

# A Study on the Aesthetic Value of Chinese Jade Carving under the Concept of "Qiao Xing Art"

Mingjian Chen<sup>1</sup>, Hui Xie<sup>2,\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Guangzhou Yuxi Trading Co., LTD, Guangzhou, Guangdong, China

<sup>2</sup>Guangzhou City University of Technology, Guangzhou, Guangdong, China

**Abstract:** As an important aesthetic concept in Chinese traditional arts and crafts, "Qiao Xing Art" has injected unique vitality and cultural connotation into jade carving with its artistic characteristics of skillful blank space, virtual reality, and both form and spirit. This paper first composes the formation and development of the concept of "Qiao Xing Art", and then discusses the four aesthetic value dimensions of form beauty, artistic conception beauty, structure beauty and material beauty under the perspective of "Qiao Xing Art" on the basis of the aesthetics of Chinese jade carving. Through the technical analysis of ancient classic works such as Han Dynasty jade penning and Qing Dynasty palace jade carving, as well as the comment on the representative works of contemporary jade carving artists, this paper reveals the innovative expression, inheritance and evolution of the concept of "Qiao shape" in different historical periods. Finally, in view of the challenges faced by the contemporary jade carving creation, such as the conflict between tradition and modern aesthetics, the balance between market demand and artistic innovation, and the inheritance of skills and education training, the countermeasures and suggestions such as concept innovation, technique improvement and cultural promotion were put forward. The RESEARCH shows that "Qiao Xing Art" is not only the essence of traditional jade carving aesthetics, but also provides an aesthetic paradigm for the innovation and development of contemporary jade carving.

**Keywords:** Qiao Xing Art; jade carving; aesthetic value; harmony of form and spirit; cultural

## 1. Introduction

Chinese jade carving boasts a rich history, and "Qiao Xing Art," with its clever use of negative space and contrast between void and substance, imbues works with dynamic charm and artistic appeal. This paper seeks to elucidate the aesthetic value of the "Qiao Xing Art" concept in jade carving, exploring its four key dimensions—morphology, poetic intent, structure, and material—while analyzing classic and contemporary case studies to uncover pathways for blending traditional aesthetics with modern innovation. Employing a methodology that combines literature review, case studies, and comparative analysis, this study offers practical aesthetic guidance for contemporary jade carving practices.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Current State of Aesthetic Studies on Jade Carving in China

In recent years, Chinese scholars have conducted extensive and in-depth explorations of the aesthetic value of jade carving, focusing primarily on two perspectives: interpreting traditional aesthetic concepts and excavating contemporary significance[1]. On one hand, many researchers analyze jade carving through traditional Chinese aesthetic categories such as "harmony", "simplicity", "rusticity", and "luster". For instance, studies suggest that "harmony" in jade carving reflects not only the coordination of material and color but also a symbiotic balance between humanity, nature, object, and form; "simplicity" highlights the beauty of jade's natural qualities and negative space through minimalistic design; "rusticity" embraces the natural grain of jade to convey an unpolished, authentic vitality; and "luster" delves into the interplay of jade's sheen and texture, exploring how light and surface affect aesthetic perception[2].

On the one hand, the domestic jade carving contemporary transformation and innovation practice has also given great attention. Some studies take the creative practice of contemporary jade carving

artists and studios as a case to sort out how modern design ideas integrate traditional aesthetics and the spirit of The Times, not only retaining the classic interest, but also daring to break through in the subject matter, form and techniques. For example, through the case study of some modern jade sculptors combining traditional decorative patterns with abstract shapes, scholars pointed out that it is necessary to protect the cultural genes of jade carvings, and also to introduce contemporary design concepts and technology to meet the diversified aesthetic needs and market orientation. In addition, for the education and inheritance of jade carving, there are also studies calling for the construction of a systematic skill teaching system, which pays equal attention to aesthetic concepts and operational skills, so as to promote the sustainable development of jade carving technology[3].

