



Press Release

The Spirit of the Literati in Bamboo
Art of the Iron Brush: Bamboo Carvings from the Ming and Qing Dynasties

April 16, 2019

The University Museum and Art Gallery (UMAG) of the University of Hong Kong (HKU) will present *Art of the Iron Brush: Bamboo Carvings from the Ming and Qing Dynasties* from April 17 to July 28, 2019. Durable, flexible and abundant in nature, bamboo has been used as a material and a subject in Chinese art for millennia. At first woven into baskets, containers and other everyday objects during the Neolithic period, over successive centuries bamboo came to be used in increasingly sophisticated ways, at the same time attaining numerous symbolic meanings. Because it bends in a storm but does not break, it was particularly associated with the integrity and personal virtue of the scholarly elite, who embraced its symbolic value by producing, acquiring and displaying delicate bamboo objects suitable for various scholarly pursuits, such as painting and calligraphy.

During the Ming dynasty (1368–1644), scholarly and imperial patronage transformed bamboo carving into a major art form. Scholar-carvers and workshops centred around Jiading (in present-day Shanghai) and Jinling (now Nanjing) produced large numbers of brush pots, wrist rests, miniature landscapes, figurines and other objects. Many bamboo carvers also worked in other materials soft enough to be manipulated with the ‘iron brush’—a term for knives and other carving tools used by literati to transfer their brushwork aesthetic to other media—including boxwood, rhinoceros’ horns and ivory, which shared a kind of loose identity under the heading of diaoke (‘carving’ in modern Chinese). Small in scale yet teeming with life, these works reflect prodigious technical skill and great imaginary involvement because of the unique shapes and contortions of the materials involved.

An opening ceremony of the exhibition was held at UMAG today (April 16). Officiating guests included the Sanyu Tang Collection Mr Paul Yu Pui Keung and UMAG Director Dr Florian Knothe.

For more images and captions of the exhibits, please click [here](#).





Details of the Exhibition

Period: April 17, 2019 (Wednesday) to July 28, 2019 (Sunday)

Opening Hours:

09:30 – 18:00 (Monday to Saturday)

13:00 – 18:00 (Sunday)

Closed on University and Public Holidays

Venue: 2/F, Fung Ping Shan Building, UMAG, HKU, 90 Bonham Road, Pokfulam

Tel/Email: (852) 2241 5500 (General Enquiry) / museum@hku.hk

Admission: Free

Website: <http://www.umag.hku.hk/en/>

Connect with UMAG on social media:

Facebook: http://bit.ly/umag_facebook

Instagram: @umag_hku, #UMAG, #Bamboo, #BambooCarving, #MingDynasty, #QingDynasty

Weibo: @香港大學美術博物館 UMAG

YouTube: http://bit.ly/umag_youtube

LinkedIn: http://bit.ly/umag_linkedin

About University Museum and Art Gallery of the University of Hong Kong (UMAG)

UMAG was founded in 1953 as the Fung Ping Shan Museum. It was originally established as the Fung Ping Shan Library in 1932 in honour of its benefactor. For more information on UMAG, please [click here](#).

Media enquiries

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