal hides without elasticity, making it quite challenging to kick. Despite several attempts, I couldn’t score a goal. Experiencing it firsthand helped me truly understand ancient *cuju* and what makes it distinct from modern football.”

But what struck Quan most from her experience on the Chinese National Costume Day was the growing trend of young people embracing and developing an affinity with *huafu*. She also noted their increasing curiosity about the underlying traditional Chinese culture associated with it, which can help foster a heightened national pride.

Quan’s makeup artist, Qiu Tong, also recognized the phenomenon. A senior college student, Qiu is a seasoned *huafu* enthusiast. She joined her school’s *huafu* society when she was in her freshman year. Through her involvement in events such as the Chinese National Costume Day, she has witnessed firsthand how *huafu*’s allure has captivated

an expanding audience. “I’ve had growing opportunities to encounter people wearing *huafu* in everyday life,” remarked Qiu. “I’m very happy to see an increasing number of individuals becoming aware of *huafu* and eager to learn more about it.”

Except for Beijing, relevant traditional culture experiencing and promotional activities with unique local characteristics were also held in three satellite venues in Shandong, Hunan, and Jiangsu provinces, respectively. Those events were further amplified through coordinated livestreaming.

As traditional Chinese attire with a profound historical legacy, *huafu* represents more than just a clothing system—it embodies the spirit of China as “a land of ceremony and decorum” and displays a tapestry of resplendent cultural heritage. Through its distinctive allure, *huafu* hearkens to the profound beauty of the Chinese civilization spanning thousands of years. “As a symbol of traditional Chinese culture, *huafu* is a treasure waiting to be explored, showcased, and innovated by every young individual,” said Quan. CP



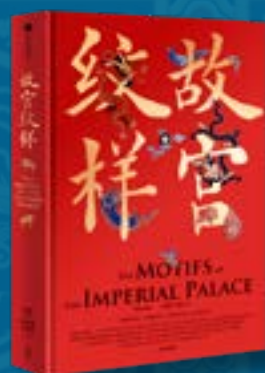


Butterfly patterns from clothing, porcelain ware, enamelware, and other cultural relics collected in the Palace Museum.

# Deeper Meanings Behind Motifs

Edited by Wang Shuya  
Photos courtesy of CITIC Press

**The motifs in the Palace Museum testify to the vibrant development of Chinese decorative art across thousands of years. They shine light on the changes and essence of Eastern aesthetics and enhance the continuation and inheritance of Chinese culture.**



*The Motifs of the Imperial Palace*, compiled by the Wencang team, written by Huang Qingsui and Li Jianfei, published by CITIC Press in March 2023.

Shen Yue, a Chinese scholar in the Southern Dynasties (420-589), wrote in *Treatise on Auspicious Signs*, a volume of his work *Book of Song*, that auspicious patterns have important meanings.

In ancient China, auspiciousness was worshiped. From rulers to ordinary people, their aesthetics were strongly influenced by traditional auspicious culture. Every motif has an auspicious meaning, which clearly reflects the cultural gene of China's traditional motif decoration art.

As a masterpiece of Chinese architecture, decoration, painting, and other art forms, the Palace Museum (also known as the Forbidden City) has marveled many with its rich and outstanding designs and motif decorations. From grand imperial buildings to small and delicate porcelain pieces, various motifs wander around the

yellow-glazed roofs, red walls, carved beams, and painted pillars, and can be also found on housewares, clothes, and brocades.

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Crane motifs from an ancient red porcelain bowl collected in the Palace Museum.

Ribbon bird and plum patterns from an ancient rectangular flowerpot collected in the Palace Museum.



A large “cellular wall” at the Shanghai Natural History Museum brings sunlight into the atrium, allowing visitors to enjoy natural lighting from the third underground floor. The museum has two floors above ground and three underground. (Photo by Dong Fang/China Pictorial)



# Cutting-Edge Laboratories of Shared Humanity

Text by Irina Bokova

Museums are hubs of constant dialogue within and among countries that foster knowledge about the incredible cultural diversity of humanity.

Today, museums are not only repositories for objects, but centers of knowledge exchange and social connection. Through the soft power of cultural diplomacy, museums become spaces to foster awareness of our shared history and transmit common values. These ideas resonated deeply during my experience as director-general of UNESCO.

In the 1960s, UNESCO launched the pioneering “Imaginary Museum” project to increase global access to art through reproduction of the world’s most famous paintings. UNESCO then adopted its first recommendation on museums, seeking to make them accessible to everyone by

working closely with the International Council of Museums (ICOM), also created by UNESCO. But so much has changed since then.