In general, domestic research has achieved fruitful results in terms of theoretical construction and case demonstration, but there are still some shortcomings, such as the division of aesthetic dimensions is not unified, the focus research on specific aesthetic concepts such as "Qiao Xing Art" is less, and the lack of deeper dialogue between contemporary innovative practice and traditional aesthetics. On the basis of combing the above status quo, this study takes the concept of "Qiao Xing Art" as the breakthrough point to deepen the systematic interpretation of the aesthetic value of jade carving, and provides more targeted aesthetic guidance for contemporary jade carving creation.

## **2.2. Research Trends on the "Qiao Xing Art" Concept**

In recent years, academic interest in "Qiao Xing Art" has gradually shifted from traditional Chinese painting and crafts to the specialized field of jade carving. Early studies often treated "Qiao Xing" as a broad aesthetic concept, summarizing its general characteristics in spatial composition, negative space handling, and the interplay of void and substance, with less focus on its specific application in jade carving[4]. With the advent of interdisciplinary approaches, scholars have begun integrating "Qiao Xing" with the physical properties of jade materials and carving processes, exploring its adaptability and expressive differences across various materials and techniques. This has shed light on the technical challenges and aesthetic value of "Qiao Xing" in carving practice.

Meanwhile, jade carving artists and craft researchers, both domestically and internationally, have brought "Qiao Xing" applications into the public eye through exhibitions, monographs, and academic discussions. For instance, analyses of Qing Dynasty imperial jade carvings featuring "negative space openwork" highlight that negative space serves not only as a pursuit of formal beauty but also as a vessel for cultural connotations like "meaning beyond words" and "ethereal charm." Contemporary jade artists, building on such techniques, incorporate modern abstract art and sculptural concepts, using bold spatial divisions and textural contrasts to further enrich "Qiao Xing"'s aesthetic expression in jade carving[5].

In addition, the academic community has begun to pay attention to the innovation potential of "Qiao Xing art" in the digital and intelligent era[6]. With the help of 3D scanning and numerical control carving technology, researchers and artisans can accurately simulate the interaction between "beauty" blank and solid in virtual models, which provides a new technical path for the realization of complex modeling. This trend not only promotes the modern transformation of traditional skills, but also injects new vitality into the inheritance and development of the "Qiao Xing" concept. Future research is expected to continue to explore the multi-dimensional value of "Qiao Xing Art" in diversified materials, cross-media art and sustainable technology on the basis of equal emphasis on theory and practice[7].

## **3. Overview of the "Qiao Xing Art" Concept**

### **3.1. Defining the Essence of "Qiao Xing Art"**

The term "Qiao Xing Art" originates from the context of traditional Chinese aesthetics, with its core lying in the skillful manipulation of form and spatial relationships. By employing "negative space" and "contrast between void and substance," it creates a subtle tension between motion and stillness, reality and emptiness. This concept emphasizes achieving complexity through simplicity within a limited form, inviting viewers to experience the beauty of poetic intent through the interplay of shape and space. Specifically, "Qiao Xing" refers not only to the lively and dynamic contours of a carved piece but also to the carver's ability to harmonize with the natural grain and texture of the material[8]. Through "borrowing momentum" rather than imposing force, the work retains the raw essence of jade while embedding infinite imaginative potential within its subtle negative spaces. From an aesthetic perspective, "Qiao Xing Art" encompasses several key elements: First, "ingenuity" : the carver must

possess exceptional skill and aesthetic judgment to strike a precise balance between what to "keep" and what to "remove" within the confined volume of jade. Second, "form": it stresses the rhythm and flow of the design, breathing life into the piece through lines, curves, and layered variations. Third, "spirit" : beyond physical form, it preserves a vivid vitality, allowing viewers to sense cultural and spiritual resonance that transcends the tangible object. Fourth, "intent" : through negative space and the interplay of void and substance, it hints at narratives or symbols, blending formal beauty with poetic depth. In essence, "Qiao Xing Art" is both a technical strategy and an aesthetic philosophy, infusing jade carving with distinctive cultural richness and artistic dynamism.

