

should never be neglected so we try to interpret it in a way that is more acceptable to the young.”

Usually it takes them 15 to 20 days to prepare the costumes and props for one creature. And the filming can sometimes be dangerous.

Xiang recalled that once they filmed the series of Baimin, a mythical ancient country in “Shan Hai Jing,” and their ideal place was Baishuitai in Shangri-la, Yunnan Province.

However, heading to Baishuitai meant that they needed to pass a very narrow passage with a cliff.

“Although it’s dangerous, we still decided to go,” she said. “All of us bought insurance and called our families before setting out. Fortunately we made it.”

When they decided to do this project four years ago, there was little support. Many thought that no one would watch their videos because young people mostly preferred Japanese animations or Marvel movies.

“It made us ponder why so

many people thought ancient culture is no longer appeals to the young,” Xiang said. “We have made efforts to show it to the public in a way that is favored.”

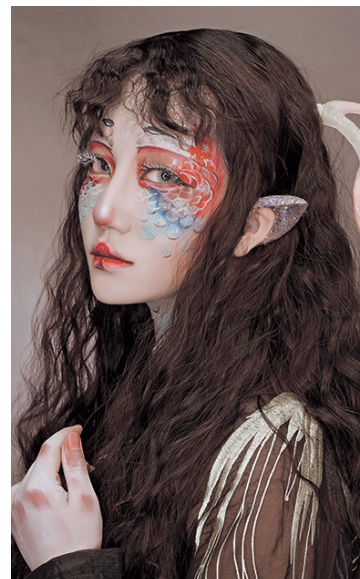
Now they have an increasing number of followers who look forward to updates of their works. There are more than 250,000 fans on Weibo and over 240,000 on video platform Bilibili.

“We’ve received many messages from parents who said they didn’t know how explain ‘Shan Hai Jing’ to their children when they were required to learn about the book during vacations,” Xiang said.

“Through our videos, their kids understood what this classic is about and some even fell in love with it. We also learned that many teachers played our videos at class, which greatly inspired and encouraged us.”

They plan to do a new series about traditional culture and will release it next month.

Unlike Zhang and Jia, who dress up as the mythical creatures, Qian Jiangyue makes



From left: Jia Ling creates the look of a nine-tailed fox, a mermaid, and Nuwa, the mother goddess credited with creating humanity and repairing the Pillar of Heaven.

models of the creatures with her hands.

Though she majored in visual communication and worked as a graphic designer for a few years after graduation, Qian felt she was more attracted to three-dimensional modeling. She spent several years learning sculpture and sketching.

“I’m fascinated by Chinese

mythical creatures,” Qian told Shanghai Daily. “They came from nature but surpassed nature. They reflect the pursuit for divinity and the admiration of nature.

“I started with ‘Shan Hai Jing’ because it’s representative and has rich details.”

In 2019, she began making models of them and created

her own brand “Mountain & Sea.” But later found the mass production and sales occupied too much time.

“I wanted to do more works so I stopped that,” she said.

The main body of her models is mostly made of polymer clay and she often uses more than five materials in each work.

“I prefer a mixture of different materials,” she said.

Once she used a lot of liquid resin but later it emitted too much heat. She had to place the work in the refrigerator, which frightened her family members when they opened it.

Her works are not only appreciated by her fans, but also by those who are not familiar with “Shan Hai Jing.”

“Once my mother had acute cerebral infarction, I took the work I was doing then to the hospital while keeping her company,” she said.

“Then all the people in the ward got attracted. Later those from other wards, and even the doctors and nurses, came and said my work looked beautiful. A grandpa tapped on my shoulder and encouraged me to go on.”

Qian believes that no matter how far the Chinese people go, their roots are always in the Chinese culture.

“Our culture keeps innovating so that it has great resilience and vitality, which allows it to show different styles in different eras,” she said.



Zhang Xin dresses as Hujiao, a creature with the body of a fish and the tail of a snake.