Annual lighting spectacle kicks off

2018-02-17

By XU JUNQIAN in Shanghai |   
 China Daily |  
 Updated: 2018-02-17 04:38

Shanghai’s most historical and renowned tourist site, Yu Garden, kicked off its annual lantern show on Feb 3. The show will run for 33 days till the end of Chinese New Year this year, two days longer than last year.  
A quintessential celebration for the most important Chinese holiday, the lantern show is traditionally held on the fifteenth day of the first lunar month, which is also known as the Lantern Festival.  
This is the 24th time that Yu Garden is holding the lantern show and this year’s event features 40 large themed lanterns and upwards of 1,000 lamps scattered around the 53,000-square-meter garden.  
The centerpiece of the show is a 9-meter-tall golden dog lantern which is meant to usher in the Year of the Dog. Measuring three stories high and weighing 1 ton, the massive installation consists of more than 10,000 joints that took five electricians a month to solder.  
“The dog may appear adorable and fun, but unlike other Chinese zodiac characters such as the dragon or horse, the animal is not actually suitable to be made into such a big installation,” said Wu Zhongqing, chief designer of the lantern show and an executive of Shanghai Yuyuan Tourist Mart Company.  
“Dogs tend to look like scary wolves when they are made into large installations. Dragons and horses, on the other hand, are already known to be large and have a ‘the bigger the merrier’ effect,” he added.  
Another challenge that Wu and his team faced is the unique format and limited space in the garden, which was built more than four centuries ago as a private residence.  
An archetype of a private garden with narrow alleys in east China, the space was designed in such a way that its features are gradually revealed as people made their way through the compound.  
Such a space is hence ill-suited for a lantern show where visitors should be able to see all the colorful displays at one glance.  
Every year, as many as 6 million visitors flock to Yu Garden to catch the lantern show. Admission to the show is free except on the night of the Lantern Festival.  
In China, the most famous and historical lantern show is widely considered to be the one held by the Qinhuai River in Nanjing, Jiangsu province. Having originated in the Southern Dynasty (420-589), the show attracted a record number of 600,000 visitors during the last Lantern Festival.  
The cultural department of Qinhuai district, which organizes the show, announced in 2016 that it is planning to have the show listed as an intangible cultural heritage by UNESCO.

http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/201802/17/WS5a874150a3106e7dcc13ce1e.html