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# CHINESE ZODIAC TRAIL

中国十二生肖之旅

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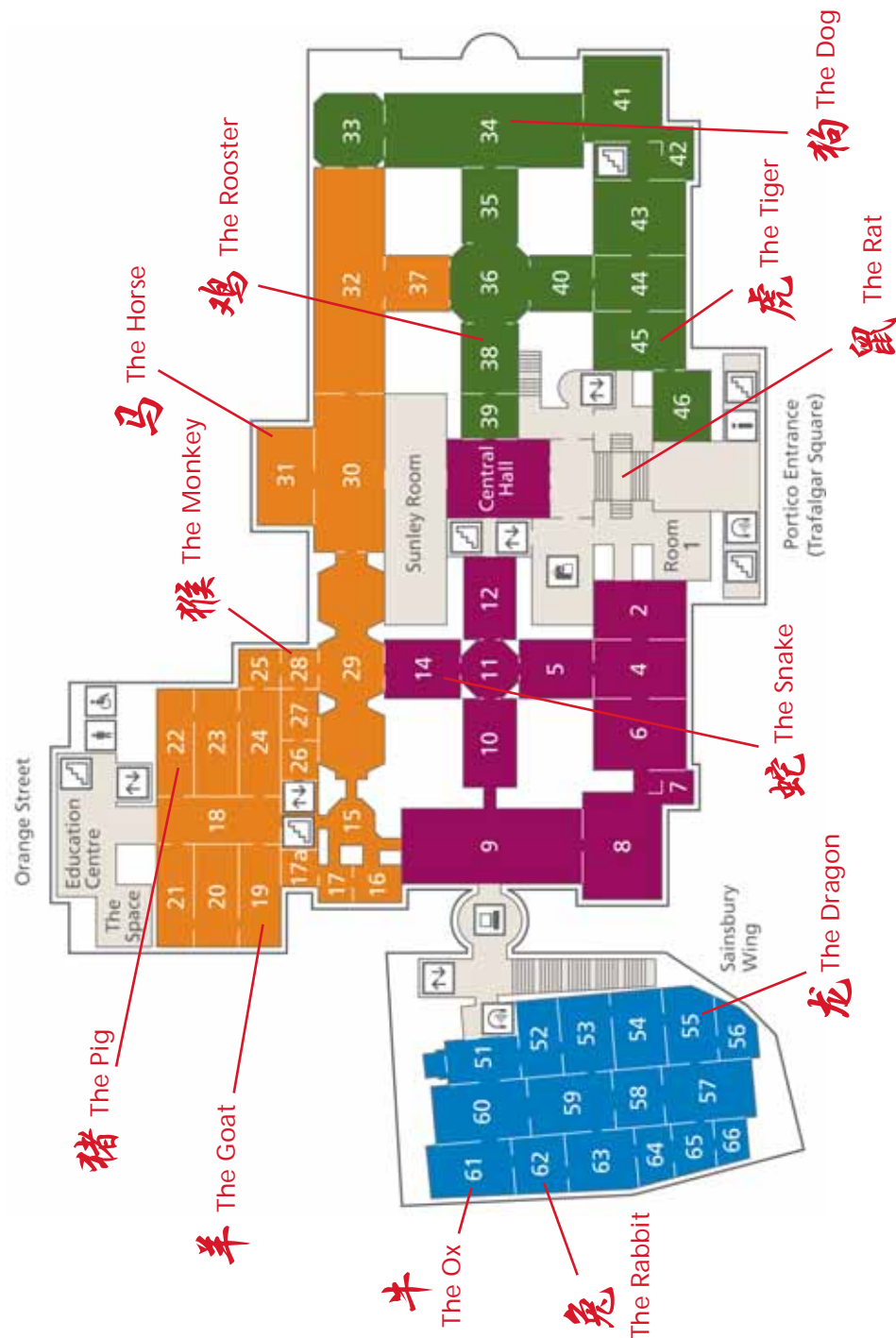
Daily 10am–6pm  
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Closed 24–26 December, 1 January

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THE  
NATIONAL  
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A trail exploring the symbolism of animals in Eastern and Western traditions.  
让我们一起探索动物在东西方传统文化中的象征意义。



# CHINESE ZODIAC TRAIL

## 中国十二生肖之旅

In Chinese astrology, the calendar has a 12-year cycle, and each year is represented by an animal. People born in a given year are said to have personality traits associated with that year's animal sign.

