

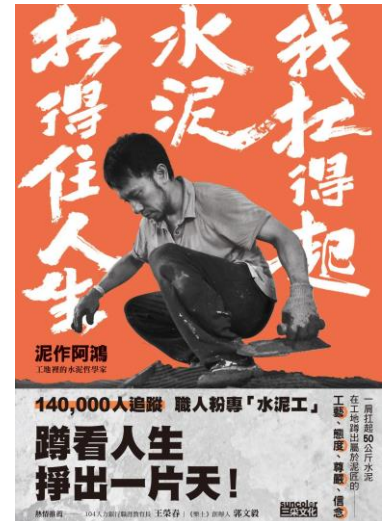
# A LIFE IN MORTAR: A TILE SETTER'S LIFE LESSONS LEARNED ON THE JOB

## 我扛得起水泥，扛得住人生： 泥作阿鴻，工地裡的水 泥哲學家

*Most people think of tile setting as humble, labor-intensive work. Cheng Chih-Hung draws on thirty years of experience at construction sites to share with readers his philosophy of life as a tiling and plastering master craftsman, challenging numerous stereotypes along the way.*

In an Asian society where academic qualifications are highly valued, most people think of tile and plastering work as unremarkable, unskilled labor. With this book, Cheng Chih-Hung challenges these negative perceptions, drawing on 30 years of experience in the industry. Family debt led him to apprentice at a construction site after junior high, following in his uncle's footsteps. Extraordinary perseverance, time, and experience have turned him into a craftsman of immense skill with the ability to influence society.

The first half of *A Life in Mortar* talks about the author's life and how he became skilled at his trade, from his time spent learning at the feet of master craftsmen to his insistence on quality and attention to detail after his apprenticeship was complete. He then discusses the difficulty of training master craftsmen: A global shortage of workers and unprofessional individuals lacking the required skills have led to poor construction quality and caused engineering nightmares.



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The second half of the book raises the issue of respect for those in the “mud work” trade and ensuring that skills are passed down. During his many years in the industry, Cheng has encountered employers who negotiated rock-bottom rates and reneged on promises. As a spokesperson for workers’ rights, particularly their right to respect, he has selflessly shared pictures of tile and plaster projects on his blog and Facebook page, helping the public to understand his work and debunking stereotypes. Thanks to his growing popularity, he now offers a course on creating frameless plaster wall paintings, and has also accepted invitations to lectures and exchanges abroad.

In a writing style both straightforward and sincere, Cheng shares a powerful life philosophy built on premises such as keeping an open mind and believing in what you do. Readers see what it takes to develop a master craftsman’s skills and to pursue work worth doing.

## Cheng Chih-Hung 泥作阿鴻（鄭志鴻）

Cheng Chih-Hung is a Taiwanese master craftsman who specializes in tile setting and decorative plaster. He began working on construction sites after junior high and has worked in the tile and plaster trade for nearly 30 years. His Facebook page (nijohn886), dedicated to his craft, has over 180,000 followers.