### ***3.2. Aesthetic Characteristics of "Qiao Xing Art"***

The aesthetic traits of "Qiao Xing Art" in jade carving first manifest in the interplay of void and substance. Carvers use techniques like openwork and negative space to cleverly frame the "real" with the "virtual" and accentuate the "virtual" with the "real," creating depth and a three-dimensional feel within the limited space of the jade. This imbues static carvings with a rhythmic vitality, as if they were alive. Next, curvilinear rhythm serves as a vital tool in "Qiao Xing" design: carvers prioritize smooth, flowing lines and rhythmic variations—through spacing, thickness, and depth—resulting in shapes that are both concise and dynamic, exuding a sense of motion and elegance[9]. Most crucially, the pursuit of harmonizing form and spirit lies at the heart of "Qiao Xing Art." While crafting vivid and expressive shapes, carvers follow the natural grain and texture of jade, using negative space to suggest imagery that evokes cultural associations and emotional resonance beyond mere visual beauty.

Additionally, the inherent luster and warmth of jade provide a solid material foundation for "Qiao Xing" techniques. Through grinding and polishing, carvers create contrasts in light intensity across different sections, highlighting the jade's texture and softness. Finally, "Qiao Xing Art" emphasizes spatial tension: through contrasts of concave and convex, recessed and raised relief, and ingenious compositional layouts, it achieves rich spatial layers and visual impact within a compact volume. It is through the balanced fusion of void and substance, curves, form and spirit, material qualities, and spatial dynamics that "Qiao Xing Art" endows jade carving with its unique aesthetic allure and cultural significance[10].

### ***3.3. Manifestation of "Qiao Xing Art" in Traditional Arts and Crafts***

"Qiao Xing Art" has long been evident across traditional Chinese arts and crafts, particularly in carving, painting, and ceramics, where it reflects a distinct aesthetic pursuit. In wood and stone carving, for instance, artisans often intentionally preserve portions of the raw material, using negative space or shallow engraving to create contrasts between void and substance, enhancing depth and liveliness. They adapt to the natural grain of wood or stone, integrating these textures into the design to convey a sense of "unity between man and nature" through the material's inherent qualities. In traditional landscape and bird-and-flower paintings, the "Qiao Xing" concept is even more apparent: artists use varying ink shades and negative space to outline rocks, flowers, and spatial relationships, encouraging viewers to mentally complete the scene, thus enriching the aesthetic experience. In ceramic decoration, artisans employ incised patterns and openwork techniques beneath or atop the glaze, crafting designs that balance intricacy and simplicity to enhance the vessel's rhythmic elegance through the interplay of void and substance. Whether in three-dimensional carvings or two-dimensional paintings, "Qiao Xing Art" leverages clever spatial negative space and form manipulation to produce works that blend tangible beauty with poetic depth, establishing it as an indispensable aesthetic hallmark of traditional Chinese craftsmanship.

### ***3.4. Inspiration of "Qiao Xing Art" for Contemporary Jade Carving Design***

Contemporary jade carving design can draw three core insights from the case study of "Borrowing Color and Negative Space for Vivid Charm". First, the principle of "adapting to the material." In Figure 1, the designer avoids over-carving, instead keenly observing the jade's natural color and grain. Darker areas are shaped into the "solid" main form, while lighter or colorless sections are left as "void." This respect for the material's inherent nature not only minimizes waste but also makes the jade's natural beauty a key expressive element. Modern designers should begin with detailed analysis of color and texture during material selection, using 3D modeling to simulate various negative space and openwork ratios in a digital environment, optimizing the void-substance layout to ensure the final piece aligns with aesthetic goals while preserving material value.



