

LIFE

Shandong province, where the Yellow River flows into the Bohai Sea, is exploring innovative ways to inherit time-honored cultural handicrafts, passed down through generations, and utilize ancient techniques to enrich people's cultural lives — not to mention their pockets.

At Nishan town in Shandong's Jining city, the birthplace of Confucius, more than 600 fine handicrafts were on show at an exhibition held during the 2022 China International Confucius Cultural Festival and the eighth Nishan Forum on World Civilizations at the end of September. The events celebrated the country's craftsmanship traditions through collaborations between traditional and modern designers and artists.

With mortise and tenon, Hao Liyan from Tengzhou, a county-level city of Shandong, built several works on site, ranging from animals to architecture.

In use for more than 7,000 years, mortise and tenon is one of the oldest construction methods in the world. Instead of using nails, it relies on interlocking joints to connect pieces of wood together.

"Mortise and tenon building blocks bring traditional craftsmanship back into our lives. That's the value of inheriting our Chinese traditional culture," says Hao.

He adds that his mortise and tenon building blocks have performed well on the market.

"Our production capacity can't meet the growing market demand. Not only children but also elderly people like our Chinese building blocks," Hao says.

At Longwanhu Art Town, which neighbors Nishan town, the Luban lock has become a popular study project, attracting many students to try disassembling and assembling the ancient Chinese puzzle.

The lock is produced through an intricate technique where countless small wooden pieces are crafted to interlock without the use of nails.

It is named after its alleged inventor Lu Ban (507-444 BC), a famous scientist and artisan who is credited in ancient texts with dreaming up a variety of wondrous mechanisms, from mills and



From left: With mortise and tenon, Hao Liyan builds a structure at the China International Confucius Cultural Festival held at Nishan town in Jining, Shandong province. Paper artist Li Jinbo crafts a delicate design. Li Yinfeng displays an image of Confucius at the exhibition using Lu embroidery. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



Traditional art, modern incentives

Ancient culture is being used to strengthen contemporary identity and promote growth, **Zhao Ruixue** reports in Jining, Shandong province.



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Hao Liyan, craftsman from Tengzhou, Shandong province

grappling hooks to flying bamboo magpies.

"The Luban lock is an educational toy which not only trains the brain but also lets children experience ancient wisdom," says Jiang Leping, a woodwork teacher working at Longwanhu's Luban lock project.

"Many children show great interest in the lock. They will keep working on it until they figure out the

way to disassemble and assemble it," Jiang adds.

The Shandong government has been carrying out measures to further encourage the development of the province's intangible cultural heritage.

The measures cover 10 sectors, and focus on a variety of aspects, such as handicraft standards, design, development, brand build-

ing, marketing and policy support.

The province has organized exhibitions and promotions to provide increased exposure for its handicrafts industry.

In addition, selected handicrafts are on show at scenic areas and tourism-focused communities and rural areas, according to the Shandong Provincial Department of Culture and Tourism.

Designers and artists have combined modern innovation with traditional handicrafts to create new products.

At the exhibition held during the Confucius cultural festival, several artists created Confucius-themed handicrafts to pay their respects to the great Chinese philosopher.

Li Yinfeng, from Weifang city in

Shandong, displayed at the exhibition an image of Confucius done using Lu embroidery.

Lu embroidery is the general name for embroidery produced in Shandong province, and has been marked out by the government as national-level intangible cultural heritage. It has a history of more than 2,000 years.

As a typical representative of local culture in Shandong, Lu embroidery is one of the eight famous embroidery in China.

"I spent two years embroidering the sage and used human hair to embroider his eyebrows, hair and beard," says Li.

To make Confucius' face vivid, Li embroidered seven layers, each using different techniques and thread colors.

She started learning embroidery from her grandmother and mother when she was 6, and has been refining the technique for over three decades.

Li has also been integrating modern design concepts and innovative stitching with traditional craftsmanship in her customized work.

"Our customized Chinese traditional costumes bear embroidery made according to clients' characteristics, such as their personality and body shape, and are well-received by the market," says Li.

At another stall, Li Jinbo, an inheritor of Gaomi county's unique paper-cutting techniques — also recognized by the government as intangible cultural heritage — spent eight hours cutting out a bust of Confucius.

"The most difficult part is cutting the thick beard. I can't make any tears while cutting it," he says.

The paper-cutter uses a special method to attach the delicate paper images to fans and screens, purchased by festivalgoers as souvenirs.

"Our traditional culture can be better cherished and promoted when we bring it into our daily lives," the craftsman says, adding that he is developing more ways to promote paper-cutting techniques, including offering free classes in schools.

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MSD vows to strengthen goal of Healthy China with local partners

By YUAN SHENGGAO

Global biopharmaceutical giant MSD is celebrating 30 years of growth in the Chinese market and vows to further expand its presence, contributing to China's healthcare industry and public health development. One of the ways it hopes to accomplish this is through more partnerships.

