



The paintings of rural practitioners formed a key part of Qinghai Week.



Qiao Yingju shows how *dui xiu*, or Tibetan brocade, is made.

PHOTOS BY GAO ERQIANG / CHINA DAILY

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Finally the convex pieces are pieced together and stitched into a large piece of cloth or leather that tells a vivid story or paints a beautiful scene.

"Embossed embroidery employs vivid colors and exquisite details, so it can really have a high-impact 3D effect," said Qiao.

"It looks like a gorgeous embossment made of brocade," she said, adding that complicated pieces take more than a month to complete.

As this art form comes from Tibetan Buddhism, many of its subjects derive from Buddhist stories, or moral fables concerning people.

However its practitioners fear it is a dying art.

"Fewer people want to learn this kind of embroidery nowadays due to the high level of dexterity involved, which makes it complicated and arduous, especially the painting," said Qiao. "It takes one year to learn the cutting and piling skills, but many more to master the painting skills, which are crucial. People don't have the patience for it these days."

Meanwhile, visitors can see other dying forms of embroidery, such as Yue and Yao, at the Expo's Guangdong Pavilion.

The former style, also known as Cantonese Embroidery, was created by a minority people during the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644). It uses a variety of threads, including those plucked from the quills of peacocks and others made from horsetail, to create bright and splendid pieces. Its main subjects are phoenixes, birds and marine life.

Yao embroidery, which derives from the ethnic group of the same name, is one of



A craftsman from Qinghai province presents a piece of leather embroidery.

the oldest forms of embroidery in China. Knowledge of it has been passed down from generation to generation by word of mouth, without any written records. Yao girls are believed to start learning how to stitch at the age of seven.

These girls, usually illiterate, learn the patterns from their mothers, but the works are of their own invention. In the past, embroidery was a necessary skill, but many of the girls are now joining rural China's mass exodus to the cities, and leaving their old skills behind in the process.

The same can be said for traditional prac-

tioners of China's lacquer works.

As such, the Fujian Pavilion proudly trumpets its two pieces of oversized bodiless lacquer wares. With respective diameters of 1.5 meters and 3.6 meters, they are the largest of their kind in China. The bigger one took five years to complete.

One of the skills needed to create them, called carving fill (or *diaotian* in Chinese), is increasingly hard to find in China.

The two bottles, once formed, were sprayed with peony to bestow on them blessings of peace and prosperity, according to the Fuzhou Traditional Bodiless Lac-



A visitor admires a piece of embroidery made from human hair inside the Hainan Pavilion.

ZHOU HUA / XINHUA

querware Protection Base. They were then painted with bodiless lacquer from Fuzhou, capital of East China's Fujian province.

This kind of lacquer is firm but light and features elegant patterns. Exquisitely decorated, it has a burly and colorfast quality, and the color does not fade with time.

"These traditional arts are so valuable. They are among our country's national treasures," said one lady named Zhou from Beijing. "The government should raise awareness of the need to protect these rare folk arts, rather than always focusing on advanced technology."