*Figure 1: "Borrowing Color and Negative Space for Vivid Charm"*

Second, the cultural expression of "harmonizing form and spirit." In Figure 1, the negative space is not merely empty but subtly conveys cultural imagery: the flowing lines of a figure's robe echo the surrounding void, as if narrating a classical tale. The viewer's gaze weaves between solid and void, evoking a poetic tableau. This "negative space as narrative" approach infuses contemporary jade carving with cultural depth and emotional warmth. Designers can adopt this method by blending traditional Chinese symbols with modern themes, using symbolic negative space and stylized forms to craft jade narratives that resonate with contemporary audiences.

Finally, the integration of "technical innovation" with "sustainable development." While Figure 1 retains the warmth of hand-grinding, modern techniques like CNC carving and laser marking can achieve precise control over negative space edges, followed by artisan polishing to ensure smooth transitions in texture and luster. This hybrid "CNC + handcraft" approach boosts efficiency and consistency while reducing waste of premium jade, aligning with sustainable practices in contemporary craftsmanship. Looking ahead, as intelligent carving tools and AI-assisted design evolve, "Qiao Xing Art" will unlock greater potential in negative space proportions, texture utilization, and cultural expression, fueling continuous innovation in contemporary jade carving design.

#### **4. Aesthetic Foundations of Chinese Jade Carving**

##### ***4.1. Material Properties of Jade and Visual Perception***

Jade, as the preferred medium in traditional Chinese carving arts, owes its rich aesthetic potential to its unique physical and chemical properties. Firstly, jade combines a warm, lustrous softness with unyielding hardness—a duality that allows carvers to craft intricate details in subtle areas while maintaining a solid, dignified presence in the overall form. Jades from different origins, such as the delicate warmth of Hetian jade, the oily sheen of Dushan jade, or the translucent glow of Xiuyan jade, each offer distinct qualities that shape visual perception differently: the former's gentle milky tones evoke the understated elegance of Eastern aesthetics, while the latter's luster and clarity lend an ethereal, floating charm.

Secondly, the natural textures, color bands, and inclusions within jade—such as misty white jade blossoms, variegated color patches, or occasional mineral impurities—serve as a "canvas" for the carver. Through clever design, these features are either highlighted or subtly bypassed, creating a visual interplay of void and substance. When polished and illuminated, the jade's surface reflects and refracts light delicately across angles, producing nuanced shifts in light and shadow that enhance the piece's

depth and dynamism as viewers engage with it.

Lastly, jade's tactile qualities deeply influence its aesthetic appeal: the cool, smooth sensation as fingertips glide over a polished surface complements the visible luster, fostering a calming experience. This dual pleasure of sight and touch transforms jade carvings into more than mere visual objects—they become tangible artistic delights. Guided by the "Qiao Xing Art" concept, carvers harness these material traits, using contrasts of void and substance alongside textural treatments to craft an aesthetic realm brimming with vitality across both visual and tactile dimensions.

#### **4.2. Analysis of Traditional Aesthetic Concepts**

Chinese traditional aesthetics emphasize the pursuit of "harmony between man and nature," which in jade carving manifests through the seamless integration of concepts like "harmony", "simplicity", "rusticity", and "luster". "Harmony" refers not only to the alignment of jade's qualities with carving techniques but also to a broader unity of humanity, nature, form, and spirit. Carvers respect the stone's natural color and grain, employing gentle curves and symmetrical compositions to reveal an inner balance and order. In contrast, "simplicity" advocates stripping away excess, using minimalist shapes and negative space to return the work to its unadorned essence, spotlighting jade's purity and restrained beauty. Complementing this, "rusticity" celebrates working with the material's natural flaws and irregular textures, embracing an "imperfect beauty" that conveys nature's raw vitality; carvers often retain or accentuate jade's inherent edges and color bands to evoke a rugged, primal charm. Finally, "luster" focuses on jade's sheen and tactile allure—through meticulous grinding and polishing, carvers achieve a surface as smooth and glossy as fat, radiating a soft glow in shifting light, offering viewers a warm, lustrous beauty in both sight and touch. These traditional aesthetic principles interweave within jade carving, forming a distinctly Eastern aesthetic framework that provides fertile cultural ground for the application of the "Qiao Xing Art" concept.

