

# Ink-wash sketches become a unique lockdown diary

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Shanghai may be under strict lockdown, but art is not. Ink painter Wang Hui, a Songjiang District resident, uses brushes and palettes to illustrate his love for the city and respect for those who offer a helping hand during these difficult days.

As a daytime patrol volunteer in the Shangshangyuan neighborhood he lives in, Wang captures moments that touch him in his camera. Back home, he revives what he sees and feels with ink and pigment on paper.

“As an art practitioner, I have a duty to record what’s happening in the era we’re in,” he said. “I’m happy that I can make a contribution to my community. I hope the portraits of these volunteers I’ve painted can bring them some comfort, as well as show my gratitude for them.”

In one picture, four *dabai* or “big whites” (a loving nickname for health care workers as they’re dressed in all-white hazmat suits) are making “heart” gestures in



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the neighborhood’s central park. They are nurses from Zhejiang Province Children’s Hospital helping with PCR tests.

“They didn’t know I painted them,” Wang noted. “I sent the painting before they left, and the nurses were so excited that they made a video to thank me. But they are the people who should be thanked.”

Since April 1, the day when Puxi was placed under stay-at-home order, Wang started his

lockdown diary by painting. So far he has filled 10 sketch books with dozens of drawings — anything from a random doodle to a well-composed tableau.

The lines are sprawling and flowing in a free and relaxing way, tinted with simple colors and large patches of black hues. Though he doesn’t stick too precisely to the details, Wang elaborates on the wrinkles on the hazmat suits, and the body gestures or movements of the characters.

In another painting, a “big white” drops into a chair, exhausted with a tilted head. Her colleague is fanning her face with a sheet of paper.

“That was a hot day, and the nurse might be dizzy after long hours of work wrapped in airtight protective garment,” the painter recalled.

Wang donated one man-size picture portraying a volunteer carrying five heavy bags of supplies on his back. It’s now hung on the door of the neighbourhood committee office. “It’s my way to thank all who’ve helped.”

