

# Collector impressed by his first visit to Jiading

Zhou Xin

Art collector Liu Bing is concerned with the preservation of Jiading's cultural and historical heritage. "I've been to Paris. Their city is also expanding, but the new regions are all in the suburbs, while the old town remains as it was. It is a good way to keep the city's original culture while developing new areas.

"Jiading is very lucky as a place that is rich in its history and culture, just like Paris. Locals here need to be aware of the fact, or you'll regret not doing anything to protect your culture before it is ruined."

Liu was born in Shanghai in 1932. In 1972, he moved from Taiwan to Los Angeles, and gained recognition in Chinese cultural and publishing circles overseas as well as Chinese collectors. Although he's been living abroad for many years, he is still familiar with the style of architecture in Jiading.

The preservation of cultural heritage is not only a problem **facing the city** but is also troubling collectors.

"I am worried that the younger generations are not going to be particularly interested in some of our collections," he said. "How can we make sure that these precious items are well preserved and not sold or discarded?"

When it comes to collecting, Liu has his own rule — he only collects and never sells.

"My family told me that it is important to pass these antiques on to future generations in China instead of selling them at a low price just to make money," Liu said.

He said some antique dealers in China would go overseas to purchase Chinese antiques. Sometimes the owners don't have much knowledge about their possessions and would sell them at a price far below their real value.

On his first visit to Jiading on July 15, Liu spoke highly of the Wenbo Center project because he thinks that it will resolve his concerns.

"Jiading has a healthy cultural environment. There are both Chinese and Western museums here for visitors of various interests. I heard that several museums are going to be built in the center and I hope overseas Chinese collectors are willing to donate to this project."

## Responsibility to educate the public

Liu stressed the need to provide clear explanations for visitors. "Sometimes visitors are confused when they see similar works by the same artist, thinking that some of them might be fake. I think museums have a responsibility to influence and educate the public," he said.

When Liu holds exhibitions, he always talks to visitors and discusses art with them.

"Some foreigners don't understand the beauty of Chinese landscape painting. I would explain to them that these lines represent the mountains and those colors represent the water. Through explanations like this, they become more in touch with the essence of Chinese art."

Although this was his first visit to the



Collector Liu Bing listens to the introduction of a tour guide on his visit to an Anhui-Style house on Zhouqiao Old Street.



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district, Liu already knows a thing or two about Jiading.

"We Shanghainese people originally come from all corners of the country," he said. "Some say that we lack the spirit of solidarity. I've been to places in China and abroad, and I haven't found one Shanghainese Association. Therefore I decided to start one myself." Sitting in an Anhui-style house on Zhouqiao Old Street, he asked: "Do you speak Shanghainese? The Shanghainese people in America are all very proud of our hometown."

Liu is a man of many titles — consultant of Cross-Strait Relations Seminar in the United States, honorary president of the Los Angeles Photography Association, and president of Liu Shi Art Foundation. But the thing he wants to talk about the most is the Shanghainese Association.

"Our association requires potential members to take a 'test' — read an article that I wrote in Shanghainese," Liu said. "What's interesting about this is that in Shanghainese, a character is pronounced differently in different words or phrases. I'm always fascinated by the language."

Liu has been following Shanghai's development over the past few years. Being far from his hometown, Liu has been following the great changes Shanghai has gone through and is amazed by Jiading's fast growing pace. "I did not expect to see this many high-rises and broad streets in Jiading. These skyscrapers are a rare sight even in Los Angeles."



## About Wenbo Center

Wenbo Center is in the south part of Jiading Old Town. It is near the S5 Hujia Highway Jiading exit. The project will occupy a space of 50,000 square meters and be built into an open park. The main building will be a commercial complex, displaying private collections from China and overseas and works by contemporary and modern artists. The museum will have more than 30 independent exhibition halls and spaces designed for seminars. The center will also provide support facilities for visitors looking for an unforgettable cultural experience.