

# Inheritance of Folk Culture in Shanxi from the Perspective of Rural Culture: Taking Jin-style Brick Carving as an Example

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## Abstract

Brick carving is a decorative art in traditional architecture. As the most varied building decorative component in folk architecture, it plays an important role in public space and environments, in which Jin-style brick carving is particularly brilliant. This paper uses comparative examples to illustrate the differences between Jin-style brick carvings and brick carvings in other regions and demonstrates the unique artistic style of Jin-style brick carvings, thus describing the culture of Shanxi merchants. However, with continuous development, the inheritance of Jin-style brick carvings has faced enormous challenges. The disrepair and loss of the production process plunged Jin-style brick carvings into the dilemma of dissemination and protection. On this basis, this paper proposes breaking the practical predicament of Jin-style brick carving, opening the market for brick carving handicrafts, and using the aesthetic education resources contained in Jin-style brick carving culture to promote the complete spread of the process and reshape local culture. The influence of Jin-style brick carving should be strengthened and expanded, and the internal driving force of culture should be given play, thus driving the high-quality development of the cultural industry and exploring the cultural core of Jin-style brick carving.

## Keywords

Jin-style brick carving, local culture, cultural inheritance, folk culture

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## 1. Introduction

Shanxi folk house brick carvings were awarded the national intangible cultural heritage in 2008. Among them, Jin-style brick carvings are a type of folk house brick carvings, occupying a major position in Shanxi folk house brick carvings. In the evolution of architectural style, to meet the needs of social life, such as simple spiritual aspirations, religious beliefs and the aesthetic standards of the people, the brick carving craftsmen of the Jin-style have conducted in-depth studies of techniques and extensive exchanges in the context of craftsmanship. It has a history of more than 3,000 years. There are seven main types of brick carving: Beijing brick carving, Tianjin brick carving, Shanxi brick carving, Huizhou brick carving, Suzhou brick carving, Guangdong brick carving, and Hezhou brick carving (Liu, 2018). The brick carving art system is divided into two schools, North China and South China, which are usually dubbed "South Hui and North Jin". Owing to the vast area of China and the different climates and human and geographic environments, the northern and southern regions are significantly different. The north pays attention to full composition, sincere simplicity,

thick and luxuriant, mainly in Hezhou brick carving, Shanxi brick carving and Beijing brick carving. The south has exquisite carving technology and gentle style, represented by Suzhou brick carving, Huizhou brick carving and Guangzhou brick carving. The difference between the northern and southern brick carvings is not only reflected in the different carriers in the residential buildings but also in meeting the simple spiritual needs of the people and entrusting them with good wishes, pursuits of belief and aesthetics. With the progress of society and the improvement of brick carving technology, traditional brick carving art has become a witness of the evolution of national culture, especially the brick carving of the Jin-style, which has witnessed the birth of the treasures of Shanxi folk art.

The “Opinions on Further Strengthening the Protection of Intangible Cultural Heritage” proposed in 2021 stated that “intangible cultural heritage is an important part of China’s excellent traditional culture, and protecting, inheriting and making good use of intangible cultural heritage are critical for the continuation of history.” This approach is highly important for promoting the cultural context, strengthening cultural confidence, promoting exchanges and mutual learning among civilizations, and building socialist cultural power” (The State Council, 2021). As a special cultural carrier, intangible cultural heritage not only inherits aesthetics but also provides spiritual support and development motivation. Under the new situation, the inheritance of the Jin-style brick carving not only needs to tap the diversified cultural value and function but also needs to meet the transformation needs of market development, which is a realistic consideration for the inheritance of culture in Shanxi.

## **2. An Overview of Jin-Style Brick Carving**

Jin-style brick carving is a comprehensive two-dimensional and three-dimensional art that combines poetry, calligraphy, seal carving, sculpture, and painting. It has nurtured the Chinese craftsmen's spirit of striving for excellence and meticulousness in art. Every carving stroke embodies sincere strength and emotion, and is the profound persistence of generations of craftsmen.

