

Exhibitors from Guangdong province make a strong presence at the 20th China (Shenzhen) International Cultural Industries Fair, which is running from Thursday to May 27. ZHAO YANG / FOR CHINA DAILY

Guangdong harnesses the power of historical artifacts

Fair to showcase province's expertise and rich resources

By HAO NAN
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South China's Guangdong province goes under the spotlight on Thursday when it hosts the 20th China (Shenzhen) International Cultural Industries Fair, which runs until May 27.

The event is reported to be a practical measure for Guangdong to consolidate its status as a cultural powerhouse. It also showcases the province's inheritance and development of Lingnan culture, as well as the vitality of its cultural industries.

This year, the Guangdong exhibition group, consisting of 381 businesses from 21 cities across the province, together with State-owned enterprises under the management of the central government, as well as companies from Hong Kong and Macao, are showcasing some 20,000 cultural products at the cultural innovation exhibition zone of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, in a space spanning 20,000 square meters.

Their exhibits focus on tech-empowered new quality productive forces, such as applications of artificial intelligence-powered large model technology, and digital and creative industries; diverse cultural industries with local characteristics as well as cultural and service programs from across the province; and programs designed to boost spending on cultural services and products, including new product launches and debuts, and releases of heavyweight reports and policies.

The Guangdong exhibitor group has planned six themed activities to

bolster consumer spending and business transactions. They include online trade events, offline promotional activities, forums, auctions and business matchmaking meetings.

Offline promotional activities, for example, will distribute consumption vouchers and focus on such sectors as cultural technology, intangible cultural heritage items, creative cultural products and cultural tourism.

As one of China's cultural powerhouses, Guangdong has been practicing creative transformation and innovative development of Lingnan culture for years. The province has also introduced a series of policies and measures that are at the national forefront in terms of cultural resources protection and brand promotion and utilization.

Among these initiatives, the Lingnan culture exploration project was announced by the Guangdong Cultural Heritage Administration and the Guangdong Institute of Cultural Relics and Archaeology in October 2023. It plans to trace the early human civilization and cultural development in the Lingnan region (Guangdong and some neighboring regions), over the next 12 years.

Also, achievements in Lingnan cultural inheritance are significant, evidenced by Chaozhou Gongfu Tea, which is included in the representative list of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity and the *Legend of White Snake*, a Cantonese opera film released in 2021, which has broken box office records in its category.

Guangdong is home to a branch of the China National Archives of Publications and Culture in Guangzhou. Opened in July 2022,



the Guangzhou branch is regarded as a "seed gene bank" of Chinese culture and houses more than 2 million precious books and materials.

The province attaches importance to the excavation of historical sites, which is a highlight of local archaeological studies. The construction of land projects, such as the parks of the Modao Shan Site of the Paleolithic Age in Yunfu and of the Qingtang Site in Qingyuan, are progressing well.

As for underwater excavations, the *Nanhai No 1* — a wooden cargo ship carrying Chinese porcelain which sank in the Song Dynasty (960-1279) — was selected as one of the top 100 archaeological discoveries of the century at the third China Archaeological Congress held in 2021. In November 2023, the overall protection project for the *Nanhai No 1* was launched at the Guangdong Maritime Silk Road Museum, marking completion of the 10-year archaeological excavation.

In addition, four archaeological tourism routes were issued in April 2023, covering a total of 12 cities and 24 key archaeological sites in Guangdong. They have attracted a large number of visitors to see renowned cultural relics.

In recent years, cross-industry innovation has promoted and injected vitality into the development of Lingnan culture. For example, Yingge Dance, Cantonese Operas, martial arts, dragon boat racing and lion dances add a new appeal to Lingnan culture. Performed every Chinese

New Year, Yingge Dance, a folk dance with a 300-year history from the Chaozhou-Shantou region, is gaining popularity both domestically and internationally.

Moreover, stage performances have brought traditional intangible cultural heritage items closer to audiences. On Jan 11, the Mandarin version of the musical drama *I am what I am* made its global debut at Guangzhou Opera House. The drama's Cantonese version was performed there on May 9 as the opening performance of the Guangzhou Art Season 2024.