On Sept 28, MSD signed a cooperation framework agreement with State-owned drugmaker and distributor Sinopharm, which has extensive expertise and a powerful network within China's pharmaceutical industry. The agreement will see MSD grant Sinopharm distribution rights and exclusive import rights for its oral antiviral medicine which fights against COVID-19, for patients in the Chinese mainland following regulatory approval. MSD and Sinopharm will also assess the feasibility of a future technology transfer with the aim of facilitating the production, supply, and commercialization of the new medicine in China.

When commenting on the cooperation, Anna Van Acker, senior vice president of MSD, and president of MSD in China said, "The cooperation with Sinopharm, a Chinese pharma giant, is meant to fight against COVID-19 together so that patients if needed can be treated as soon as possible. This is another important step taken by MSD to fulfill our mission, follow our century-old legacy of pandemic fighting, and meet the needs of patients and communities. We are convinced that public health knows no borders, and that international cooperation will accelerate all aspects of drug development and production and help China and even the whole world curb the pandemic.

A committed journey

In 1989, even before opening its first office in the country, MSD began its journey with China by transferring the then most advanced genetically engineered recombinant hepatitis B vaccine technology to help China curb the then-rampant hepatitis B public health problem.

Three years later, MSD established its headquarters in Shanghai. The company aspires to make a difference yet understands that it cannot do it alone.

As a firm believer in the potential of collaboration, MSD has valued its partnership with key players and some of its greatest achievements have been born out of collaborative efforts.

In 2011, MSD partnered with Chongqing Zhifei Biological Products on vaccines' import,



MSD's booth at the ongoing fifth China International Import Expo. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

distribution, and joint promotion. Among them, HPV and rotavirus vaccines have benefited 25 million Chinese women and girls, and approximately 9 million infants to date.

MSD also seeks to work with public institutions, universities, and associations to collectively promote public health for the well-being of more patients and the general public, enabling them to access affordable medical solutions. The ongoing CIIE is witnessing the launch of a Public Health Scholarship, demonstrating MSD's vision to work with public associations to support public health education for a healthier China.

"I think a successful partnership starts with a shared vision. It's not the size of a partner that matters, but their value system and the purpose. We have common goals, we need to do the right thing the right way, and we focus on our strengths to create synergies that can contribute to faster access or better patient outcomes, because patients are at the core of all of our decisions," Van Acker said.

30 years of growth

For MSD, finding the right partnership in

the right place at the right time is just one of the many reasons the company has been successful in China.

As a world-leading research-intensive biopharmaceutical company, MSD's investment in research and development reached \$12.2 billion in 2021. In China, the same commitment has resulted in the launch of nearly 30 human health products with more than 1,700 local scientists and supporting function employees at the R & D center in Beijing.

Another driving force is talent, not only for the development of MSD but also for the healthcare industry. The company has expanded significantly over the decades, while making efforts to build a culture of diversity and inclusion and create ample room for individual development. "Another priority we have is our talents. All of the growth and achievements can only happen when we have the best talent, when we provide them with an environment to which they can bring their best selves to work, and when they feel they are writing their future too," Van Acker said.

China has already become one of the biggest growth pillars and most vital markets for

MSD's global growth strategy. "The regulatory environment has significantly geared up, the approvals and the access to innovative drugs has greatly improved and accelerated. We want to drive superior access and outcomes for patients and consumers so that healthcare can be enjoyed by all," Van Acker said.

Writing the future

The medical giant is on a continuous journey, aiming to become a trusted and leading partner in China's healthcare ecosystem with a sense of duty and urgency in order to save and improve more patients' lives, according to Van Acker.

Committed to further meeting the huge unmet medical needs in China, MSD launched the "Writing Our Future" China strategy, empowering MSD with sustainable, long-term growth and ongoing development with an ever-growing ability to support the goals of "Healthy China 2030". The Strategy also has a Chinese name where the character 'Yao' has multiple connotations.

"It's a homonym for 'medicine', illustrating our mission to save and improve lives with



Anna Van Acker, senior vice-president of MSD and president of MSD in China.

innovative drugs. It also symbolizes the Chinese character 'key' to patient access, which will help to unlock the benefits of 'Healthy China 2030'," Van Acker explained. "The third meaning is that we 'must' strengthen innovation and collaboration to achieve success. Finally, it demonstrates our determination to jointly 'light up' a brighter future for China's healthcare ecosystem."

Displays at the 5th CIIE

MSD China is showcasing its 30-year legacy and future vision with creative "Future Racetracks" to "Healthy China 2030" at the fifth China International Import Expo in Shanghai. Located at 7.2A3-03, the MSD booth covers an area of 1,000 square meters, making it one of the largest and most eye-catching pavilions.

It consists of three racetracks corresponding to MSD China's core strategy. The M Cafe is one of the fun highlights, demonstrating MSD's innovative spirit of openness and cooperation through an interactive experience area.

A series of innovative exhibits are featured, including key human health products such as HPV vaccines, antiviral medicines, and tumor immunotherapy, as well as intelligent devices in animal health, outlining the remarkable journey and wonderful ideals of MSD in, with and for a flourishing healthcare industry.

There will be more than 10 events and agreement-signing ceremonies between MSD and its ecosystem partners in China at the CIIE, demonstrating the company's strong, long-term commitment to Chinese patients and the general public, to jointly write the future for a healthier China.