Jin-style brick carvings, with various carriers, are widely used in brick and tile buildings in Shanxi and are used mainly on roof ridges, screen walls, flower walls, headers, and gatehouses. The themes of the Jin-style brick carvings are even more overwhelming. In addition to the common flowers, birds, fish and insects, they also inspire working people in production and manufacturing, which accompanies folk life. With the development of the new era, Jin-style brick carvings are also making continuous progress with the changes in society, bursting out with the brilliance of the new era in today's society.

### **2.1 Origin of Jin-Style Brick Carving**

The origin of Jin-style brick carving can be traced to the Eastern Zhou Dynasty, and it was developed from the hollow bricks of the late Warring States period and the portrait bricks of the Han Dynasty (Shanxi Economic Daily, 2015). This art form initially developed centripetally, with the Taigu area at the core. Over time, it then adopted a radial pattern and gradually spread to the surrounding areas, with its influence reaching Qingxu, Linfen and other places. In the end, it was scattered throughout Shanxi Province, forming the unique brick-carving culture that we can see today. The Jin-style brick carving flourished in the Jin Dynasty and made brilliant achievements in the Ming and Qing Dynasties, which were spread to every household. Owing to the rise of Shanxi merchants and active commercial capital, it was widely used in houses, temples and other buildings in Shanxi, which gave birth to Jin-style brick carving with a unique northern style and reached a peak of development. Different brick carvings have different meanings. For example, the Suspended Fish and Provoke Grass Painting in Figure 1 uses triangular cloud patterns to surround the fish tail to imitate the image of water, which means fire prevention.

### **2.2 Cultural Connotations of Jin-Style Brick Carving**

As carriers, Jin-style brick carvings create landscapes through the courtyard space. The undulating changes in virtual reality create a cadence of rhythm for residential buildings and highlight the rhythm of the courtyard. The beautiful vision for life, the hope placed in life and the emphasis on the studies of future generations are expressed through decorative patterns. The Shanxi courtyard not only showed lifelike characters and stories

through brick carvings to fully demonstrate its unique charm but also placed Jin-style brick carvings throughout the immortal courtyard, indirectly conveying the core values of Shanxi merchant culture. These stories embody the eight characters of the spirit of Shanxi merchant integrity, diligence, tenacity and unity and pass these virtues on to future generations. In the Jin Brick Family's masterpiece “Impression of the Silk Road”, the glorious journey of the Silk Road is narrated. This ancient route for trade and cultural exchange starts from the ancient capital of Chang'an and extends to ancient Rome. The works covered important moments and people in history, such as Zhang Qian's trip to the Western Regions, Princess Wencheng's marriage marriage, and Wang Zhaojun's travel to the Fortress. There are also descriptions of regions with a long history, such as Mogao Grottoes and Quanzhou, that were involved in the Maritime Silk Road, demonstrating their far-reaching cultural influence and historical value. Among them, “Thousand-Armed and Thousand-Eyed Avalokiteshvara” was carved on the basis of the murals of the Yuan Dynasty in Dunhuang, and it won the gold medal at the Provincial Cultural Expo (Taigu District People's Government, 2020). In the long process of development and evolution, brick carving art has gradually become an important medium for conveying auspicious meanings. It not only symbolizes the blessing of the heavenly monarch and the prosperity of the family, implies peace and joy and a thriving career but also represents the desire to live and work in peace and contentment and to live a long and healthy life. These rich allegories are skillfully integrated into residential buildings to protect and calm the homeland.

*Figure 1: Suspended Fish and Provoke Grass Painting*



Source: ZS Beike (b.d.).

*Figure 2: Brick carving art in the Li family courtyard*



Source: Sina (2019).

Figure 3: Thousand-Armed and Thousand-Eyed Avalokiteshvara



Source: Yishudaka (n.d.).

