

The Li river meandering under the foot of Shu Mountain is like a hard man, who constrains his worries and fickleness in this bustling world and flows on to a faraway place. Over thousands of years, Li River give birth to so much stories about the purple clay that only the river itself can confirm how many inky inscriptions had been applied on the purple clay by heroic calligraphers and painters, thus becoming unfading classics in history.

Jiang Yanbin was born into a pottery-making family beside the Li river amid the clang and jingle of pottery wares. Those gorgeous and elegant wares, with their spirit endowed by their ancient craftsman, finally become shining stars in the southern region. With the clay-like humbleness in his blood, Jiang has the ability for pottery-making since his childhood. When the inspiration concretizes the totem of life into daily conversaiton and stand out from the practice, metal-and-stone-like purple clay carries the writing of a intellectual in the kiln.

Purple clay carving plays an important role in the arts and crafts. Jiang Yanbin learned calligraphy from Chu Yun, a famous calligrapher, when he was young. Later, he learned carving from Chen Fudeng, a Chinese calligraphy and Seal Carving scholar. Various learning experiences broad both his horizon and mind. Yanbin Carving has come into being in the great hardships of pioneering work and stands out in the pottery domain.

Ding, distinguished and mysterious sacrificial vessel in traditional Chinese culture, symbolizes power and class in the eyes' of our ancestors. The Three-legged Bao Ding teapot, one of Jiang's masterpieces, represents nature in the purple clay. Profound history and long-standing culture are displayed in the pot. The teapot, with three legs and a body like a huge Ding, looks magnificent. The colour is clear, pure, fine and gentle with a touch of sheen. The lid is modeled on the face of a cow with huge, round eyes. The spout and handle have smooth outlines like rivers flowing into the ocean. The outlines are also like the stokes of Chinese characters in the calligraphy. The best part of the pot is the inscription on the body. Jiang uses the graver like a writing brush. The carved Chinese characters are as natural as written by the brush. He carves one stroke at a time and never adjusts it by adding other strokes. Thus the inscription is like tablet rubbing in Han Dynasty. Beautiful women, exquisite patterns and ancient totems are put together through carving on a teapot.

Jiang never stops his pursuit of innovation. The mountain, rivers and characters are carved in the way of undercutting rather than intaglio, changing the line-carving into surface-carving. He incorporates the carving skills of stone relief and portrait brick of Han Dynasty into pottery carving. He carves difficult patterns like legends, immortals, ghosts, auspicious signs and constellations on the pot. It is quaint and simple in style, open and strong in character and elegant and exquisite in quality. The inscriptions not only maintain the advantages of calligraphy, but also show the might of carving. Jiang Yanbin is neither conceited nor rash. He is good at playing the Guqin, Chinese musical instrument. He trudges through mountains and rivers for field research and carves a lot of works. He can carve and draw by surmounting the boundary of graver and ink.

Jiang can carve on pots, earthen bowls, plates and pen containers. His graver creates spring, autumn, gentle breeze, and rolling waves, which all show the harmony with nature. Listening to

the sounds of nature, Jiang courageously breaks the conventional rules of carving and seeks the essence of nature. With diligence, humbleness and reverence for nature, he keeps building his ideal art kingdom day by day.

By Xu Feng

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