#### **4.3. Cultural Symbols and Symbolic Meanings**

In Chinese jade carving, a wealth of cultural symbols and profound symbolic meanings imbue works with spiritual depth beyond their material form. Traditional motifs like dragons, phoenixes, turtles, deer, and chi dragons—chosen for their auspicious connotations—gain renewed vitality under the "Qiao Xing Art" approach. Carvers use negative space and void-substance contrasts to let these symbols dance within limited space, preserving their recognizable forms while infusing the voids with mystery and fluidity. The "Four Gentlemen"—plum, orchid, bamboo, and chrysanthemum—frequently appear as cultural emblems in jade carving. Through "Qiao Xing" negative space, petals and leaves emerge subtly between openwork and solid carving, crafting a refined, poetic ambiance. Additionally, decorative patterns like landscapes, cloud motifs, and thunder designs are skillfully incorporated, using simplified lines and partial negative space to weave philosophical reflections of nature and the cosmos into the work. Modern jade carving inherits these traditional symbols while leveraging "Qiao Xing Art" to deconstruct and reimagine them, fostering a dialogue between ancient cultural imagery and contemporary aesthetic needs. This approach both preserves cultural memory and meets modern viewers' desires for innovation and personalized expression.

### **5. Exploring Aesthetic Value Under the "Qiao Xing Art" Perspective**

Within the framework of "Qiao Xing Art," the aesthetic value of Chinese jade carving can be systematically analyzed across four dimensions, as outlined in Table 1. Firstly, morphological beauty arises from techniques like negative space, openwork, and shallow relief, capitalizing on jade's distinct color contrasts and clear textures to create a visual effect that blends motion and stillness with layered clarity. This interplay of void and substance, paired with flowing curves, heightens the work's rhythm while delighting viewers through the dance of solid and void.

Secondly, poetic beauty emphasizes embedding spirit within form and achieving harmony between the two. Carvers use delicate techniques like line carving, embellishment, and micro-carving, aligning the material's natural texture with the theme to embed cultural symbols in negative spaces, sparking viewers' imagination and emotional resonance. This "negative space as narrative" approach enriches the work's cultural depth within its limited form.

Thirdly, structural beauty shines through balanced density and the fusion of lines and surfaces. As noted in the "Structural Beauty" row of Table 1, techniques like hollowing, reverse carving, and

layering—applied to jade of moderate hardness with smooth cut surfaces—create spatial tension and inner-outer harmony, delivering a robust three-dimensional effect within a compact volume. This structural arrangement not only amplifies visual impact but also showcases "Qiao Xing Art"'s masterful handling of spatial layers.

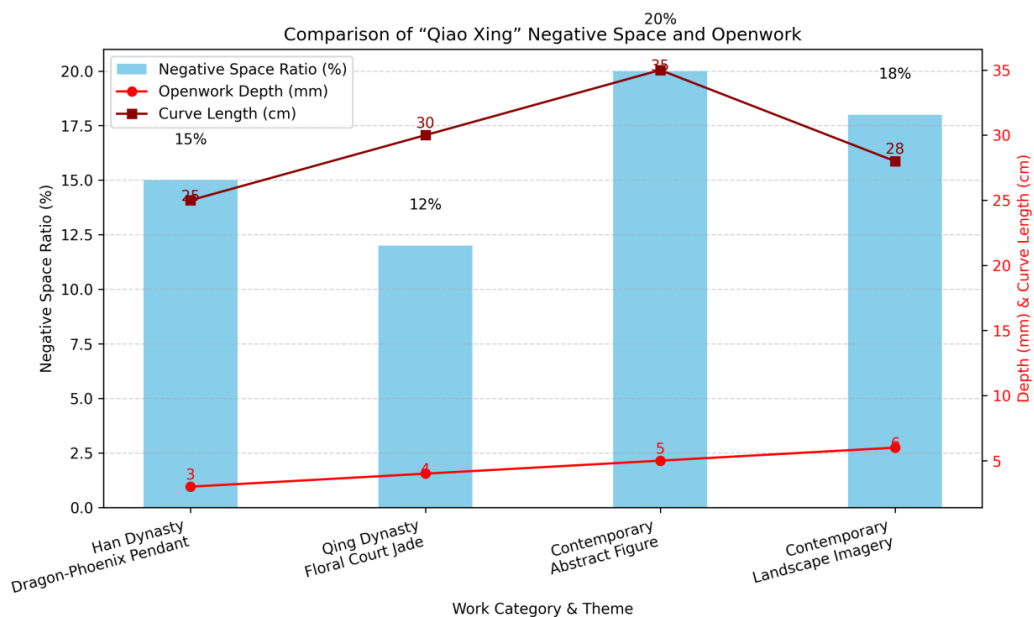
*Table 1: Aesthetic Value Dimensions of Jade Carving Under the "Qiao Xing Art" Perspective*

