

LIFESHANGHAI



A *mamianqun* from the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911) features phoenix as the ornament.

The *mamianqun*, translated as the “horse-face skirt”, is a type of traditional clothing that is making a comeback as the latest fashion trend, gaining increasing popularity among younger Chinese generations, according to those in the know.

The curators of an ongoing exhibition, *Splendid Mamianqun*, at the Shanghai Textiles Museum, made the above observation, due to the emerging trend of young people's growing sense of cultural pride.

Mamianqun is a type of *hanfu* that features a high, flat front and pleated sides. It originated in the Song Dynasty (960-1279) and maintained its popularity during the Ming and Qing dynasties (1368-1911).

Launched on May 18, the two-month exhibition showcases dozens of *mamianqun*, including over 40 pieces from the ancient dynasties and 12 modified skirts with innovative designs. The exhibition has attracted a large number of visitors, many of which came dressed in *mamianqun* — both males and females, says Jia Yiliang, curator of the Shanghai Textiles Museum and a curator of the exhibition.

“There is an old saying — ‘You are what you wear’. *Mamianqun* embodies the aesthetic, philosophy and wisdom of ancient Chinese dressmakers, reflecting the status, thoughts and experiences of the people wearing them,” Jia says.

“*Mamianqun*, as a type of clothing, is also a language of self-expression and is close to our daily lives. You can either admire them from a professional perspective for the craftsmanship, technique and philosophy, or simply from a personal view and preference.”

Despite the long history of *mamianqun*, it was not until recent years that this traditional garment drew extensive focus, gaining international attention on the ancient Chinese skirt.

Ma Wenjuan, one of the curators of the exhibition and deputy director of the Journal Center at Donghua University, was among the first to introduce in details the skirt to more people in 2022.

Along with some notable professors, Ma published a post to explain the fea-



Above: The Shanghai Textiles Museum's ongoing exhibition *Splendid Mamianqun*.

Below: A painting from the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) features people in the royal palace dressed in *mamianqun*. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



Another, featuring figures and courtyards, also from the Qing Dynasty.

If You Go

Splendid Mamianqun

Through to July 18
F3, Shanghai Textiles Museum, 150 Aomen Road, Putuo district, Shanghai

Traditional Chinese garment makes stylish comeback

Mamianqun becomes trendy among younger generations as modern iterations reflect self-expression, **Wang Xin** reports.

tures of *mamianqun* and its origin in China.

Yet, Ma found one single post far from enough to make the public understand *mamianqun*.

Working together with authors, Donghua University Press published a book on May 17 to comprehensively explain the traditional Chinese clothing, including its history, colors, patterns, techniques and cultural connotations.

“*Mamianqun* is one of the most influential and widely worn traditional Chinese clothing in the recent *guofeng* — Chinese style using elements from traditional culture — boom. Its popularity not only leads the new Chinese fashion

trends but also witnesses the rising cultural confidence of Chinese people,” says Jia Xizeng, one of the curators of the exhibition and an author of the book.

He notes that the *mamianqun* design, structure, pattern and cultural connotations have formed the coexistence of its sporty, decorative and ceremonial features, representing the wisdom and aesthetic of ancient Chinese dressmaking.

Such features have also made *mamianqun* a versatile garment suited for both everyday wear and ceremonious occasions.

Seamlessly integrating tradition and modernity, an increasing number of young people in China are choosing it for their mix-and-match daily outfits.

According to a report on female consumption trends by Douyin e-commerce, over the past year, the platform's orders for new Chinese-style clothing increased by 195 percent year-on-year. Orders for *hanfu* surged by 336 percent year-on-year, with orders for *mamianqun* rocketing by 841 percent year-on-year.

Jia Yiliang also notes that she has seen the growing popularity of *mamianqun* and *hanfu* among males.

“In addition to young female visitors, we are pleased to see many males and elderly at the exhibition. They are yearning for traditional Chinese clothing as well. Unlike other traditional Chinese garments, such as *qipao*, *mamianqun*

usually relies less on gender or body shape and is easier to wear.”

“Although people's lifestyles and dress habits have changed dramatically with the development of society, the *mamianqun* still exudes a unique charm. It is not only loved by traditional dress enthusiasts but also valued and sought after by Western fashion brands and designers,” Jia Xizeng adds.

At the exhibition, several relic *mamianqun*, as well as new designs by Lin Xi, are on display.

