

I met Peter Bentley through this web site in 2009. Over the years since then he became a very ardent supporter of modern inside painted snuff bottles for which he coined the phrase VMIP (very modern inside painted). He made a significant contribution to the knowledge of this art on the forum, **Chinese Snuff Bottle Discussion Forum** 中國鼻煙壺討論論壇, created by George Ingraham a few years later.

Peter was born and grew up in the UK. He received a Phd in Vacuum Physics from Oxford and later moved to Hong Kong.

Peter – In his own words:

*It seems you have trod a path I am just starting to tread, but several years before me.*

*Let me introduce myself : I have lived in HK since 1981 and since 1987 I have been working full time in mainland China travelling every week, selling vacuum technology for a swiss/ german/ USA hi-tech company ( [www.inficon.com](http://www.inficon.com) ). I speak and write Chinese, besides being married to a lady from Wenzhou.*

*In the mid 1980's when I first starting going to BJ I spent my free time browsing around Liu Li Chang, which at that time was a very sleepy backwater. Never before having been an art lover, I suddenly found myself totally in love with a certain school of Chinese paintings called the Huang Shan school : black and white water paintings of misty mountains and clouds and by accident I stumbled on some paintings by the founder of the school : Guo Chuan Zhang , which I started to collect before he died. Later I found another artist with a similar style : Zhang Yu Mao , except that his paintings included colours in his misty mountains, Maples of Qian Mountain , which now proudly hangs in our office entrance lobby.*

However there's a limit as to how many paintings one can buy and hang to enjoy looking at them, and prices of high quality paintings of the style I like are now far too high for my pocket ( bear in mind I was only ever buying for love, not for investment ) .

Then about 4 -5 years ago I noticed that one or two of the tourist shops in BJ ( and later SH) which specialise in selling snuff bottles had a very small number of extraordinarily exquisite specimens tucked away in locked display cabinets which were little miniatures of the kind of paintings I like, and eminently more affordable and space-intensive ( flats in HK are very small ! ) So I started buying these bottles from time to time, only the very highest quality and most fine and delicate style, sometimes going back to the same shop for up to 2 years to find that the same little bottle I coveted was still not sold because it was out of the price range of the average tourist ( advertised prices were typically in the RMB8,000 + range ) and then finally negotiating a price about 1/3 the advertised price. Then I noticed that two of the bottles I had bought were by the same artist , albeit one was purchased in BJ and the other in SH , so I began to conclude that there must be a relatively small number of artists able to paint the style and quality I liked.

On my last trip to BJ in 1.2009 I went to one of my favourite shops in the Landmark hotel shopping arcade, and finding that they had nothing special ( I had cleaned out their little stock of high quality bottles in late 2008) I asked if they could rustle up some really good

bottles, and sure enough the manager came back next day with a selection of 7 beautiful bottles in various styles/ painting subjects , out of which I bought two. One, is probably the most expensive I have bought so far. This was listed at RMB16,000 but I finally managed to get it down to RMB5,000 . It's not the best quality painted bottle in my little collection : it was just rather more expensive than usual relative to the quality of the artistry because it is a quite a tall bottle and is made of crystal. The manager mentioned Hengshui as the prime source, which led me to do some extensive web searching , and to your site.

"Labour of love" must be the understatement of the century ! What an amazing and beautiful website!

Many thanks for your dedication. I have spent the best part of a whole day and night downloading all the beautiful pictures and the very useful info about the artists into my private snuff bottle file folders, so I guess it must have taken you weeks to build the site, not to mention researching and scanning the pics.

I have reviewed ( literally ) all the bottles by all the artists on your site and I could find almost none depicting traditional Chinese mountain/ river scenes of the type I like. Why is this so?

I do not mean for one moment that I don't admire the quality of the paintings in all the bottles I can see on the web Indeed the quality and detail is stunning.

I look rather for free lance paintings in chinese style , executed to

*perfection, like the HuangShan paintings I love.  
Why are such bottles so hard to find?*

*Thanks again for your amazing and wonderful website !  
Cheers*

*Peter Bentley 彭大理*

I followed that initial email from Peter with a recommendation of some artist he needed to meet in Hengshui who painted the style that he found appealing. I arranged for him to meet my close friend and painter, Li Shouxun, who would take him around Hengshui to meet some of these painters. Thus began Peter's serious collection of "VMIP" snuff bottles. To painters, Peter was always a friend first. He loved not only the final product but had a great admiration for the talent and the person that created these pieces of art. For me, a bottle was not just a bottle with a wonderful painting, it was also the person behind the work. It was that shared passion that linked our spirits and lead to many personal discussions over the years, not just about snuff bottles but about China, politics, theology and even a bit of physics (my undergrad major).

The snuff bottle world was enriched by Peter's life. He would say, as do I, that simple statement made to me years ago by Wang Guanyu: collect for love.

Enjoy these pictures of Peter;s collection. He spent many long hours photographing them to be posted here because he wanted you to be able to see and enjoy his collection of this fabulous art.

Bill