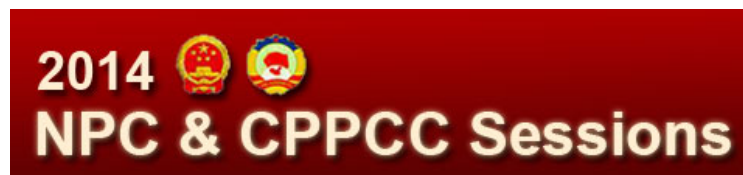



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## Dafen village, not an art factory

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Located in Shenzhen's Buji town, Dafen village is one of the most influential oil painting base in the world. It is not an exaggeration that at least 50 percent of the oil paintings hung on the walls in the United States and Europe are from Dafen. After two decades of rapid growth propelled by sales of oil painting reproductions, Dafen is now reinventing itself as the destination of choice for original art.

This workshop in Dafen has been busy for a 1,700 oil painting production order from a hotel in Spain for over a month. From 2 in the afternoon, a painter works until midnight just to get

one done.

The workshop impressed the client by its unique designing idea and got this big order.

Zhang Yazhe, manager of Non-Formular Art, said, "We design the oil painting according to the style of the hotel. Our work blends with the hotel's characteristics. So we are not only selling production, but also ideas!"

Imitation works have made Dafen a world-famous art zone and greatly supported the growth of the local economy. But it is the original paintings that will help Dafen gain a foothold in the high-end international art market in the future. Many artists have already shifted to creating original art works.

Chen Qiuzhi, artist, said, "Drawing replicas is easier than painting originals, but it means you stay at the bottom of the supply chain. The best replica sells for 200 to 300 US dollars at most, but our originals go for at least 10 thousand!"

As more and more oil painting production bases emerge, competition in the industry is becoming intense from home and abroad. What sets Dafen apart from other global art villages is the slew of orderly arranged oil painting workshops and the distinctive artistic atmosphere. And with more galleries in Dafen realizing the importance of producing their own paintings, it is only imperative that Dafen copy workers transform into "real artists."

The local government has been supportive by holding the International Oil Painting Exhibition and Trade Fair in Dafen annually. The event has been held twice since 2010, guaranteeing Dafen village's status in oil painting production and trade.

Wu Ruiqiu, president of Dafen Art Industry Assn., said, "The event connects the workshops and the

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buyers directly, increasing the artists' profit. "

According to the Shenzhen statistics bureau, the output value of Dafen's oil painting business was 3.5 billion yuan or 550 million US dollars in 2010, and this year it's likely to surpass the 4-billion-yuan mark.

In Shenzhen's five-year plan, the Dafen oil painting village will be expanded into a cultural industry park that is three times bigger than the existing art village. Apart from that, more high-end creative talent will be introduced and professors from art academies will train copy workers.

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