UNESCO has stayed engaged not only by supporting the ICOM, but also by investing in major intercultural projects in which museums have played a prominent role.

Considering the Silk Road’s enduring legacy of connecting civilizations throughout history, the UNESCO Silk Roads Programme, launched in 1988, continues to revive and expand these historic networks in a digital space, bringing people together in an ongoing dialogue and fostering a mutual understanding of diverse and often interrelated cultures along these routes.



The author served two terms as the director-general of UNESCO from 2009 to 2017.





A child enjoys the Silk Road exhibits including pottery figurines from the Tang Dynasty (618-907) at the National Museum of China, May 6, 2023. (Photo by Qin Bin/China Pictorial)

The Programme has a very rich legacy of movable heritage displayed in museums along the lengths of these routes. Since 2017, these museums have been presented and promoted by an online platform, connecting the historic cultural legacy of the Silk Road around the world—from Xi'an to Venice and all the way through Baghdad, Samarkand, the Balkans, and other places.

For millennia, the wondrous story of the Silk Road has been one of encounters between people, cultures, religions, and knowledge. These encounters have shaped civilization over the ages, catalyzing inventions and fertilizing intellectual scholarship. They gave birth to literary and scientific treasures and to traditions and artistic practices that have been passed across generations.

And all the glorious stories of human encounters can be found in museums. Generally, they are places where people meet to share ideas, innovate and learn more about their

own history and culture, as well as those of other histories and cultures. They are places where people come together as one single community, showcasing the wealth of diversity. They are places to wonder, to learn about the past, and to invent the future.

I see museums as cutting-edge laboratories of our shared humanity helping to protect our heritage, catalyze new creativity, find words and images to capture the complexity of our world, and to foster understanding of others. I firmly believe in the power of museums to rejuvenate urban policies, deepen social inclusion, create jobs, foster a sense of belonging, make the most of cultural heritage for all, and contribute to mutual understanding in a complex world.

This is the spirit of UNESCO's *Recommendation Concerning the Protection and Promotion of Museums and Collections*, adopted in November 2015. It seeks to promote the role of museums in fostering

ideals of tolerance and mutual understanding. The recommendation recognized that “the preservation, study, and transmission of cultural and natural, tangible, and intangible heritage, in its movable and immovable conditions, are of great importance for all societies, for intercultural dialogue among peoples, for social cohesion, and for sustainable development.”

All these ideas were very well captured at UNESCO's High-Level Forum on Museums, held in Shenzhen, Guangdong Province, from November 10 to 12, 2016, following the adoption of the recommendation. I had the privilege of participating in it.

I believe these words have not aged a day. At the heart of our cities, museums are much more than cultural spaces to display collections. They are hubs of constant dialogue within and among countries and bastions of knowledge about the incredible cultural diversity of humanity. CP

# Museums Bridge Civilizations

Text by David Gosset

Museums create more cohesive communities and can lead to fraternity.



The author is founder of the China-Europe-America Museums Cooperation Initiative and editor of *China and the World*.

The China-Europe-America Museums Cooperation Initiative was established in 2021 amid a unique trend of museum expansion.

That year, we explored how technology was transforming museums, which certainly remains an open question in the age of mobile devices, cyberspace, AI chatbots, and quantum physics. Last year, we focused on the role of museums in preserving cultural heritage. In 2023, we decided to consider how museums serve as cultural intermediaries between civilizations.

The economic dimensions associated with museums are well known. The ecosystem of art galleries, art fairs, cultural foundations,

and art museums generates economic value and jobs. In 2022, the global art market was estimated at around US\$68 billion. And the documentary *The Art of Making It* reminded us that the relationship between art and finance is not always harmonious.

The Guggenheim Museum Bilbao has been a symbol of the transformation of an entire city through culture since its establishment in Spain in 1997. True art is always an elevation.

From the perspective of urban revival, Hong Kong's ambition to become Asia's art metropolis is another ongoing story to follow. At the moment, the West Kowloon Cultural District is one of the world's largest cultural



infrastructure projects. Flanked by the Hong Kong Palace Museum and the M+ Museum, Hong Kong's global museum of visual culture, the district is an illustration of China's cultural renaissance fusing an ancient past with projections into the future.

Whether in arts, humanities, sciences, or technologies, museums also create communities, which is quite obvious at the local or national level. A nation is partially built through its domestic museums. The Louvre Museum, for example, opened to the public during the French Revolution (1789-1799).

Beyond, at the global level, museums can be seen as unifying factors. Cultural tourism fosters better understanding between cultures, and the internationalization of museums facilitates dialogue between civilizations. By some estimates, around 104,000 museums operate globally today.

