

Press Release

Professor Jao's *Heart Sutra* Inscription --- Wood Carving Display of Professor Jao Tsung I's Art of Calligraphy of the "*Prajna Paramita Hrdaya Sutra*"

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The Government announced today (18 July 2003) details of a plan to reproduce Professor Jao Tsung I's calligraphy of the "*Prajna Paramita Hrdaya Sutra*" (*Heart Sutra*) in the form of a large-scale wood inscription display in an outdoor environment.

The Commissioner for Tourism, Ms Eva Cheng, said, "Professor Jao Tsung I is an internationally renowned master in Chinese studies, calligraphy and painting with outstanding achievements in both academic research and art. His works are highly regarded locally and overseas. We are honoured that Professor Jao has presented his original calligraphy as a gift to Hong Kong to enable the public at large to appreciate his work and the meaning of the *Heart Sutra*."

Ms Cheng said that relevant Government departments have formed a Project Steering Committee with representatives of Professor Jao, the University of Hong Kong (HKU) and the Hong Kong Tourism Board to provide advice and guidance on issues concerning implementation of the project. A preparatory working group had conducted months of in-depth study, taking into account various issues concerning the project, such as site selection, choice of material, technical issues concerning inscription, quality assurance, environmental factors, and promotion and publicity. The Project Steering Committee, having considered recommendations of the preparatory working group, has endorsed the proposal to use large scale wood inscription as a form of expression of the calligraphy of the "*Heart Sutra*" at a site at the foot of Lantau Peak near Ngong Ping of Lantau Island.

To ensure that the project reflects the depth and spirit of his calligraphy, the inscription of the calligraphy of the "*Heart Sutra*" would have a major impact on the success of the Project. HKU will lead a

technical assessment team tasked to undertake the selection of the inscriber. Professor C F Lee, Pro-Vice-Chancellor of HKU, will lead the team, which will also provide guidance and supervision on technical requirements and the quality of inscription.

Professor C F Lee said, “The ‘Professor Jao’s *Heart Sutra* Inscription’ is a manifestation of Professor Jao Tsung I’s achievements in art. The University of Hong Kong is deeply honoured to participate in bringing this project forward, and to offer advice from the perspectives of culture, art, sculpture and the environment. We believe that upon completion, the inscription will be a masterpiece in which the people of Hong Kong will take great pride.”

The project involves the inscription of Professor Jao’s whole piece of *Heart Sutra* calligraphy of more than 200 characters on some 30 timber logs at varying heights ranging from 5 metres to 8 metres. Each character will be reproduced in its original size of approximately 600mm x 600mm. The logs will then be erected in such a formation as to chime in with the natural landscape on the selected site.

Professor C F Lee said, “Early Chinese writing used to be inscribed on ‘bamboo tablets’. The inscription of the calligraphy of *Heart Sutra* on timber logs bears close resemblance to ‘bamboo tablets’. Wood inscription could be done with such ingenuity and precision that it helps reflect the subtlety and express the essence of Professor Jao’s calligraphy, and the long and distinct cultural heritage of China.”

The proposed site sits on a natural slope at the foot of Lantau Peak. Its tranquility will enable visitors to fully appreciate this masterpiece which combines art with philosophy.

On the choice of material, natural hardwood logs at the storage yard at Yam O may be considered using to form the “timber tablets”. Hardwood has a prominent natural texture and is particularly suitable for inscription work. The stockpiles of large hardwood logs at Yam O have long been regarded as a natural landmark of Lantau Island and even Hong Kong. The use of materials sourced locally will help reinforce the link between the project and Hong Kong.

Relevant Government departments will take forward the necessary statutory processes. The project is expected to be completed in late 2004.

To enable members of the public with an interest to understand more about the project, the University Museum and Art Gallery of HKU will host an exhibition on the Project at the Fung Ping Shan Building at HKU until 27 July 2003.

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