In European painting, these animals have similar or contrasting meanings, inherited through myth, folklore and religious teaching – how do they compare?

在中国的占星术里，历法为 12 年一轮回，并且每一年由一种动物来代表。据说某年出生的人会具有与该年动物属相相关的个性特征。

在欧洲绘画中，根据神化、民间传说和宗教教义，这些动物属相有着相似或相反的意义—如何将它们加以比较呢？

福

# 龙 The Dragon

1916 1928 1940 1952  
1964 1976 1988 2000

## Room 55

Uccello: *Saint George and the Dragon* about 1470



The Christian story of Saint George is a classic tale of good triumphing over evil: a knight in shining armour rescues the princess from being eaten by the menacing dragon. In Christian symbolism, the dragon represents the devil, and is therefore a figure of fear and destruction. The word comes from *draco*, the Latin for snake, and these two creatures are often confused with one another. In this painting, a spiralling cloud hovers above the dragon-slayer, perhaps suggesting a heavenly force giving George strength in his battle against evil.

基督徒 Saint George 的故事是一段正义战胜邪恶的经典传说：身披闪亮铠甲的骑士从恶龙口中救出了美丽的公主。在基督教的象征意义中，龙代表邪恶，因而是恐怖与破坏的象征。在西方“dragon（龙）”源于“draco”——在拉丁文中是蛇的意思，这两种动物经常被人混淆。在这幅画中，屠龙者头顶螺旋上升的白云，或许这暗示了上苍赐予 George 以力量，让他来战胜邪恶势力。



The Chinese dragon is a positive symbol of good luck and success. The dragon represents extraordinary achievement, and the Chinese are described as 'descendants of the dragon'. In the past, the dragon was associated with the emperor, and images of it were restricted to the imperial court. People born in the year of the dragon are charismatic, eccentric and full of life. A popular saying in China is to 'wish my son to be a dragon', whereas in Europe you might wish your child to be the gallant knight.

在中国，龙象征着好运与成功。它代表了非凡的成就，而且中国人也被誉为“龙的传人”。在过去，龙与皇帝紧密关联，龙的形象仅能出现在朝廷之中。龙年出生的人具有超凡魅力，与众不同，而且长命百岁。在中国有一句家喻户晓的话是“望子成龙”，而在欧洲人们会希望孩子成为英勇的骑士。

# 兔 The Rabbit

1915 1927 1939 1951  
1963 1975 1987 1999

## Room 62

Mantegna: *The Agony in the Garden* about 1460



In China, people born in the year of the rabbit are graceful and stylish. They are known for their good manners and intelligent conversation, although they can sometimes be shy and over-anxious. The rabbit is also associated with the moon, since the legendary 'Jade Rabbit' lived in the night sky with the goddess of the moon.

在中国，兔年出生的人优雅、时尚。他们以优雅的举止和智慧的谈吐而为人所知，但有时也会害羞和焦躁。兔还与月亮有关，因为传说“玉兔”与嫦娥一起生活在夜空当中。



Because rabbits produce so many young, they have always been associated with fertility. But in this painting they must represent something else – it is a religious scene showing Jesus in his last moments before being arrested. As he prays alone, his followers find it impossible to stay awake. This episode leads to Jesus' death, remembered at Easter. Perhaps the rabbits represent springtime, and the hopeful beginning of new life. Or they may illustrate references in the Bible to rabbits surviving on barren ground – as a symbol of the endurance of faith.

由于兔孕育了如此之多的后代，所以它们总与家丁兴旺联系在一起。但在这幅画中，它表达的是另一种涵义——这是一个宗教场景，其中描绘了耶稣在被逮捕前的最后一刻。当他独自祈祷时，他的信徒发现无法将他唤醒。这段情节导致了耶稣的死，而复活节就是为了对此进行纪念。或许兔让人联想到春暖花开，因而象征着新生活的美好开端。或者，这幅画是引用了圣经中生存于贫瘠土地上的兔子——象征着对信仰的坚守。

# 牛 The Ox

1913 1925 1937 1949  
1961 1973 1985 1997

## Room 61

Bellini: *Madonna of the Meadow* about 1500



Mary, mother of Christ, watches over her sleeping son, while farmers and oxen work in the field beyond. While the infant Jesus appears protected in this peaceful setting, the artist also suggests his troubled future: from earliest times, the ox has been killed in sacrifice to gods, and here it is a reminder of Jesus' own sacrifice through his death on the cross. The ox is usually found as a witness to Jesus' birth in the stable (there are many examples in rooms nearby). It is written in the Hebrew Bible that 'the ox knows its owner', and so it represents a loyal servant who recognises Christ as its master.