In his trilogy *Museum, a World History*, European scholar Krzysztof Pomian associated the notion of "museum" with that of "world history." Trying to make sense of the act of collecting shines light on human nature and mankind. Links certainly exist

The Hong Kong Palace Museum faces the sea on three sides. Its main structure is a seven-story building that opened to the public on July 3, 2022. (Photo from Xinhua)



David Gosset (left, top) joins the third dialogue of the China-Europe-America Museums Cooperation Initiative, held from May 18 to 19, 2023, via video link. This year's global dialogue focuses on museums' role as cultural intermediaries between civilizations. (Photo courtesy of David Gosset)

between our capacity to collect objects, specimens, and data and our power to understand and, therefore, make progress. Here, we should reflect on the significance of the Global Brain Museum in particular, a digital archive for the history of brain research worldwide.

Alongside art trafficking and restitutions, another problem has plagued the development of museums—uneven distribution. Indeed, let us not forget that 61 percent of museums are in Western Europe and North America. More than 33,000 museums are in the United States, which hosts a museum industry estimated at more than US\$11 billion. Only 18

percent of the world's museums are in the Asia-Pacific, and less than one percent are in Africa, where more than 17 percent of the global population lives.

The China-Europe-America Museums Cooperation Initiative is a community composed of experts, practitioners, collectors, artists, designers, entrepreneurs, and educators. One would hope that such an open circle could raise awareness about museums' significance, stimulate research on a global phenomenon, and incubate cooperation projects.

As Henry James (1843-1916) noted in *A Small Boy and Others*, museums can overwhelm people with a "deafening chorus" filled

with more "visibilities as one could directly deal with." They are, at the same time, indispensable to individual education and civilization.

Museums create more cohesive communities. They can also be paths to fraternity. In 1927, the year of the first publication of the prestigious journal *Museion* that ran until 1946, French art historian Henri Focillon (1881-1943) stated that "museums were the first means towards the world's awareness." Today, they stand as catalysts incubating a community with a shared future for humanity. 

This article is adapted from David Gosset's opening remarks at the third dialogue of the China-Europe-America Museums Cooperation Initiative.



# Prosperity in Diversity

Text by Liu Chang

**A concrete carrier of culture, art forms the mind schema of a country and works with pieces from around the world to establish an artistic palace for humanity.**

Scorching summer days with bucket-list-worthy experiences are few and far between, and the National Art Museum of China (NAMOC) has air conditioning alongside nearly 4,000 pieces from over 100 countries on five continents.

Recently, the museum organized “Prosperity in Diversity: Collection of International Artworks from NAMOC (II)” in Beijing as part of an exhibition series celebrating its 60th anniversary. Over 70 pieces (sets) of international art treasures are on display including oil paintings, prints, sculptures, photographs and more.

## Road to Modernism

NAMOC’s rich international art collection showcases the evolution of international art since the 20th century. The section “Road to Modernism” features more than 30 works mainly donated by German collector Peter Ludwig and his wife, the French Academy of Fine Arts, and the artists themselves.

In 1996, Peter Ludwig and his wife selected 89 pieces (sets) of art from their collection including those by 82 European and American modern artists and donated them to NAMOC. *Portrait of Peter Ludwig* (1980) by American artist Warhol Andy captured Ludwig in a three-quarters view,

looking at the artist in a serious and attentive manner. Different colored lines, featuring a fast sketch, repeat and emphasize the contours of the face, hand, and shoulder. The connection between the figurative depiction and brightly structured surface creates an impressive contrast.

Among Ludwig’s exhibited donations, *Sky 2* (1967), a three-dimensional screen-print collage by British artist Joe Tilson, is eye-catching and features many beautiful flying “elves.” Randomly pasted on a blue background with white dots, various birds, plants and flying objects, rich in color, simple in shape, and strong in planarity, seem to sing and dance in the blue sky among white floating clouds. But most of them are head down, as if “flying” from the envelope pinched by a hand with only its thumb and index finger exposed.

From Leo Tolstoy, Karl Marx, and Albert Einstein to Mei Lanfang, Guo Moruo, and Qian Xuesen... *The Wise Men of the Century* (1999) by Chinese master Feng Yuan presents a “planet” of wise men. These pioneers in various fields occupy four-fifths of the frame,



*Portrait of Peter Ludwig, 1980.*  
(Photo by Qin Bin/China Pictorial)



*Sky 2, 1967.*  
(Photo courtesy of the National Art Museum of China)



*The Wise Men of the Century, 1999.*  
(Photo by Qin Bin/China Pictorial)



against an arc-shaped horizon, implying an endless queue and the depth of history and civilization.