Aesthetic Dimension	Key Features	Techniques	Material Requirements	Expressive Outcome
Morphological Beauty	Void-substance contrast, flowing curves	Negative space, openwork, shallow relief	Distinct color contrast, clear texture	Dynamic-static blend, layered clarity
Poetic Beauty	Form imbued with spirit, harmony of form and spirit	Line carving, embellishment, micro-carving	Natural texture aligns with theme	Negative space sparks imagination, cultural symbols implied
Structural Beauty	Balanced density, line-surface integration	Hollowing, reverse carving, layering	Moderate hardness, smooth cut surfaces	Inner-outer resonance, spatial tension
Material Beauty	Lustrous sheen, fine texture	Polishing, grinding, partial sanding	High oiliness, no visible cracks	Light-shadow variation, tactile experience

Lastly, material beauty hinges on jade's lustrous sheen and fine texture. Through polishing, grinding, and selective sanding, carvers transform strict material selection criteria (high oiliness, no visible cracks) into dynamic light-shadow interplay and a tactile experience. This dual visual-tactile delight ensures the work exudes a warm, fat-like smoothness in both viewing and touching. Together, these four interwoven dimensions construct the unique aesthetic landscape of jade carving under the "Qiao Xing Art" perspective.

## 6. Case Study Analysis

In analyzing representative cases, we examine the differences and trends in the application of the "Qiao Xing Art" concept in ancient and contemporary jade carvings from three perspectives—historical inheritance, technical innovation, and market feedback—using data from Figure 2, 3, and 4.



*Figure 2: Comparison of "Qiao Xing" Negative Space and Openwork (Historical vs. Contemporary)*

As shown in Figure 2, contemporary works exhibit an average negative space ratio of 19%, higher than the 13.5% of ancient classics, with increased openwork depth and curve length. This suggests

modern jade carvers lean more heavily into the "void-substance interplay," using larger negative space and deeper openwork to enhance spatial layering and dynamic expression.