耶稣的母亲玛利亚看护着自己睡梦中的儿子，此时外面田地里农民和牛在耕作。虽然看上去婴儿耶稣在这样祥和的氛围中受到关爱，但画家却暗示了他坎坷的未来。最早的时候，牛被宰杀用来祭祀上帝，这里为耶稣日后牺牲自己钉死在十字架上埋下了伏笔。牛常常被视作厩舍中耶稣出生的见证者（在周围房间中有许多例子）。在《希伯来圣经》中记载着“牛知道自己的主人”，这代表着牛是奉耶稣为主的忠实奴仆。



The ox has similar positive attributes in the Chinese zodiac. Dependable and patient, it is a symbol of prosperity through determination and hard work. In modern Chinese, the word associated with ox, *Niu*, is used to describe something exceptionally good. The Chinese ox values calm and quiet, so would be equally at home in this still, contemplative Western scene.

在中国的十二生肖中，牛有着相似的正面意义。牛生性可靠、任劳任怨，代表了通过努力和顽强意志获得丰硕成果的正面形象。在中国当代，“牛”这个字经常被用来表达极好的意思。在中国牛象征着平静谦和，这与安静、沉思的西方场景是一致的。

# 羊 The Goat

1919 1931 1943 1955  
1967 1979 1991 2003

## Room 19

Poussin: *The Triumph of Pan* 1636



Vessels of wine, tambourines and theatrical masks lie strewn on the ground, while the ancient gods abandon themselves to drinking and debauchery. They are followers of Pan, the Greek god who looked after shepherds and their flocks. The artist enjoys the wild animal nature of this party, and includes the goat as a symbol of untamed lust. Some of the characters are half-goat themselves: drunken satyrs slip up on their hairy hooves and reach for naked female flesh. The image of Pan, with his goat-like hooves and horns, may have inspired later Christian images of Satan, the devil.

一边是散落一地的酒杯、手鼓和假面具，另一边是沉溺于饮酒作乐的古代诸神。他们是希腊半人半羊的山林和畜牧之神潘的追随者，潘负责照看牧羊人及其羊群。艺术家喜欢这种显示野兽本性的聚会，并将羊描绘成一种有强烈欲望的动物。其中某些特征就体现为半人半羊的森林之神：酩酊大醉的森林之神跪倒在长满茸毛的蹄下，触摸着赤裸女性的身体。有着羊一样蹄子和犄角的潘神形象有可能引申为后来基督教中魔鬼撒旦的形象。



The goat or ram in Chinese astrology is the opposite of this ancient Western symbol: it is vulnerable, gentle and easily frightened. People born in this year appreciate the love and support of their friends. Often extremely creative and elegant, this is the most artistic animal of the Chinese zodiac.

在中国的占星术中，对羊的解读与古代西方恰恰相反：羊生性脆弱、温和并且易于受到惊吓。羊年出生的人珍视爱情，珍惜友谊。通常他们极具创造力并且温文尔雅，羊是中国十二生肖中最有艺术气质的动物。



# 猪 The Pig

1923 1935 1947 1959  
1971 1983 1995 2007

## Room 22

Steen: *The Effects of Intemperance* about 1663–5



In the Chinese zodiac the pig is one of the most admired signs: it is considered very fortunate to bear children in this year. Gracious and honest, they are destined to be wealthy and prosperous; however, pig-year people can sometimes be shy and withdrawn. In China, the pig is also associated with laziness.

