

Arrival in Japan: The national treasure, “Water of Immortality” from the National Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts collection debuts in the overseas exhibition, “Huang Tu-Shui and His Time: Taiwan's First Western-style Sculptor and the Tokyo Fine Arts School in the Early 20th Century”

Jointly curated by the National Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts (NTMoFA) and Tokyo University of the Arts (TUA), “Huang Tu-Shui and His Time: Taiwan's First Western-style Sculptor and the Tokyo Fine Arts School in the Early 20th Century” will open on 6 September at the University Art Museum, TUA, Japan. The exhibition features 58 works of art by Taiwanese and Japanese artists from the early 20th century, recreating the bustling art scene of East Asian art a century ago. Among them, the highlighted national treasure, “Water of Immortality”, was officially unveiled at the exhibition venue today.

NTMoFA began to closely coordinate with TUA more than a year ago to prepare for the overseas exhibition of “Water of Immortality”. All procedures have been carried out in accordance with the Regulations for Shipping National Treasures or Significant Antiquities out of the Country. First, TUA assisted in obtaining Japanese official documents in March this year guaranteeing that all works of art on loan to the museum shall not be subject to litigation, legal action or seizure. Subsequently, NTMoFA applied to the Bureau of Cultural Heritage (BOCH) in May, and passed the taskforce review convened by BOCH in June. The committee members unanimously approved the overseas exhibition of “Water of Immortality”.

In order to ensure that this national treasure can be safely exhibited in Japan, NTMoFA has planned customized packing and shipping logistics for “Water of Immortality” with the highest safety standards. After its arrival in Japan, “Water of Immortality” and the other exhibiting artworks were left in the exhibition space for 48 hours to allow sufficient time for them to adapt to the environment. All the artwork was unpacked today and confirmed to be in good condition. TUA has also taken corresponding safety measures during the exhibition period, particularly with regard to the exhibition route, safety management and transport coordination, monitoring and controlling of the micro-environment in the exhibition hall as well as the reliability of the artwork display stand.

Since the Ministry of Culture (MOC) launched the Reconstruction of Taiwan's Art History project in 2018, there has been a gradual discovery of Huang Tu-Shui's artwork and related archives. From amongst these, the iconic sculpture “Water of Immortality” was displayed at the third Imperial Art Exhibition (Teiten) in 1921 and had disappeared without a trace since 1958. The sculpture miraculously reappeared in 2021 when the family members of Chang Hong-biao, who had long guarded and preserved it, donated

it to the country. “Water of Immortality” then became part of the NTMoFA’s collection and was designated as a national treasure in February 2023.

This exhibition is the first overseas exhibition of “Water of Immortality” as a national treasure following “An Undefeatable Quest for Freedom and Beauty: The Life and Art of Huang Tu-Shui” held by NTMoFA in March 2023, which formed the inception of the exchange between NTMoFA and TUA. At that time, TUA professors, including Hiroshi Kumazawa, Takashi Murakami, and Yasushi Okada were invited to participate in the exhibition seminar and published their research, which aroused widespread discussion amongst the Taiwanese attendees. Significantly, Huang Tu-Shui studied at Tokyo Fine Arts School from 1915 to 1922. This experience also strengthened the two parties’ determination to cooperate in bringing Huang Tu-Shui’s works back to his alma mater for exhibition.

Chen Kuang-yi, Director of National Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts said, “This exhibition is not only a re-examination of Huang Tu-Shui, but also a major contribution to reconstructing the history of Taiwanese art in the early 20th century. It is also of profound significance to the study of modern art exchanges between Taiwan and Japan. We are incredibly grateful for the support from Ministry of Culture Taiwan, Tokyo University of the Arts, Taipei Economic and Cultural Representative Office in Japan and other supporters from the art community. We look forward to welcoming audiences from Japan and all over the World to learn about Huang Tu-Shui’s artistic value and outstanding achievements in the exhibition.”

Huang Tu-Shui (1895-1930) was the first Taiwanese artist to study at Tokyo Fine Arts School and was regarded as a representative figure in Taiwan's art world from 1910 to 1930. In order to faithfully restore the historical background that shaped Huang Tu-Shui, TUA carefully selected 48 pieces of early 20th century sculptures and paintings from its University Art Museum collection for exhibition. Meanwhile, NTMoFA curated the Hung Tu-Shui section, where ten highlight artworks of Huang Tu-Shui and related archives will be on display. By juxtaposing the works of Huang Tu-Shui and his mentor Koun Takamura on the same stage as those of the artists from the same period, including Takeji Fujishima, Seibo Kitamura, Fumio Asakura, Kotaro Takamura, Morie Ogihara and many others, we hope visitors will feel they are able to experience a condensed history of Taiwanese and Japanese art in the early 20th century.

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About National Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts (NTMoFA)

Located in the West District of Taichung City, Taiwan, the National Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts (NTMoFA) was inaugurated in 1988. It covers a total area of about 10 hectares and is the largest public art museum in Taiwan. With visual art as its main focus, NTMoFA highlights the collection, research, exhibition and educational promotion of modern and contemporary art in Taiwan, and is dedicated to providing visitors with a diverse and professional space for appreciating art.

About Tokyo University of the Arts (TUA)

Tokyo University of the Arts (TUA), located in Ueno Park, Taito District, Tokyo, Japan, was founded in 1949 by the merger of Tokyo Art School (now the Faculty of Fine Arts) and Tokyo Music School (now the Faculty of Music). It has 14 art departments and music-related departments, committed to cultivating artists in the fields of art and music.

Huang Tu-Shui and His Time: Taiwan's First Western-style Sculptor and the Tokyo Fine Arts School in the Early 20th Century

Exhibition Period | 6 September – 20 October 2024

Venue | University Art Museum, Tokyo University of the Arts, Japan

Organisers | Tokyo University of the Arts, National Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts

Curators | Takashi Murakami, Hsueh Yen-Ling

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