#### Material Characteristics and Post-Processing Comparison

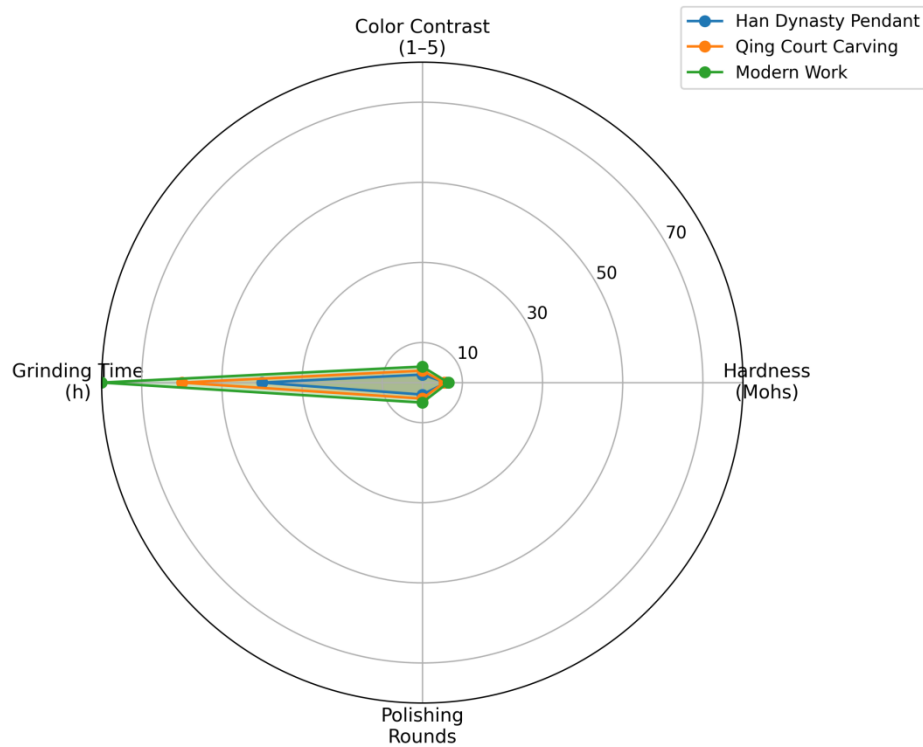


Figure 3: Material Characteristics and Post-Processing Comparison

Figure 3 reveals that contemporary carvings favor harder, more color-contrasted Dushan jade to achieve richer visual effects. Additionally, modern works require 30%–50% more grinding and polishing time than their ancient counterparts, reflecting a heightened focus on "material beauty" through lustrous sheen and fine texture.

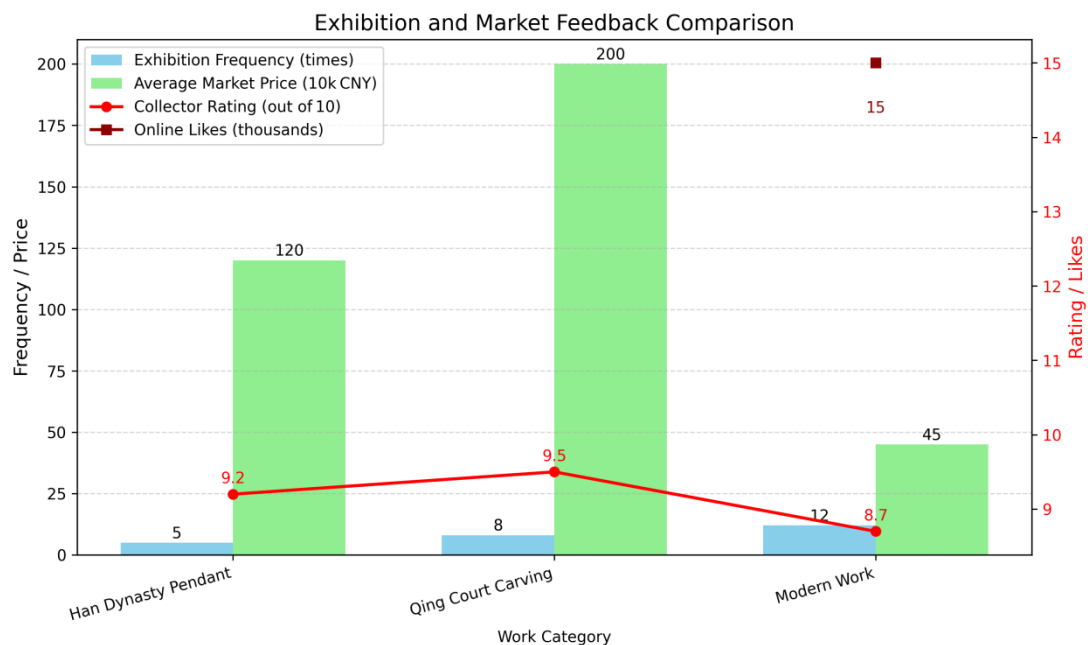


Figure 4: Exhibition and Market Feedback Comparison

Figure 4 indicates that, despite lower average market prices, modern works outpace ancient classics