在中国的十二生肖中，猪是最令人羡慕的属相之一：在猪年生育被认为是一件非常幸运的事。猪代表了亲切和正直、富裕和兴旺，猪年出生的人有时也会腼腆和退缩。在中国，猪也代表懒惰。



In Europe, the pig is often a symbol of greed and gluttony. In this painting, the pig is at the centre of uncivilised, bad behaviour: a drunken woman is mocked by children as she sleeps. One boy slips his hand into her pocket to steal some coins. It is a moral lesson, with hidden messages to be decoded. The pig, sniffing at flowers on the ground, represents a Dutch proverb: 'strew no roses before swine', meaning that beauty is wasted on those who aren't cultured enough to appreciate it. In Chinese, a similar idea is expressed in the saying 'to play music before an ox'.

在欧洲，猪象征着贪婪和暴饮暴食。在这幅画中，猪代表了不文明、不礼貌的行为：一名喝醉的妇女在睡着时遭到几个孩子的嘲弄。一个男孩将手伸到她的兜里偷了几枚硬币。这是一堂道德课，暗含了一些需要解读的信息。地上嗅花的猪体现了荷兰的一句谚语：“不要在猪面前撒玫瑰”，意思是说美丽对于没修养的人是一种浪费。在中国，类似的说法有“对牛弹琴”。

# 猴 The Monkey

1920 1932 1944 1956  
1968 1980 1992 2004

## Room 28

Flemish artist: *Cognoscenti in a Room hung with Pictures* about 1620



In this imaginary gallery, what role does the monkey play, sitting at the window? Perhaps the artist is contrasting the 'foolish' monkey with the 'serious' art collectors nearby – but could he also be mocking these earnest men, who take such pride in their supposedly superior knowledge? The monkey is well known for its ability to imitate what it sees – and so is often used to represent the art of painting. The monkey reminds us of the artist, who copies the world around him, following a popular saying that 'art is the ape of nature'.

在这幅虚构的画面中，坐在窗边的猴子扮演了什么角色？或许，艺术家是在对比“愚蠢的”猴与旁边“认真的”艺术收藏者——他是否也在嘲笑这些认真的人，他们自以为自己有多么高深的知识？众所周知，猴的模仿能力很强，因此常常用它来代表绘画艺术。猴提示我们，艺术家就是复制周边世界的人，人们常说“艺术就是对自然的模仿”。



In Chinese astrology, rather than being an unthinking mimic, the monkey is intelligent and inventive. Although often erratic, monkeys have a magnetic personality – they are charming and confident. Monkeys are also astute observers: just as in this painting, perhaps they remind us to think about how we appear to others.

在中国十二生肖中，猴代表聪明、善于创造，而不是缺乏思考能力的模仿者。虽然经常反复无常，但猴有着令人着迷的个性——迷人和自信。猴也是敏锐的观察者：就像在这幅画中描绘的那样，也许它们是让我们思考自己在他人面前到底是什么样子。

# 蛇 The Snake

1917 1929 1941 1953  
1965 1977 1989 2001

## Room 14

Gossaert: *Adam and Eve* about 1520



In Chinese astrology, the snake is the wisest of all the animals. Snakes are sensitive, deep thinkers and have no time for frivolous things. Passionate and enthusiastic about new possibilities, they can sometimes forget to listen to others. While the snake can be a negative symbol in Chinese culture, this sign is also known as the 'little dragon', giving it a more majestic character.

在中国的占星术中，蛇是所有动物中最聪明的。蛇代表思维敏捷、深思熟虑和日理万机。对新事物充满热情，但可能有时会忘记聆听他人的意见。虽然蛇在中国文化中也有负面含义，但它也素有“小龙”之称，这令它更具威严。



In most Western painting, the snake is the embodiment of evil, associated with the devil. This can be traced to the story of Adam and Eve in the Hebrew Bible. Here, the first man and woman decide to eat forbidden fruit from the Tree of Knowledge. Eve has been tricked into taking the apple by the deceitful snake, which writhes in the tree above. As they bite into the apple, they will release the knowledge of good and evil into the world – including an awareness of their nudity, shown by the leaves that have grown to cover them.