The musical drama, adapted from a movie of the same name, displays the intangible cultural heritage item of the lion dance and tells a touching story of a young boy pursuing his dreams through various twists and turns.

Guangdong has invested heavily in major cultural facilities in recent years, demonstrating its determination to fortify its foothold as a cultural powerhouse in China. Cultural landmarks have mushroomed one after another across the province in recent years. The latest one, the Bai'etan Greater Bay Area Art Center, opened to the public on May 1. Integrating the Guangdong Museum of Art, the Guangdong Intangible Cultural Heritage Exhibition Center and the Guangdong Literature Hall, it marks a new pinnacle of Lingnan culture.

Prior to this, the new art museums of Guangzhou and Shenzhen were opened last November.

Together with the Guyuan Art Gallery in Zhuhai, which is scheduled to be completed later this year, these cultural facilities will constitute a large art museum group covering about 300,000 sq m in the Bay Area.

Booming cultural and digital businesses aid cultural promotion

By HAO NAN

A batch of enterprises from South China's Guangdong province are showcasing their latest high-quality development achievements at the 20th China (Shenzhen) International Cultural Industries Fair. It kicks off on Thursday and will run until May 27.

In recent years, Guangdong has strengthened digital empowerment and its creative drive. The province has also focused on improving the modern cultural industry and market systems, as well as established a new highland of digital culture and cultural creativity, and a model for cultural and tourism integration.

Official statistics showed that in the first quarter, Guangdong enterprises above a designated size — those with 20 million yuan (\$2.76 million) or more in annual revenue — in cultural and related industries achieved operating revenue of 550.8 billion yuan, an increase of 11 percent year-on-year.

Of the total, the operating revenue of cultural goods manufacturing stood at 246.8 billion yuan, up 11.3 percent. Cultural services generated 228.3 billion yuan, up 8.4 percent.

Guangzhou and Shenzhen are the core cities of Guangdong in its cultural industry development. In 2023, the operating revenue of cultural and related industries above a designated size in Guangzhou, the provincial capital, reached around 558.2 billion yuan, a year-on-year increase of 15.9 percent.

In the same year, the added value of Shenzhen's cultural industries reached 275 billion yuan, accounting for about 8 percent of its GDP.

Shenzhen is home to more than 100,000 cultural enterprises, with more than 1 million employees. It has introduced and nurtured a number of nationally renowned companies in such sectors as creative design, animation and games, cultural tourism, high-end printing, and cultural equipment research and production.

Guangdong has been working to develop clusters of internationally competitive types of cultural businesses, according to the province's economic and social development plan (2021-25) and its outline for long-range objectives through 2035.

Over the past three years, the province has integrated the resources of upstream and downstream cultural companies and accelerated

38.54 billion yuan

Export revenue of Guangdong's online games in 2023

the construction of cultural industry parks.

On March 26, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism announced a new batch of national cultural industry demonstration bases as well as others passing review.

A total of 26 enterprises from Guangdong made the list, including 12 new ones such as Guangzhou Kugou Computer Technology and Foshan Acmetec Holdings.

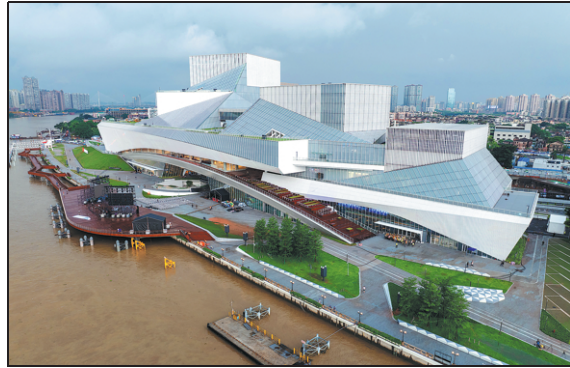
Today, Guangdong boasts a well-developed cultural industry structure, with related enterprises spanning nine major fields and 146 subsectors. The province's culture-related foreign trade has also expanded to more than 160 countries and region. The province has cultivated a group of internationally competitive export companies and brands.