### The Silk Road

In 1877, German geographer Ferdinand von Richthofen coined the term “Silk Road,” referring to the ancient communication line connecting Asian, European, and African continents. The term not only refers to the terrestrial route stretching from the ancient capital Chang’an (located near modern Xi’an City, Shaanxi Province) to Rome jointly blazed by Zhang Qian, a Han Dynasty (202 B.C.-220 A.D.) envoy, and the people in the places he visited along the way, but also the maritime route from Quanzhou Port in China’s Fujian Province to countries in the East and the West.

In 2018, NAMOC established the Silk Road International Alliance of Art Museums and Galleries, aiming to expand the dimensions of international cultural exchange through cooperation.

The section “Significance of the Silk Road” focuses on more than 30 works by artists from countries along the Belt and Road. It reflects on inheritance and promotion of their own national culture and acceptance and respect for others’ cultures and interprets the spirit of the Silk Road, namely “peace and cooperation, openness and inclusiveness, and mutual learning and mutual benefit,” with rich visual artistic language.


Iranian artist Farahnaz Azarabadhagh portrayed a dream road connecting the East and the West in her work *Road of Dreams* (2016) with acrylic and batik applied to canvas. Two huge windows are

open to a new realm featuring layers of colors, which transform reality into poetic expressions. The Belt and Road Initiative, first coined in 2013, invites people to achieve common prosperity through commercial and cultural exchange, on an equal premise of mutual benefits, mutual respect and development in harmony with nature, echoing the artist’s view that “this new global concept will lead everyone toward a new path.”

*Lontano da Xian* (2016) by Italian artist Omar Galliani promotes the spirit of the Silk Road in a panel of large dimensions, produced in pencil. A mirrored androgynous figure whose neck has a tattoo of a pomegranate, an Eastern fruit that arrived in the Mediterranean on the convoy of silk traders thousands of years ago. It is worthy noting that the two backs of the head form the shape of a vase that

contains a constellation.

The Chinese and Arabs were the first to develop the paper industry globally. Khalid Hamza, an artist from Sudan, demystified the art of Arabic calligraphy featuring many varieties and aesthetics and showcased them in the piece *Forest of Words* (2017) with acrylic applied to his canvas as an interpretation of various natural landscapes. Shapes in his work imitate trees and branches, creating an unprecedented color and aesthetic value through interlacing, reflecting the artist’s emotion and the infinite beauty of the universe.

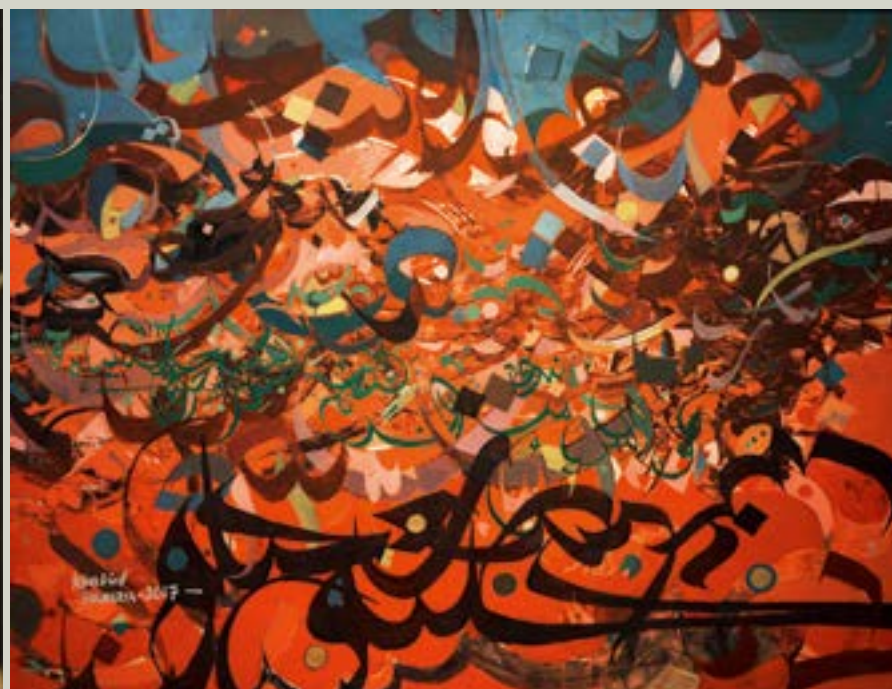
As a saying goes, “delicious soup is made by combining different ingredients.” A concrete carrier of culture, art forms the mind schema of a country and works with pieces from around the world to establish an artistic palace for humanity. 