在大多数西方绘画中，蛇是邪恶的化身，代表着魔鬼。

这可以追溯到《希伯来圣经》中亚当与夏娃的故事。故事中，第一个男人和第一个女人决定吃下智慧树上的禁果。夏娃受到了盘在树上的毒蛇的诱骗，摘下了苹果。当他们咬苹果时，他们将善与恶的知识传播给全世界——包括意识到自己的裸体，表现为用长大的树叶帮他们遮挡私处。

# 马 The Horse

1918 1930 1942 1954  
1966 1978 1990 2002

## Room 31

Van Dyck: *Equestrian Portrait of Charles I* about 1637–8



Those born in the year of the horse are extremely independent and value their freedom. They are hard-working and adventurous – making this one of the most admired animals of the zodiac. The Chinese phrase 'swift horse' ('*Qian Li Ma*') describes someone who is intelligent and successful. However, horse-year people can sometimes be too impulsive, getting carried away with a new idea.

马年出生的人极其独立，并且珍视自由。他们工作努力、敢于冒险，这使它成为十二生肖中最令人羡慕的属相之一。中国词汇里的“千里马”，就用来描述睿智、成功的人。然而，属马的人可能有时很冲动，会冒出一些新奇的想法。



In contrast to its free nature in Chinese astrology, this horse is far from independent. King Charles I restrains his powerful horse effortlessly, as a demonstration of his leadership and skill. The portrait is designed to remind us of Roman emperors, who were depicted riding triumphantly into newly conquered lands. The artist has exaggerated the horse's brute force and reduced the size of its head, so it doesn't compete with the king. However, something of the impatient Chinese horse is visible in the foaming mouth and rippling muscles, straining against the reins.

与中国占星术中马的自由奔放不同，在西方马与独立毫不相干。查理一世国王以轻松驯服战马来表现他的领导能力和领导艺术。这样的形象让我们想起了罗马帝王一耀武扬威地骑马踏上新征服的领土。艺术家夸张地表现了马的健壮，同时缩小了马头的尺寸，从而避免马抢占国王的风头。然而，有时可以看到将性格刚烈的中国马描绘成口泛泡沫、肌肉轮廓分明，同时奋力挣脱缰绳的形象。

# 鸡 The Rooster

1921 1933 1945 1957  
1969 1981 1993 2005

## Room 38

Canaletto: *The Stonemason's Yard* 1727–8



In China, the rooster's crow is believed to ward off evil spirits. People born in this year are very outgoing and love to be in the spotlight. Roosters are known for being romantic although they can often end up alone. They are always tidy and pride themselves on looking good.

在中国，人们相信鸡鸣可以驱邪。鸡年出生的人热情洋溢，喜欢出风头。鸡以浪漫而闻名，尽管常常以孤独而告终。它们总是很整洁，并为自己的外形而感到骄傲。



As the morning sun warms up this city square, the rooster crows to announce the beginning of a new day. The artist has carefully observed the effects of light and the fall of shadows across the buildings. Men are shaping large blocks of marble in the work yard, and a young woman drops her broom to attend to her small crying child. The rooster adds further sound and colour to this corner of the painting, but it is also a traditional symbol of lust. Perhaps it is alerting us to the young couple in the shadows beside the house: what could this man be saying to his companion?

当清晨的阳光温暖城市的大街小巷时，一声鸡鸣宣布了新一天的开始。艺术家仔细观察了穿插于建筑间的光影效果。人们的身影长长地拖在工作场所的大理石上，一名少妇撒下手中的扫帚去照看自己哇哇大哭的小孩。位于画面一角的鸡带来了远处的声音和色彩，但它同时也象征着强烈的欲望。也许，这是在向我们昭示那对躲在房子阴影下的年轻夫妇：这个男人和他的女伴可能正在说什么呢？

# 狗 The Dog

1922 1934 1946 1958  
1970 1982 1994 2006

## Room 34

Gainsborough: *The Morning Walk* 1785



The dog has always been valued as a loyal companion. The ancient Roman author Pliny named the dog as the most faithful animal to man, along with the horse. In this portrait, made around the time of Mr and Mrs Hallett's wedding, a dog looks up eagerly at its owners and seems to keep in time with their steps. Dogs are often found in marriage portraits, representing a wife's devotion to her husband (look out for other examples in Room 35...). The feathery brushstrokes of the dog's fur are repeated in Mrs Hallett's dress and hair, creating a sense of harmony and empathy between the two.