in exhibition frequency and online engagement, suggesting that combining "Qiao Xing Art" with innovative themes garners broader public attention. Lower collector ratings for modern pieces may stem from the historical value and rarity of traditional motifs. Synthesizing these perspectives, modern jade carvers, guided by "Qiao Xing Art," expand the use of negative space and openwork, select harder jade for visual impact, and invest more in grinding and polishing to enhance luster. Meanwhile, contemporary works leverage innovative themes and diverse platforms to gain wider market and public recognition. These cases of adapting tradition for modern use highlight the enduring value of "Qiao Xing Art" and offer a developmental model for contemporary jade carving.

## 7. Challenges and Strategies in Contemporary Jade Carving

Contemporary jade carving first grapples with the tension between traditional aesthetics and modern market demands. The traditional "Qiao Xing Art" prioritizes subtle negative space and poetic charm, emphasizing harmony of form and spirit, while today's collectors and consumers favor bold visual impact and novel themes. This creates a dilemma for creators balancing negative space ratios with thematic innovation. To address this, designers can retain core "Qiao Xing" techniques while incorporating modern symbols and everyday scenes—juxtaposing urban silhouettes or tech-inspired elements with traditional motifs—to achieve a balanced fusion of old and new through striking design contrasts. Secondly, the conflict between craft inheritance and innovative techniques requires resolution. Traditional hand-carving is time-intensive and skill-demanding, while CNC and laser technologies boost efficiency but struggle to replicate the natural texture responsiveness and artisan touch of "Qiao Xing." A hybrid "CNC base + hand-finishing" approach can help: simulate negative space and openwork digitally, use CNC for rough carving, and rely on seasoned artisans for fine detailing and polishing, balancing efficiency with quality. Additionally, establishing school-enterprise training programs to teach "Qiao Xing" aesthetics and practical skills systematically ensures tradition's continuity while equipping younger generations with modern tools. Moreover, the scarcity of jade resources and environmental pressures pose new demands. Premium materials like Hetian and Dushan jade are dwindling, and over-extraction incurs ecological and social costs. The industry should promote sustainable sourcing and recycling, such as developing techniques to repurpose offcuts, encouraging the use of distinctive secondary jade, and enhancing lesser-grade materials through chemical stabilization and fine polishing. Exploring the compatibility of synthetic and natural jade with "Qiao Xing Art" could also broaden creative possibilities through material innovation. Finally, limited cultural dissemination and market education hinder widespread appreciation of "Qiao Xing Art." Many consumers lack understanding of the aesthetic intent and cultural depth behind negative space, impeding their appreciation of "Qiao Xing" works. The jade carving sector and academia should collaborate on themed exhibitions, online/offline lectures, and interactive experiences to demystify "Qiao Xing Art" for the public. Leveraging short videos and live-stream sales to showcase creation processes and aesthetic insights can further elevate awareness of its negative space and poetic beauty, fostering a supportive cultural environment for sustainable growth.

## 8. Conclusion

Grounded in the "Qiao Xing Art" concept, this study systematically explores the four aesthetic dimensions of Chinese jade carving—morphological beauty, poetic beauty, structural beauty, and material beauty—while case analyses reveal differences in negative space ratios, material traits, and market responses between ancient and modern works. The findings affirm that "Qiao Xing" techniques remain vital in contemporary jade design, emphasizing void-substance interplay and form-spirit harmony. Through hybrid "CNC + handcraft" processes and sustainable material strategies, it effectively bridges traditional aesthetics with modern needs. Moving forward, enhancing craft inheritance systems, promoting cultural education, and expanding market outreach will drive the innovative and sustainable evolution of "Qiao Xing Art" in jade carving.

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