

Features of the Tai Hang Fire Dragon

Team:

About 300 current or ex-residents of Tai Hang make up the team. There are coordinators leading those in charge of the head, body and tail of the dragon, respectively. The youngest member of the team is 16 while the eldest is 80 — he serves as the consultant, and helps to insert the incense stick into the heart of the dragon, which requires a lot of strength.

Body:

The 67-metre body consists of 31 sections with a hemp rope spine wrapped in pearl straw. Stronger than common straw, pearl straw used to be found easily in Hong Kong's countryside, but has become increasingly difficult to find with the development of the city, and is now sourced from Mainland China.

Head:

The 48 kg head is formed by wrapping pearl straw around a rattan frame. Two electric torches are inserted into its eye sockets and its teeth and tongue are made from sheets of metal. After the dragon is consecrated, its head is adorned with auspicious symbols, including red ribbons and paper decorations.

Pearls:

The dragon is prompted forward by two 'pearls'. These are actually pomelos into which numerous sticks of incense are inserted. The fruits are held up by young men, who twirl them to create a blur of light that looks like shining pearls.

Uniform:

The team didn't have a uniform until 1959. It is called the 'culture shirt' and is a treasured keepsake for anyone who has taken part in the dance.