Moreover, Guangdong has been implementing a digital culture strategy to boost emerging industries. In 2023, the province's digital creative industry achieved operating revenue of more than 600 billion yuan, serving as a new pillar of its economy and a driving force for high-quality development in the cultural industry.

As digitalization becomes a development trend in cultural industries, new formats represented by the animation and game industry are empowering the inheritance and promotion of Lingnan culture, also known as Cantonese culture.

For example, Guangzhou-based 37 Interactive Entertainment, a top Chinese mobile game developer, has used Lingnan culture as game content or a source of inspiration in many of its products, attracting much attention from players.

According to a report on Guangdong's game industry development, the operating revenue of mobile games, computer games, web games and other kinds of games exceeded 245 billion yuan in 2023, accounting for nearly 81 percent of the national market share in China. Also, export revenue of its online games hit 38.54 billion yuan in 2023, up 4.1 percent year-on-year.



The Bai'etan Greater Bay Area Art Center opens its doors to the public in Guangzhou, capital of Guangdong province, on May 1. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Dance show's success in step with traditional Chinese legacy

By WANG JINHUI
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Since its debut at the end of 2022 in Shenzhen, Guangdong province, the original dance drama *Wing Chun* has become a hit on stage, with more than 100 shows performed in China and abroad in less than 18 months.

The drama integrates some of China's intangible cultural heritage — Wing Chun, a martial art style which originated in South China, and *xiangyunsha*, or gambiered Canton gauze, a traditional silk fabric that originated in Guangdong, particularly Shunde district of Foshan — into the storyline and performance, exploring the development of Lingnan culture and displaying the beauty of modern Chinese civilization to the world.

Dancers dressed in *xiangyunsha*-made costumes perform martial arts through dance, blending strength with grace.

"*Wing Chun* creates a good model for the combination of the strong



From left: A still from *Wing Chun*, an original dance drama created and staged by Shenzhen Opera and Dance Theater. A stage photo from the original opera *Marco Polo*, commissioned by the Guangzhou Opera House. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

and soft characteristics of Lingnan people, their open and inclusive spirit and local lifestyle and customs. It achieves a spiritual refinement of Lingnan culture and advances our Guangdong-produced literature and art another step forward," said Chen Jianzhong, executive deputy leader of the stage art creation special working team at the

Guangdong Academy of Arts and a first-level playwright.

Early this month, *Marco Polo*, an original opera by Guangzhou Opera House that had its premiere in 2018, was restaged in Guangzhou. With nearly 200 performers, the massive ensemble brought the stunning epic Marco Polo back to life on stage.

During the shows, an exhibition

of Marco Polo-related intangible cultural heritage was held at the Guangzhou Opera House, featuring more than 30 pieces of "Kwon-glazed porcelain" and "Cantonese embroidery" arts, tracing Marco Polo's footsteps and showcasing the ancient friendship and cultural exchanges along the millennia-old trade routes.

Before this, Guangzhou launched the original dance drama *Awakening Lion* in 2018. The first grand folk dance drama featured the national ICH item of Guangdong lion dancing, combining Lingnan dance with lion dance and martial arts.

Awakening Lion won the "dance drama award" at the 11th Lotus Award, the highest dance award in China later that year. Since its debut, *Awakening Lion* has received widespread acclaim and become a new symbol of Lingnan culture.

In recent years, Guangdong has conducted numerous innovative practices, using various forms such as dance dramas, musicals, films and games to present the cultural and historical context of Lingnan.

The latest work, the Cantonese musical *I Am What I Am*, adapted from the animated film IP of the same name, began its Chinese mainland tour in Guangzhou on May 9. This musical incorporates many local elements and cultural connotations, showcasing the charm of Lingnan culture and generating great

enthusiasm from its audiences.

As of the end of 2022, Guangdong has five ICH projects inscribed in UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity: Cantonese Opera, *guguin* (Lingnan school), paper-cutting (Guangdong paper-cutting), shadow puppetry (Lufeng shadow puppetry), and tea arts (Chaozhou *gongfu* tea arts).

The province is home to 165 national-level ICH representative projects and 816 provincial-level ones; 132 national-level and 824 provincial-level ICH inheritors; and one national-level and nine provincial-level cultural ecological protection experimental zones.



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