### 2.3 Current Status of Inheritance

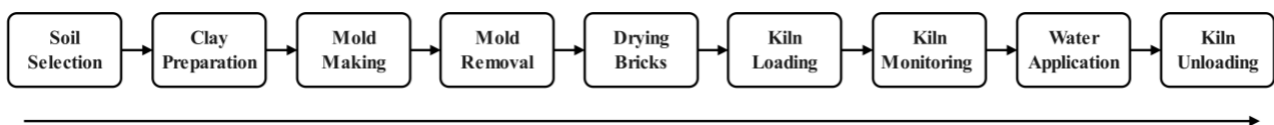
While adhering to traditional techniques, the Jin-style brick carvings also face the impact of modern technology and the challenge of the scarcity of inheritors. The Wen family, located in Dunfang Village, Guhucun Town, Shanxi Province, is a famous local brick-hailing family. During the Qianlong period, Wen Shiwei, who was known as one of the “Three Immortals”, was an outstanding representative of the family. Since then, the skill has been passed on to Wen Youde, Wen Changyi, Wen Chengjie, Wen Qide, Wen Zhongshou and Wen Haikui, and now Mr. Wen Jianming is the eighth generation inheritor of the Jin-style brick carving (Shanxi Cultural Tourism, 2019). In the early 1990s, Mr. Wen Jianming and his father Wen Haikui co-founded the Jin-style brick carving studio in Dunfang Village, Hucun Town, Taigu County. After hard work and development, the research institute was formally established in August 2010. The works are divided into three main categories: traditional Jin-style brick carvings, miniature brick carvings and indoor brick carvings as background walls (Kang, 2017). At present, Mr. Wen Jianming is devoting his life to the systematic research and practice of Jin-style brick-carving techniques and, at the same time, focuses on training a new generation of inheritors to inherit and carry forward the exquisite skills of his family and inject new vitality into this art. Using the research institute as a platform, he is committed to excavating the depth and breadth of the Jin-style brick carving art and effectively protecting and promoting its further inheritance and development in the contemporary era.

## 3. Artistic Characteristics of Jin-Style Brick Carving

### 3.1 Brick Carving Process and Characteristics

The production of brick carvings is not easy. From the selection of raw materials to the kiln, there are nine processes including soil selection, mud making, mold making, blank removal, blank cooling, kiln entry, fire watching, water supply, and kiln exit (Shen, 2024).

Figure 4: Brick carving process



First, the selection of soil is the cornerstone of creation. The production of masonry begins with molding clay into a blank, which is then fired at high temperature. Bricks used for carving should have the characteristics of wear resistance, moisture resistance and moderate hardness. In the raw material preparation stage, the soil needs to be fully stirred and then filtered with clean water to remove impurities. After multiple periods of precipitation, the precipitate is removed, and the soil is then dried and trampled to form a plastic billet. The fired bricks require further grinding to achieve a smooth and level surface. Owing to the different raw materials used, firing techniques and shapes of adobe bricks, a variety of bricks are available on the market, including gray bricks, red bricks, pattern bricks, strip bricks, square bricks, and hollow bricks.

Second, an important factor in the formation of brick carving art is the processing of craftsmanship, such as firing, burning, chiseling, and pushing. Each has its own advantages and disadvantages. For example, firing has few layers and lacks detail, while firing is labor intensive and time-consuming, the lines of the adobe produced are crisp, and the carved works are suitable for close viewing. Chiseling involves chiseling and engraving directly on finished bricks via techniques such as an overcast line, flat work, line work, deep talk, holes through holes, work, and a round body, with the richest expressiveness (Qin, 2019). Next, carving begins, which is divided into two types: carving before the kiln and carving after the kiln. First, use a knife and chisel to “make a blank” on the brick, commonly known as “forming the shape”. Determine the composition of the picture, depict the three layers of scenery: far, near, and middle. Then determine the specific part of the scenery, and use experienced “knife paths” and “knife techniques” to depict it. Finally, color it after firing. The colors are not too saturated or bright, and are mainly pleasing to the eye.

### 3.2 Characteristics of Jin-Style Brick Carving

The Jin-style of brick carving can be divided into two types: pre-kiln carving and post-kiln carving (Yu, 2021). The former is to carve before the bricks are fired. This process is simpler because the unfired clay is softer and easier to carve. The latter is to carve after the bricks have been fired, taken out of the kiln and completely cooled. Compared with pre-kiln carving, this technique is more time-consuming and labor-intensive, and requires a higher level of skill from the craftsmen. However, the craft products it produces are more delicate, and the shapes are more distinct and powerful. The two carving techniques are elegant and are mainly used to distinguish between residential buildings. For example, different social classes have different carving patterns, and the residences of nobles and commoners also have different material thicknesses.

