

# Major Exhibition Hits Ningbo to Unveil 2,000 Years of History

Striving towards a modern coastal metropolis  
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A digital screen to unveil the theme of the exhibition. (credit: Yang Hui)



An array of replicas of the best treasured ancient paintings. (credit: Ningbo Museum of Art)

"The exhibition route extends 1.5 kilometers," a guide at Ningbo Museum of Art told *Ningbo Evening News*. "A stroll around would take an hour or two at least."

*Compilation of Classics in the Flourishing Age: The Exhibition of Achievements in Compiling a Comprehensive Collection of Ancient Chinese Paintings* is a 6,000 sq m (64,583 sq ft) art exhibition held at Ningbo Museum of Art (NMA), where ancient Chinese art integrates with modern digital technology to provide an immersive artistic space. The exhibition boasts 1,600 artifacts, making it the largest exhibition at NMA since its establishment and the largest and longest-running art event held in Ningbo. As its name - the Flourishing Age - suggests, the display showcases the aestheticism of multiple dynasties spanning 2,000 years, unveiling the realities of ancient China from the Tang Dynasty to the Qing Dynasty.

Upon entering, visitors navigate a hall of mirrors to learn the behind-the-scenes of this exhibition. In this section, numerous art catalogs are aligned to resemble *A Panorama of Mountains and Rivers*, the only known painting by teenage artist Wang Ximeng of the Song Dynasty (960-1279), embodying the panoramic history of Chinese painting.

In the next section, visitors get to admire the extant "national treasures" of ancient paintings, spanning over 2,000 years from the Pre-Qin, Han, Tang, Song (including works from the Five Dynasties, Liao, and Jin), to Yuan, Ming, and Qing Dynasty. All displays are arrayed in chronological order to showcase the progression of ancient Chinese paintings.

Through closer observation, visi-

tors can touch on the essence of Chinese culture, as He Huanhuan, Qiushi Distinguished Professor of Zhejiang University, implied.

For instance, visitors may find that illustrations and paintings to the poem of Qu Yuan (about 343 - 278 B.C.), titled the "Nine Songs", vary throughout different periods but focus on a common theme - the patriotic and exploratory spirit of Qu Yuan, a household heroic poet and politician whose commemoration marks the supposed origin of the Dragon Boat Festival.

Visitors may also pay attention to the traditional painting techniques. "My favorite work here is the Four Sections of Snowy Scenery from the Song Dynasty. The artist intentionally left a ton of blank space for the imagination," Ye Chenxi, an art student coming to the exhibition with friends, shared his opinion. "I feel that the artist indulged in the solitary yet comforting vibes of the snowy landscape when creating the work."

Traditional Chinese paintings usually feature the interaction between humans and nature. Thousands of years ago, the snow laden landscape inspired the production of a time-honored masterpiece. Likewise, the third section of this exhibition intends to inspire its viewers by introducing them into an immersive art space, where visitors can lose themselves in over 30 classic landscape paintings of green rivers, rolling mountains, blooming flowers, cruising fish swarms and snow landscapes - to name but a few.

"We have blended the masterpiece, 'Streams and Mountains Without End', into a naked-eye 3D digital display. Visitors will feel as if they are wandering with-

in the painting and have the wonderful experience of interacting with traditional culture," explained Wang Xiaosong, the curator of this major exhibition.

Many visitors are attracted to a long corridor where replicas of significant grotto temples in the Yellow River and Yangtze River basins are on display. With 20 industrial-grade 3D printers running 24 hours a day for 13 months, the replicas of the immovable cave architectural art heritage sites listed in the World Cultural Heritage have been reproduced in proportion and transported over a long distance to Ningbo. Included are Shanxi Yungang Grottoes, Gansu Maijishan Grottoes, niche sculptures, colored sculptures, and murals of other well-known grottos around China.

Ningbo elements are also highly prominent at the exhibition. In the Ningbo-themed section, more than 180 sets of ancient paintings and calligraphy works from Ningbo are displayed for the first time. Exhibits include replicas of numerous masterpieces that have been exported from Ningbo to circulate over-

seas. They are precious living evidence of Ningbo's history cultural exchanges along the Maritime Silk Road.

After its first debut at the National Museum in late September 2022, the exhibition of *Achievements in Compiling a Comprehensive Collection of Ancient Chinese Paintings* became a nationwide sensation. This has led to repeated extensions of its showing and the number of visitors has exceeded 2 million. Additionally, the exhibition has been well received in other countries, including the United Kingdom, Belgium, Spain, Switzerland, Germany, Malaysia, Singapore.

Kicking off on July 1, the exhibition will last until October 7.

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