

Li Jianjun writes words from Analects of Confucius.

Character of art

Seals and their ancient language are a favorite of calligrapher Li Jianjun

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No matter where he travels, Li Jianjun's luggage will always include a set of writing implements---ink brush, inkstone, inkstick and Xuan paper---obviously writing has been integrated into his life.

"Writing purifies people's hearts and it has become an indispensable practice in my life," says Li who looks fit and younger than his late 50s.

A full set of calligraphy implements --- writing brush, ink stone and rice paper --- is placed neatly in Li Jianjun's luggage whenever sets out on his travels.

Li said no matter where he goes, he always carries the tools of his art with him.

Now deputy director of the Shandong Provincial Publicity Department, Li said calligraphy has long been a central part of his life.

"Writing calligraphy can purify the heart," he said. "And it is a way to promote Chinese traditional culture to the world."

Born in 1957, Li was a big fan of calligraphy since he was a child.

He practiced calligraphy by himself and read hundreds of related books over the past 40 years. He was already 50 years old when he formed his own style combining traditional elements and his individual character.

He is particularly fascinated with seal characters, a type of Chinese calligraphy that is extremely hard to learn.

He said though seal script is heavy, it is elegant and has an

energy flowing in it.

Seal characters were first used in the Qin Dynasty (221-206 BC), so they are very different from the Chinese characters in use today.

"Seal characters are thousands of years old, so learning them is almost like learning another language," Li said.

To practice the art, Li searches through every single piece of famous seal script in Chinese history and studies it carefully.

I have written more than 10,000 seal characters in total," Li said.

The ancient scripts Li has learned from range from the Western and Eastern Zhou dynasties (c.11th century-256 BC) to the Ming and Qing dynasties (1368-1911), including copies of inscriptions from ancient artifacts such as the Duke Mao Tripod, a bronze kettle on three legs.

Li also meets with scholars and professors at the universities to learn more about the ancient characters, but also studies other calligraphy styles to have a broader view of the art.

"For few hundred times, I have practiced the piece Lantingji Xu (preface to a collection of poems) written by Wang Xizhi (303-361), one of the most well-known calligraphers in Chinese art history," Li said.

Li continues to practice seal characters for at least couple hours every day even though he is very busy with his work.

On weekends and holidays, Li stays at home most of the time and practices for a dozen hours without a break.

The effort has been paid back. His works are now recog-

nized by calligraphers and collectors from all over the world.

Two of his calligraphy pieces are in the collection of the Shandong Museum and some have been exhibited in Japan and South Korea.

In addition, more than a hundred of his works have been given to government officials and artists from the United States, Italy, Switzerland, Greece, South Korea and Japan.

Former Japanese Prime Minister Fukuda Yasuo awarded Li a prize for Confucius Calligraphy to honor his effort to promote the great teacher's thought through calligraphy.

Most content of Li's work is the wisdom from Chinese classics including the Analects of Confucius and the I Ching.

With their theme of Confucius ideas, Li's works have won great popularity in East Asia.

During his visit to South Korea in 2011, the governor of North Jeolla province showed his appreciation and asked Li to write some of Confucius' wisdom to reflect the friendship between the two countries.

And when Li visited Japan with his colleagues, a Japanese assemblyman asked him write some characters to present to a Japanese school as a gift.

Li wrote five characters that he said best express Confucian philosophy --- benevolence, righteousness, courtesy, wisdom and trust.

"Calligraphy is a treasure in Chinese culture," he said.

In addition, Li also creates his own versions of Chinese classics such as A Tale of the Fountain of the Peach Blossom Spring by Tao Yuanming and

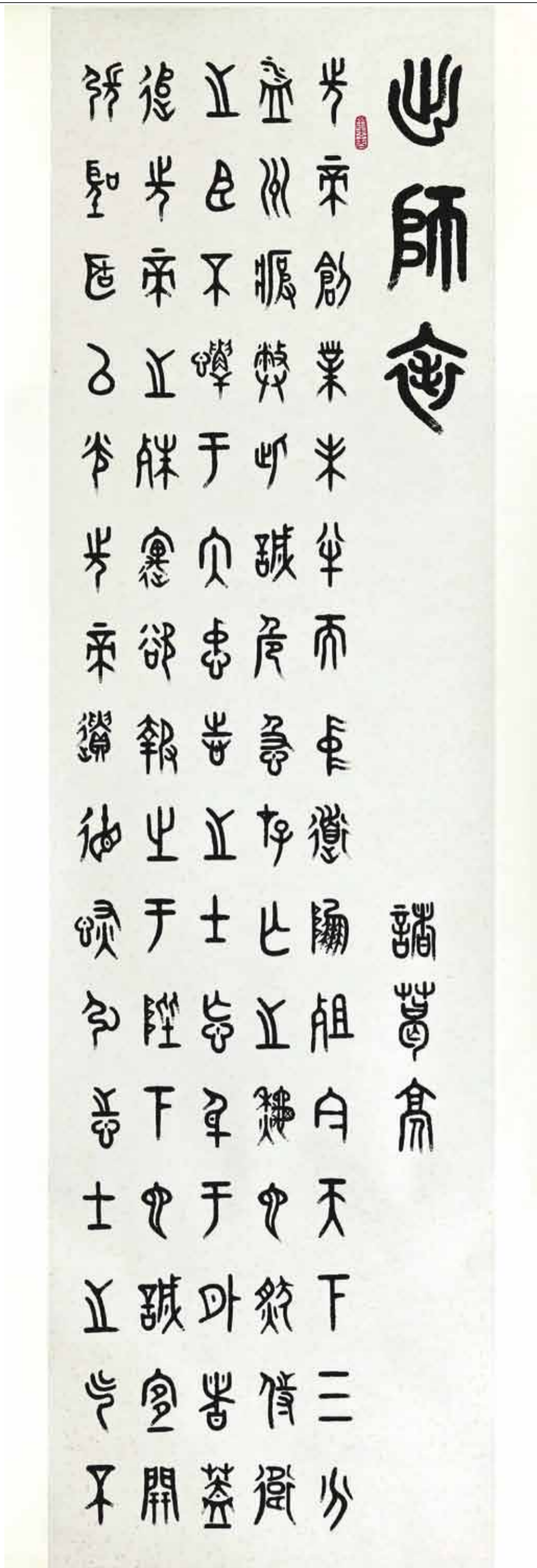
Statement on a Military Campaign by Zhuge Liang.

Portrait of the artist:
Li Jianjun was born in Qingdao city, Shandong province in 1957. He is a member of the Chinese Calligraphers Association and of the council for Shandong the Calligraphers Association. Li is also the honorary president of the Shandong News Artists Association.



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LI JIANJUN
CALLIGRAPHER AND DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF THE SHANDONG PROVINCIAL PUBLICITY DEPARTMENT



Statement on a military campaign by Zhuge Liang.



One of the poems composed by Mao Zedong, the former Chairman of China.



Classicz article is one of Li Jianjun's favorite.