*Table 1: Carving process*

Craft	Characteristics	Role	Production procedure
Pre-kiln carving	Hollow structure	During the firing process, gas inside the brick is released to reduce deformation	First, use a brick dipped in water to smooth it, and then “draft”, “final draft”, cutting, “rounding” and “refining”
Post-kiln carving	Multicolor painting	Make more detailed creations or repair defects generated in the firing process after the material hardens	Cool, polish, paint, and add details to the finished product, such as facial expressions and clothing textures





The carving techniques used in brick carving are mostly shaded line engraving, bas-relief, high-relief, round carving, semicircular carving, hollow-out carving, floor-reduced-level carving, etc. Brick carving art in the northern region tends to adopt abstract pattern designs, emphasizing the density of the composition. In these brick carvings, the size and relative relationship between the decoration and the actual object are often scaled because the patterns are redesigned and adjusted during the creation process. The Jin-style brick carvings have their own advantages and disadvantages. This diversity comes from the architectural characteristics of Shanxi dwellings, that is, the emphasis on the orientation of sitting north facing south and the pursuit of uniformity in layout and decoration. Brick carvings are used mainly on enclosure walls, roof ridges, kissing animals, plaques, flower walls, etc. Brick carvings are characterized by unevenness, and the brick carvings in each part present a unique form and style (Han & Wu, 2021).




### 3.3 Pattern Characteristics of Jin-Style Brick Carvings

The artistic themes of the Jin-style brick carvings were mostly four types of flowers, birds, fish and insects, and the decorative themes can be summarized into three types: prayer for good fortune, ethical education, and exorcism and disaster relief. The patterns are all attached to dwellings and can be divided into two categories: natural and social. The patterns are mainly auspicious, implying auspiciousness, prosperity and prosperity. The natural patterns include plant patterns, mostly flowers and grass patterns, which are used in the places that can be seen directly, such as the gate, courtyard, and screen wall. There are so many patterns that it is hard to list them all. Social life consists mostly of characters and beasts, with rough shapes, which not only have both form and spirit but are also close to the lives of the people, who are popular to hear and see. Some homeowners prefer to engrave the family's ancestral admonitions, personal philosophy of life or world view in brick carvings. This content includes words of truth, aphorisms, and expressions of homeowners' emotions. For example, they may combine the art of calligraphy with brick carving, carving couplets on walls in official script or ancient seal script, or embedding auspicious words such as "auspicious" and "longevity". In addition, these brick carvings also carry the family's expectations and teach for future generations. This content not only provides profound wisdom in real life but also enhances the aesthetic and artistic value of buildings and provides a pleasant aesthetic experience to viewers. Different places have different patterns. The geometric patterns on the fence, such as the fret pattern, cloud pattern and thunder pattern, symbolize auspiciousness and eternity. Plant patterns such as lotus, peony, bamboo, and plum blossoming represent nobility, wealth, tenacity and purity, respectively. Animal patterns such as dragons, phoenixes, kylins, and bats imply auspiciousness and bless (Jiang, 2024). Text patterns such as Fu, Shou, and Xi express good wishes. The dragon pattern on the roof symbolizes power and nobility, the phoenix pattern symbolizes beauty and nobility, the fish pattern represents surplus every year, and the lotus pattern symbolizes purity and elegance. The kissing beasts are mostly kissed by dragons, which are placed at both ends of the main ridge, symbolizing avoiding evil and guarding the house. In addition, the lion, unicorn and seahorse symbolize authority, auspiciousness, auspiciousness and peace, respectively. In addition, calligraphy is often engraved on the plaque, which highlights the cultural implications contained in the building. The border is decorated with cloud and dragon patterns to add to the solemnity of the plaque. Finally, the flower wall, known as the parapet, is decorated with openwork patterns, including hollow geometric figures and flowers and plants, which not only add aesthetics but also promote air circulation.

