

The Inheritance of Ancient Jade Carving Techniques in Beijing and the Integration of Modern Art

Jing Zhang, Huixin Yan, Chenxi Liu, Lifeng Zhu*

College of Art, Beijing Union University, Chaoyang, Beijing, 100101, China

ABSTRACT

As one of the important traditional crafts in China, Beijing jade carving emerged in the Yuan Dynasty and reached its peak in the Ming and Qing Dynasties. It is famous for its grand, dignified, and elegant style and was listed as a national intangible cultural heritage in 2008. This article explores the historical origins, ancient techniques, and modern artistic innovations of Beijing jade carving. The ancient technique emphasizes "measuring materials and selecting materials, applying art according to materials", covering multiple aspects such as design, carving, polishing, etc., demonstrating a superb level of craftsmanship. Modern innovation is reflected in the diversification of styles, expansion of themes, comprehensive use of materials, and the combination of modern design concepts and traditional techniques, making Beijing jade carving shine with new vitality in contemporary art. The integration of tradition and modernity not only enriches the artistic expression of jade carving, but also injects new vitality into its inheritance and development.

KEYWORDS

Beijing jade carving; Ancient techniques and skills; Modern innovation; Intangible cultural heritage; Traditional craft

1 The historical origins of beijing jade carving

Beijing jade carving, also known as "Beijing jade carving", is a jade carving technique that has been passed down in Beijing. It originated in the Yuan Dynasty, with its ancestor being the Quanzhen Taoist Qiu Chuji. During the Ming Dynasty, the Imperial Censorate set up jade sculptures and gathered excellent jade masters from all over the country. As a result, the jade carving industry in Beijing flourished. During the Qing Dynasty, playing with jade was popular in Beijing, and the craft of jade carving reached a historical peak. After the establishment of the People's Republic of China, the jade carving industry in Beijing developed rapidly, reaching a scale of several thousand people at one point, with a gathering of talents and a remarkable competition for new skills.^[1]

Jade carving is one of the oldest carving varieties in China, with a long history and rich cultural connotations. Due to regional differences and distinctive features, Chinese jade carving techniques are mainly divided into four schools: the Northern School jade carving centered on Beijing, the Shanghai School jade carving centered on Shanghai, the Yang School jade carving centered on Yangzhou, and the Southern School jade carving in Guangzhou and Fujian, which enjoy a high reputation in the world. In 2008, jade carving (Beijing jade carving) was included in the second batch of national intangible cultural heritage list.

The style of Beijing jade carving is deeply influenced by the imperial court officials, with a grand and dignified style, elegant and luxurious. The China National Arts and Crafts Museum and the China Intangible Cultural Heritage Museum have four jade national treasures, "Daiyue Wonders", "Fragrant Gathering of Rui", "Four Seas in Joy", and "Fragrant Scenery", which are exquisitely crafted and presented to the utmost beauty. They are representative works of Beijing jade carving, presenting a high artistic level and receiving praise from the State Council; While inheriting the ancient Chinese jade carving techniques, Shanghai style jade carving adapted to the characteristics of different periods and artistic works, gradually forming the cultural features of Shanghai style jade carving; The Southern style jade carving style is innovative in concept, elegant and beautiful, and is known for techniques such as carving, chain carving, and multi-layer set carving; Yangpai jade carving is committed to innovation and follows the principle of "measuring materials and applying art according to materials" in practice, creating a large number of art works with novel compositions, beautiful shapes, and exquisite workmanship. Among them, the techniques of "Shanzi Carving" and "Lianzi Huo" are unique, demonstrating the exquisite craftsmanship of Yangzhou jade carving.

Beijing jade carving is known for its exquisite craftsmanship and solid materials. It inherits the traditional skills of palace jade carving, with exquisite materials and a complete range of products. It can produce various products such as vessels, figures, flowers, birds and animals, bonsai, jewelry, etc. The Beijing jade carving technique includes multiple

stages such as mixing, cleaning, cutting, design, grinding, and polishing. The shape is majestic, heavy, dignified, and elegant, and the decoration is exquisite, delicate, bright, and simple, reflecting a high level of craftsmanship.^[1]

2 The ancient techniques of beijing jade carving

The jade carving craft culture has a long history and contains profound carving techniques and knowledge. In terms of production, "measuring materials, applying techniques according to materials, and concealer for jade" has become an important principle of jade carving, and has always been throughout the whole process of jade making, including "phase materials", "clearing materials", "cutting materials", "planning", "polishing" and "polishing".

The most crucial aspect is design and carving. Design is the pre design of a future jade carving based on the natural shape, color, texture, texture, and transparency of jade, combined with the designer's artistic creativity. Designers need to first draw ink lines on the raw materials that have been cut off from the outer skin and removed from the cracks, and then hand them over to the sculptor for rough carving and shaping. Designers then create secondary details based on the shape and color changes of the jade material presented, which often involves some adjustments compared to the initial design drawings. The sculptor needs to maintain communication with the designer, discuss some details of the carving, and after determining the final plan, carry out detailed carving to present the best effect. After the fine carving is completed, polishing and grinding should be carried out. After these processes are completed, a jade carving work will be officially released.^[2]

Beijing jade carving, as one of the important schools of Chinese jade carving, has a high historical status and cultural value. Its history can be traced back to the Neolithic Age, reaching its peak during the Ming and Qing dynasties, and becoming a craft used by the imperial court. Beijing jade carving inherits the tradition of imperial jade carving, with exquisite materials and exquisite production. The shape is majestic, heavy, dignified and elegant, and the decoration is exquisite and delicate. It is not only a representative of traditional Chinese craftsmanship, but also one of the "Eight Wonders of Yanjing". His works cover a wide range of themes, including characters, flowers, birds and animals, vessels, etc., showcasing profound cultural heritage and exquisite craftsmanship. The value of Beijing jade carving is not only reflected in art and craftsmanship, but also in its intangible cultural heritage, which carries the essence of traditional Chinese culture and has important historical, cultural, and social value.