*Road of Dreams*, 2016.  
(Photo by Qin Bin/China Pictorial)



*Lontano da Xian*, 2016.  
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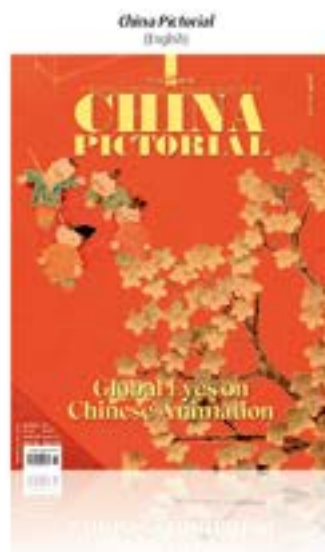


A visitor examines Arnaud d’Hauterives’ painting *Daughter of Fire* at the exhibition, June 8, 2023. (Photo by Qin Bin/China Pictorial)



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# Voice for snow leopards

## Harmony between human and nature

为雪豹发声 与自然共生

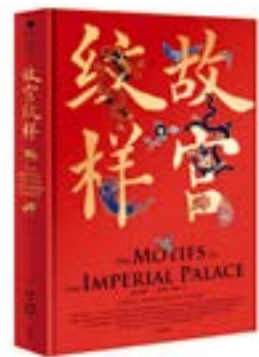




# Deeper Meanings Behind Motifs

Edited by Wang Shuya  
Photos courtesy of

**The motifs in the Palace Museum testify to the vibrant development of Chinese decorative art across thousands of years. They shine light on the changes and essence of Eastern aesthetics and enhance the continuation and inheritance of Chinese culture.**



*The Motifs of the Imperial Palace, compiled by the Wencang team, written by Huang Qingsui and Li Jianfei, published by CITIC Press in March 2023.*

Shen Yue, a Chinese scholar in the Southern Dynasties (420-589), wrote in *Treatise on Auspicious Signs*, a volume of his work *Book of Song*, that auspicious patterns have important meanings.

In ancient China, auspiciousness was worshiped. From rulers to ordinary people, their aesthetics were strongly influenced by traditional auspicious culture. Every motif has an auspicious meaning, which clearly reflects the cultural gene of China's traditional motif decoration art.

As a masterpiece of Chinese architecture, decoration, painting, and other art forms, the Palace Museum (also known as the Forbidden City) has marveled many with its rich and outstanding designs and motif decorations. From grand imperial buildings to small and delicate porcelain pieces, various motifs wander around the

yellow-glazed roofs, red walls, carved beams, and painted pillars and can be found on housewares, clothes, and brocades.

Exploring and studying motifs in the Palace Museum shines light on the development history of motifs in China across thousands of years. They are complicated, inclusive, vibrant, and profound, and their creators sought common ground while reserving differences of various cultures.

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The book deeply explores the meaning behind each motif by tracing its origin and interpreting its cultural connotation. Traditional Chinese craftsmanship tends to create art to convey philosophy by integrating the shape, pattern, and usage method of the objects with mankind's spirit, desires, and soul.

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The motifs in the Forbidden City

were created with inspiration from mountains, rivers, the sun, the moon, plants, birds, and other things. They capture the keen perceptiveness and extraordinary imagination of ancient people.

Firmly overlapped mountains and rocks in motifs depicting a river running off cliffs into the sea look as precipitous as the real situation. Cloud motifs are diverse and vivid, inspired by changes in the sky and weather. The dragon, phoenix, and kylin motifs depict legendary auspicious beasts, which are vivid, majestic, and solemn.

Palm-sized motifs show the love and awe of ancient Chinese people for life and nature in terms of basic necessities.


For instance, the motif inspired by persimmon pedicles with four prongs, which looks simple, can be traced back to the Warring States Period (475-221 B.C.). In the past, they were used in buildings to imply solidity and in fabrics to help wishes come true.

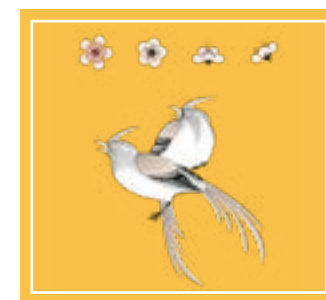
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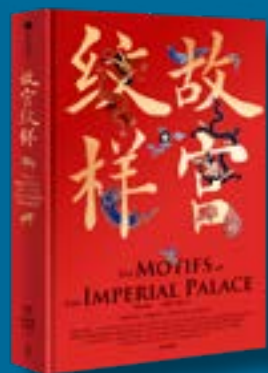




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