Table 2: Pattern characteristics

	Composition	Classification	Allegorical	Pictures		Composition	Classification	Allegorical	Pictures
1	Gourd·vine	Natural	Descendants for thousands of generations	 Source: Self-photographed by the author	2	Ruyi·Psimmon	Natural	All the best	 Source: Self-photographed by the author
3	Plum blossom·orchid·bamboo·chrysanthemum	Natural	Gao Jie and chastity	 Source: Self-photographed by the author	4	Peony·Pulsatilla	Characteristics	Wealthy and whiteheaded	 Source: Self-photographed by the author

5	Children·Lotus ·Bat	Social life	Family happiness					
				Source: Self- photographed by the author				

### 3.4 Comparative Analysis Between Jin-Style Brick Carving and Seven Major Brick Carvings

The art of brick carving involves rich historical information. Through a comparative study of brick carving in different regions, we can better understand the development and evolution of brick carving in each period and demonstrate the uniqueness and diversity of cultures in various parts of China. In addition, an in-depth analysis of the artistic characteristics and aesthetic characteristics of brick carving in different regions, a demonstration of their function and significance in different historical backgrounds, and a revelation of the core technology and humanistic value of brick carving techniques in different regions are performed.

Historical development and geographic separation have given birth to seven completely different schools of brick carving, with the difference in style between North China and South China being particularly significant. In general, the brick carvings of the northern school are exquisite, with simple shapes and rough styles, whereas the southern school is known for the diversity of techniques, the delicacy and layering of shapes, and the softness contained in the style (Zeng, 2024). Shanxi is the birthplace of brick carving in the north. The Wang family courtyard is famous for its profound regional characteristics and folk customs and is known as “the No. 1 Residence in China”. The brick carving craftsmanship in this courtyard is fine and complicated and can be considered a typical representative of delicate and complicated styles. Hezhou brick carving applied for World Heritage in 2006 and is also a representative of northern brick carving. The craftsmanship is mainly divided into two types: “kneading” and “carving”. In the process of development, it is different from the Confucian culture of Jin brick carving and incorporates religious elements of Islam, which has multicultural characteristics. Beijing brick carving, which was listed as an intangible cultural heritage in 2009, is deeply rooted in the cultural soil of this ancient capital and is honored as one of the “Four Famous Dan” in Han brick carving art. This art form has been widely used in traditional courtyard buildings in Beijing through the two techniques of brick carving in relief and openwork. What is special in modern times is the miniature brick carvings made by the inheritors. Their creations show the grandeur and exquisite beauty of the capital, such as the glazed nine-dragon wall in the Forbidden City, which has a primary and secondary order. Finally, Tianjin brick carving reached its peak in the Qing Dynasty, with fine carvings, including round carving, relief and line carving. During the Daoguang period of the Qing Dynasty, a unique “brick-sticking” technique was developed. This method was to first carve a small independent brick carving work and then paste it onto the brick surface, giving the work a distinct sense of layering and complex composition design, which has continued to later generations.

*Figure 5: Glazed Nine-Dragon Wall of the Forbidden City in Beijing*



*Figure6: Brick carvings at Wanjuan Hall in Suzhou Master-of-the-Nets Garden*



Source: ZOL (2018).

Source: Qunar (n.d.).

Brick carvings in the southern region are mainly represented by Suzhou brick carvings. They are as hard as metal and are called “gold bricks”. The overall effect is beautiful, fresh, delicate and vivid. Its representative work is the Wanjuantang brick carvings in Wangshiyuan, the “first gatehouse in classical gardens”. The Huizhou brick carvings, also from southern China, use hard and delicate green–gray bricks as materials. The decoration focused on the gatehouse and door cover. The design of these parts has special functions, which can effectively prevent the direct erosion of rainwater above the wall, protect the wall above the door from moisture, and protect the lime from peeling off due to the tide, thus avoiding the appearance of unsightly stains (Wu, 2010). For architectural decoration, the three-dimensional round carving technique was used, the openwork technique was used in the middle background, and the background tended to use multilayer relief, with progressive layers to deepen the sense of layering. This design, which focused on plot development and composition, endowed the building with an elegant and solemn temperament, as described in the poem, “The door cover makes the algae pleasant, and the screen wall becomes a carved wall.” In addition, Guangdong brick carving is famous for its fine carving technique. They can exist as independent works of art or can be combined with various decorative arts, such as painted painting, stucco sculpture and ceramic sculpture, which complement each other and compete to show their brilliance. Two-dimensional painting is characterized by the profound line technique, which is as fine as silk, and the techniques include high and low relief, openwork and line engraving.