狗一直被认为是忠诚的伙伴。古罗马作家 Pliny 将狗和马一同视为人类最忠诚的动物伙伴。在这幅肖像画中，一只狗伴在正在举行婚礼的 Hallett 先生及其夫人身旁，它殷切地望着主人，看起来与他们寸步不离。狗经常出现在婚礼的画面中，代表妻子对丈夫的忠诚（第 35 室中还有其他例子）。柔软如羽毛的狗毛皮的绘画技巧被重复运用在 Hallett 夫人的服饰和头发上，在两者之间创造了一种和谐与互衬的感觉。



People born in the year of the dog share this sensitivity to others and are loyal to their friends. They are good at keeping promises and are known for their honesty. While they are the most likeable astrological sign, they can also be stubborn and are easily shocked.

狗年出生的人关心他人、忠于朋友。他们信守承诺、诚实可靠。虽然狗是占星术中最可爱的符号，但它们也可能固执和易于激动。



# 虎 The Tiger

1914 1926 1938 1950  
1962 1974 1986 1998

## Room 45

Rousseau: *Surprised!* 1891



In Chinese culture, the majestic tiger is the king of beasts, while in the West it is the lion. Tigers are magnetic characters: enthusiastic about new experiences and associated with good fortune. However, the tiger is both respected and feared – they don't like to be trapped and can conflict with authority.

在中国文化中，威武的老虎是百兽之王，而在西方狮子是兽中之王。老虎的魅力包括：热衷新事物，并且预示着财运亨通。然而，老虎既受尊敬又令人畏惧——它们不喜欢被束缚，并且有可能会与权威发生冲突。



How does this tiger respond to its jungle surroundings? Is it in danger of being captured or surprised by something? Perhaps it is the tiger who intends to surprise its hidden prey. The vibrant colours and layers of pattern draw us into the drama, heightened by the glistening teeth. For this French artist in the 19th century, the tiger represented an exotic, unseen world. Like the Chinese tiger, Rousseau seems to be excited by the idea of exploration and the unpredictable, raw energy of nature.

这只老虎如何面对身边危机四伏的丛林？它是否正处在被猎杀的危险之中，或者会受到其他什么东西的突袭？

或许这是一只虎视眈眈、企图偷袭潜伏猎物的老虎。画中鲜明的色彩和层次引人入胜，尤其是那寒光闪闪的利齿。对于这位 19 世纪的法国艺术家来说，这只老虎代表了奇异且不可预见的世界。与中国的老虎一样，Rousseau 对于探险的想法以及对于自然界不可预知的、原始的力量显得兴奋不已。

# 鼠 The Rat

1924 1936 1948 1960  
1972 1984 1996 2008

## Floor mosaics, stairs to Central Hall

位于通往中央大厅楼梯上的地板镶嵌图案

Anrep: *The Awakening of the Muses* 1930–3



In these celebratory mosaics, the arts are represented by reclining women, who draw inspiration from the natural world. Close to the border are two rats (or are they large, long-tailed mice?) – just one small incident in this rural cycle of growth and harvest. Rats are associated with disease and decay in Western culture, and represent the destructive effect of time. Perhaps not surprisingly, they appear very rarely in European painting; there are no obvious examples in National Gallery pictures.

在这些展示的镶嵌图案中，斜倚着的女人散发着艺术气息，其灵感来源于自然世界。靠近边缘的地方是两只老鼠（或者是拖着长尾巴的大老鼠？）——对于乡村里年复一年的播种和丰收，这只是一件司空见惯的事情。在西方文化中，老鼠与疾病和腐朽相关联，代表着时间的破坏效果。也许这并不令人惊奇，它们很少出现在欧洲绘画当中：在英国国家美术馆的藏品中，很难见到它们的踪影。



In contrast, the rat in the Chinese zodiac is charming and attractive. Rat-year people are associated with wealth and are known for hoarding money and possessions. They are intelligent but can be selfish and cunning. Unlike in the West, the rat is thought to bring good luck – and hopefully brings an auspicious end to this Gallery trail.

与此形成对照，鼠在中国十二生肖中魅力无限。鼠年出生的人象征着财富，并且善于积蓄金钱和财产。他们聪明，但也有可能自私、狡猾。这与西方不同，中国人认为老鼠会带来好运——希望借其吉兆，为本次英国国家美术馆之旅画上圆满的句号。