Figure 1 Jade Carving Five Elements Pagoda Author: Liu Xiaohua, Zhang Yingsun, Chen Yonggui, etc



Figure 2 Jade Carving Daiyue Wonder Author: Chen Changhai, Zhang Zhiping, Gao Xiang, etc

3 Modern art innovation of beijing jade carving

The modern artistic innovation of Beijing jade carving is reflected in multiple aspects, especially in style transformation, theme expansion, and the combination of modern design concepts and traditional techniques. In terms of style, Beijing jade carving has gradually evolved from traditional royal style to diversified style, no longer limited to

traditional complexity and symbolism, but incorporating modern design concepts such as simplicity and abstraction, using simple lines and geometric shapes to express natural themes, making the works more modern and contemporary. At the same time, jade carvers began to explore the application of composite materials, combining jade with materials such as metal, wood, and gemstones, which not only enriched the forms of artistic expression, but also enhanced the durability and decorative value of their works.

In terms of subject matter, Beijing jade carving has expanded from traditional auspicious patterns and character stories to reflect modern humanistic emotions, natural imagery, and cross-cultural themes with an international perspective. For example, some works are themed around "nature" and showcase the harmony between life and nature through special carving techniques, while others combine Western modern art elements with traditional Chinese imagery to broaden the artistic expression of jade carving. In addition, jade carvers also pay attention to combining the essence of traditional culture with modern aesthetics, by reconstructing traditional symbols, removing factors that are not harmonious with modern civilization, and emphasizing the natural beauty of the materials themselves.

In the combination of design concepts and traditional techniques, Beijing jade carvers not only inherit traditional carving techniques such as round carving, relief carving, and engraving, but also innovate techniques such as micro carving and micro light carving on this basis, making their works more delicate and delicate. At the same time, by incorporating modern artistic concepts such as abstract expressionism and the combination of functionality and art, jade carvings not only showcase exquisite craftsmanship, but also meet the aesthetic needs and lifestyle of modern people. This fusion of tradition and modernity not only injects new vitality into Beijing jade carving, but also revitalizes it in the context of contemporary art.



Figure 3 Xiuyu Flower Fumigation Author: Wan Shuaibing Figure



Figure 4 Hotan Jade White Jade Guanyin Bottle Author: Guo Weijun



Figure 5 Hotan Jade Scented Beauty Author: Xu Ruiqing Figure



Figure 6 Hotan Baiyu Flower Bottle Author: Guo Weijun

4 The integration of ancient jade carving techniques and modern innovation in Beijing

The integration of ancient techniques and modern innovation in Beijing jade carving reflects the inheritance and development of traditional crafts in contemporary society. On the one hand, Beijing jade carving inherits traditional carving techniques such as round carving, relief carving, and engraved carving, which give the works a rich sense of hierarchy and three dimensionality. At the same time, jade carvers have innovated on the basis of traditional techniques, such as introducing new technologies such as micro carving and micro light carving, to make their works more delicate and delicate, presenting unique artistic effects. In addition, the integration of modern design concepts has also promoted innovation in Beijing jade carving. Jade carvers are no longer limited to traditional realistic techniques, but increasingly use simple lines, geometric shapes, and abstract expression techniques to depict natural themes, making their works more modern. This fusion not only enriches the expressive forms of jade carving works, but also broadens the creative space, making them more in line with the aesthetic needs and lifestyle of modern people.

On the other hand, Beijing jade carving has also expanded its themes, gradually shifting from traditional auspicious patterns and character stories to reflecting modern humanistic emotions, natural imagery, and cross-cultural themes with an international perspective. For example, some works are themed around "nature" and showcase the harmony between life and nature through special carving techniques, while others combine Western modern art elements with traditional Chinese imagery to broaden the artistic expression of jade carving. In addition, jade carvers also pay attention to combining the essence of traditional culture with modern aesthetics, by reconstructing traditional symbols, removing factors that are not harmonious with modern civilization, and emphasizing the natural beauty of the materials themselves. This fusion not only injects new vitality into Beijing jade carving, but also revitalizes it in the context of contemporary art.

5 Conclusion

As a treasure of traditional Chinese craftsmanship, Beijing jade carving not only carries a profound historical and cultural heritage, but also continuously expands its artistic boundaries through modern innovation. The inheritance of ancient techniques and the integration of modern design make Beijing jade carving more in line with contemporary aesthetic needs while maintaining traditional characteristics. This balance and innovation not only continue the artistic life of jade carving, but also provide important reference for the protection and development of intangible cultural heritage. In the future, Beijing jade carving should continue to explore the intersection of tradition and modernity, and promote its further dissemination and recognition on the global art stage.

About the Author

Jing Zhang, master's student, research direction : urban space art design .

* Corresponding Author: Lifeng Zhu, ystlifeng@bnu.edu.cn

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