Table 3: Introduction to the seven major brick carvings

	Name	Characteristics	Vector type	Initial period	Theme
1	Jin-style brick carving	With rich cultural connotations and profound good wishes	Ridge collar, screen wall, flower wall, ledge, gate tower, etc.	Eastern Zhou Dynasty	Most of the auspicious patterns symbolize happiness, prosperity, longevity, happiness, and wealth
2	Hezhou brick carving	Absorbed painting and woodcut techniques	Screen wall, gate tower, ridge head, wall wall, coupon gate, ridge decoration, mountain flowers, etc.	Qin and Han	Dragon, phoenix, lion and various flowers, birds and insects
3	Huizhou brick carving	Most intaglios and bas-reliefs; a few line engravings	Blue–gray roof, blue-brick door cover, gatehouse, cornices, etc.	Song Dynasty	Daily life patterns such as flower and bird figures, play scenes, and auspicious decorations
4	Beijing brick carving	Simple style with exquisite carving	Gates, pavilions, flower walls, facing walls, flower windows, etc.	Yuan Dynasty	Flowers are the main ones; dragons and phoenixes can be used in the emperor’s house.
5	Guangdong brick carving	According to technique, it can be divided into bas-relief, high-relief and openwork; Grouped brick carving and single brick carving according to scale	Placed on the top of the wall with a large area, inlaid in the frame, phase decoration, and seat decoration of the shrine	Ming Dynasty	Multiple flowers, characters, and animals
6	Suzhou brick carving	Typical and simple	Gatehouse, screen wall, “chitou”, “skirt shoulder”, etc.	Late Ming Dynasty	Most of the materials were opera stories, flowers and birds,



					auspicious patterns and calligraphy, etc.
7	Tianjin brick carving	Fine engraving and complicated composition	The placement location varies with the	Qianlong period	All ten categories contain

While maintaining its unique style, each school of Chinese brick carving has also developed through continuous exchange and integration. Factors such as commercial activities, population flow, and cultural transfer have contributed to the mutual influence and reference between them, which together have shaped a diversified art style. This development trend not only highlights the inclusive characteristics of traditional Chinese culture but also opens a wider field for the continuation and innovation of brick carving techniques.

#### 4. The Dilemma of Jin-Style Brick Carving Inheritance

The Jin-style brick carving has faced multiple challenges in recent years: unclear policy support, insufficient material guarantees, lack of talent for inheritance, lost brick carving craftsmanship, weak young forces, reduced audience groups, and decreased attractiveness, all of which affect its inheritance. The first is the issue of social aging. In today's information age and given the rise of artificial intelligence, more young people are willing to try new things. With the acceleration of population aging, many traditional cultures face the risk of inheritance faults, and the younger generation's appreciation for traditional arts interests has decreased. Coupled with the large-scale development of mechanization, the production cost of industrial products is low and time-consuming. Brick carving patterns can even be realized via 3D printing technology. However, real handicrafts require nine major processes. If you focus on production carefully for a long time and practice over and over again just to keep improving, then no one will learn intangible cultural heritage that takes too long.