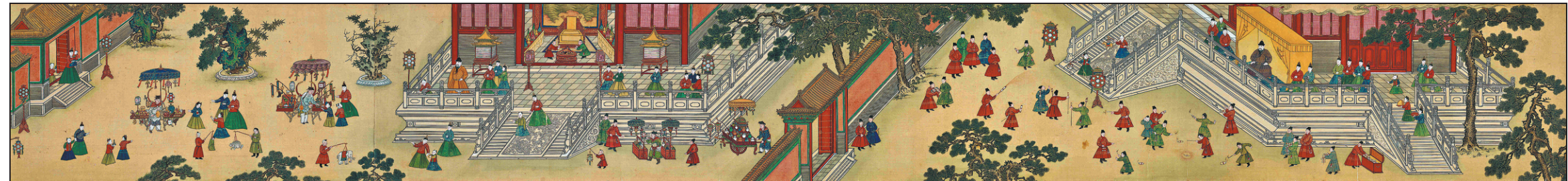
As an inheritor of the craftsmanship for making *mamianqun* and the founder of a clothing brand, Lin has been making efforts to bring this traditional Chinese garment to the global stage with her modern modifications. Notably, Lin launched a show featuring *mamianqun* during the Paris Fashion Week last September.

“Clothing is a premier bridge for cultural exchanges,” says Jia Yiliang, highlighting a donated piece of *mamianqun* on display. At the request of an American in China back in the Qing Dynasty, the garment was remodeled from the traditional Chinese skirt, brought to the United States, kept generation to generation, and finally found its way back home to the Shanghai Textiles Museum.

Witnessing the success of the exhibition, both Ma and Jia Yiliang are confident and ready for their plans to dig deeper into this sector.

“Through *mamianqun*, we expect to draw more attention to the clothing and traditional Chinese culture. We will continue to work to promote the culture to a wider audience, and I believe more young people will join us,” says Ma firmly.

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Vintage animation gets fresh update at exhibition

By ZHANG KUN
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Vintage films by the Shanghai Animation Film Studio are projected at the Inlet, a new lifestyle hub in Shanghai's Hongkou district, alongside more recent notable animation films from across China.

A *Dialogue Beyond Time and Space* is an exhibition jointly hosted by Shanghai Animation Film Studio and the HiShorts! Film Festival.

Taking place from June 8 to the end of August, it features some of the “forgotten gems” of animated films by the Shanghai Animation Film Studio, as well as a series of new animation films curated by the HiShorts! Film Festival. It is a leading festival in China featuring short film productions of no more than 40 minutes.

Since its founding in 1957, the animation film studio has created more than 500 feature films.

Some widely beloved productions, such as the *Monkey King*, have been so popular through the past decades that they conjure treasured childhood memories of different Chinese generations, says Wang Anyi, a staff member of the studio.

“We have selected 36 films from our archives, which are as brilliant as the most beloved classics but are less known to the public because they have had fewer opportunities for projection.”

Some of the vintage films, such as the 1963 film *Princess Peahen*, have been restored with 4K technology, exhibiting vivid colors and fresh brightness.



Left: Visitors interact with the Window Project artwork. Right: Audiences enjoy the restored animation movies by the Shanghai Animation Film Studio. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



Also showcased are films selected by the HiShorts! Film Festival. With the first installation launched in Xiamen of Fujian province in 2019, the festival has been held annually, receiving more than 7,000 entries from 118 countries and regions in 2023.

“We have discovered through the festival's past five sessions that the cutting-edge animation filmmakers in China are keen to bor-

row from traditional Chinese art, such as the Han Dynasty (206 BC-AD 220) brick and stone pictorial reliefs and the Buddhist frescoes of Dunhuang,” says Zeng Yiling, a staff member for the festival.

The films are arranged in four chapters, showcased in posters, manuscripts, stop-motion puppets, storyboards and so on, revealing the creative process and evolu-

tion of the art and craft of animation filmmaking.

“This exhibition is a dialogue that goes beyond time and space when we rediscover the heritage and artistic achievements of pioneering animation artists,” says Peng Yong, deputy general manager of the animation film studio.

“It also provides new inspiration and

motivation for the younger generation of animation creators.”

Qiu Anxiong, the curator of the exhibition, recalls his childhood experience of watching cartoon movies shown before the feature film in the cinema.

“Very often I enjoyed the cartoon more than the feature film,” he says.

Later on, when he became a contemporary artist, cartoon movies, such as *Nezha Against the Dragon King*, inspired him to create one of his most significant art projects, *The New Book of Mountains and Seas*.

“As a child, I watched the cartoon movies simply for fun, without any artistic or aesthetic judgment,” he says at the opening.

“When I grew up and became a professional artist, I took a fresh look at them and found them artistically impeccable, often with elements of Chinese ink painting and other strong stylistic expressions.”

The Shanghai studio has achieved such artistic heights that it was widely recognized in the world animation art scene as the representative China school.

“Looking back, I feel more and more grateful for the artistic nourishment these films brought me as a child,” he says.

Qiu has brought together a group of contemporary artists to create The Window Project for the exhibition, consisting of installations, live music, poetry, performances and more.

All those are showcased in giant glass boxes in different corners of the Inlet, a lifestyle hub refurbished from old houses along eight lanes at the juncture of Sichuan Road North and Haining Road in the city.