Second, with the gradual change in traditional folk concepts and the rapid development of urbanization, traditional art forms have been impacted. With a large population and limited land, urban planning and land use have become inevitable choices. However, the differences in aesthetic preferences in different regions have led to increasingly homogeneous city styles, which not only erode the unique characteristics of traditional residential buildings but also prevent people from paying enough attention to the layout and design of traditional courtyards. Even more worrying is that brick carving, a precious cultural heritage, faces the severe challenge of being forgotten or even dismantled. In the end, the inheritance of the single individuality of the craftsmen has not formed special organizations and learning locations, there are no efficient organizational measures, and the group spirit is not strong and cannot be concentrated. Owing to the lack of commercial and economic vitality, reconstruction on the original basis is more complicated, and the lack of guidance and protection will lead to more antiques being damaged and dismantled.

#### 5. Development Path of Jin-Style Brick Carving

The protection of the Jin-style brick carvings involves not only the preservation of an art form but also the maintenance of the Chinese national spirit and cultural identity. This requires us not only to inherit technology but also to innovate culturally so that Jin-style brick carving can continue to flourish in modern society.

To solve the problem of the inheritance fault of Jin-style brick carvings, on the one hand, the government needs to increase official support and cooperation, lead the inheritance of intangible cultural heritage, dispatch them to market-oriented operations, produce cooperative outputs, and simulate an efficient operation mode. For example, aesthetic education is arranged in the curriculum of primary and middle school students, and allusions and characteristics, such as brick-carved dwellings, are exported to tourists with local cultural and tourism bureaus so that the students have fun in learning and play and achieve symbiosis among educators (Zhang et al., 2024). To implement General Secretary Xi's idea of "applying more art elements and artistic elements to urban and rural planning and construction to enhance the aesthetic charm and cultural taste of urban and rural areas" (Shandong Artists Association, 2021) and to integrate aesthetics into the learning of primary and middle school students.

On the other hand, we should strengthen publicity to make intangible cultural heritage no longer niche, establish and improve a training and inheritance system, improve professional quality, maintain authenticity, and conform to mainstream settings. We can establish brick carving museums and brick carving cultural and creative products, etc., to strengthen the improvement of the industrial chain. For example, Shanxi Xitang Culture Communication Co., Ltd., has excavated in depth the traditional culture of Shanxi, extracted and incorporated cultural elements such as humanities, folklore, and nature to independently develop products with Shanxi cultural characteristics and carry out original designs of Shanxi cultural elements. History and culture have also become cultural and creative IP with local characteristics.

Moreover, the income and employment of craftsmen can be reasonably increased at the same time, which can further promote economic development and intangible cultural inheritance (Li et al., 2023). The Shanxi Jinyun Brick Sculpture Art Museum is taken as an example. The museum is located in Xinzhuang Village, Xugou Town, Qingxu County, Shanxi Province. It is the only officially registered specialized brick carving museum in Shanxi Province. The establishment of the museum can systematically and standardizedly inherit the brick carvings of the Jin-style and protect the brick carvings of local folk houses, thereby strengthening the cohesion of the region and inheriting and reshaping rural culture to make it more in line with the new era.

## 6. Conclusion

The application of Jin-style brick carvings to residential buildings is just a part of the “living examples”. Both aristocratic mansions and ordinary residential buildings embody the expectations of the masters for a better life, which is a craft as well as an art. As a regional artistic expression, the Jin-style brick carvings reflect the rise and fall of a region and the living heritage of human culture. The craftsmanship of Jin-style brick carvings should also be passed down over time. Contemporary craftsmen shoulder the important historical responsibility of connecting the past and the future, and neither the craft nor the artists should be abandoned. Therefore, there is still a long way to go to inherit and develop brick carving skills in today's society. How to inherit and solve the difficulties is the best way to stay grounded in the present. We can use digital technology to protect and restore Jin-style brick carvings, promote interdisciplinary cooperation, and use modern technological means, such as 3D scanning and material analysis, to study in depth the production process and artistic characteristics of Jin-style brick carvings. The Jin-style brick carvings, which once enjoyed a brilliant and splendid popularity, have returned to the public's attention, transcending the courtyard and the building itself, from a handful of mud to a dignified and elegant architectural decoration, allowing the gradually fading brick carving art to return to the public's home, no longer high and mighty, nor plain tiles and high walls. What is picked up again is not only culture, but also a confidence, which allows the Jin-style brick carvings to shine and develop rapidly in the context of the new era.

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## Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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