

Splendors of the Southern Branch of the National Palace Museum



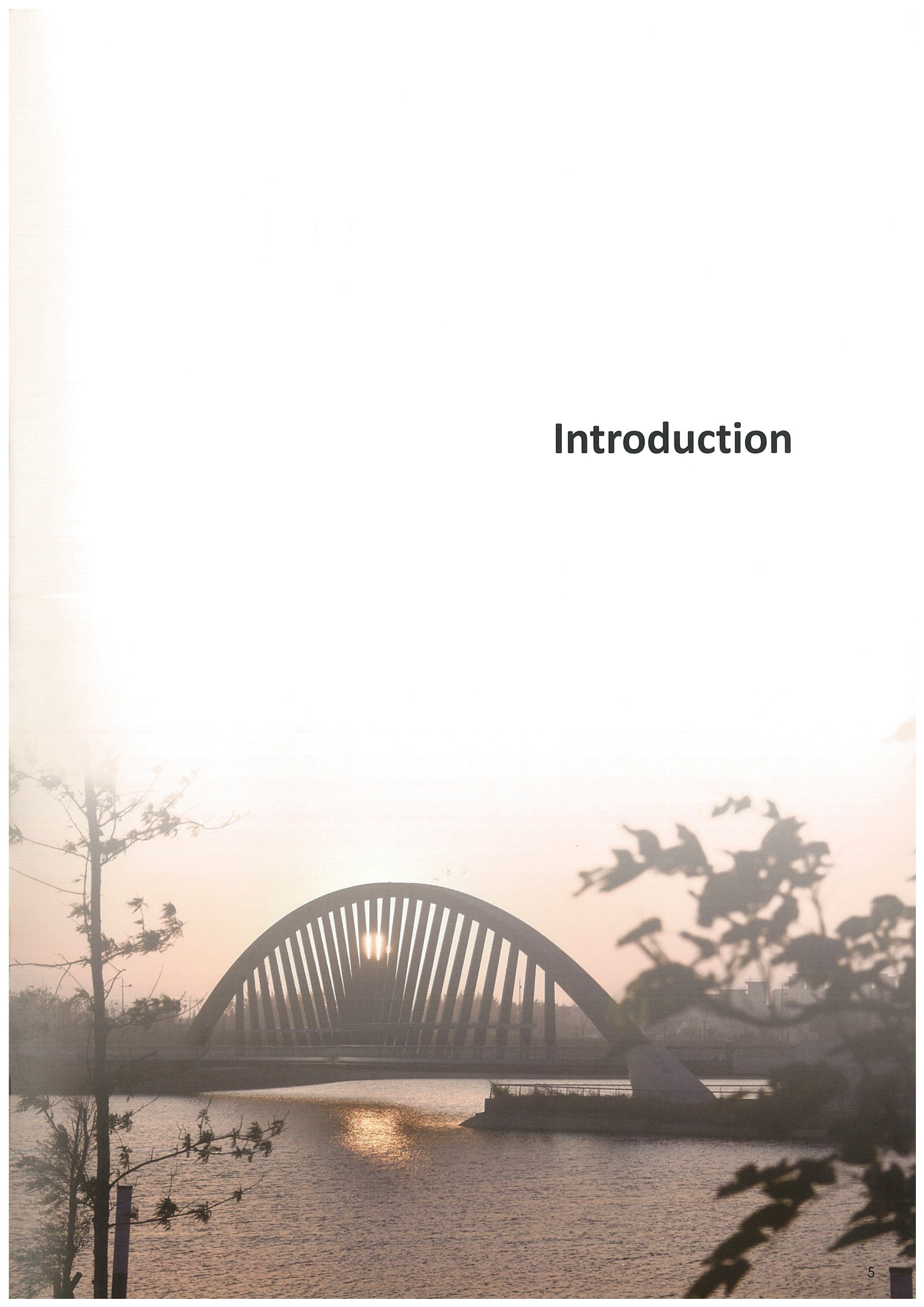
Splendors of the Southern Branch of the National Palace Museum

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5	Introduction
25	Landscape and Architecture
26	A Green, Energy-efficient Landscape
32	A Timeless Moment through Public Art
48	Dynamic Images and Static Structures
57	Selected Exhibitions
58	Multimedia Gallery Guide: Understanding Asian Art
66	Chiayi Literature Historical Hall Historical Development of Chiayi
80	Imprints of Buddhas: Buddhist Art in the National Palace Museum Collection
102	Boldness of Forms and Colors: Asian Textiles in the National Palace Museum Collection
118	Sailing the High Seas: A Special Exhibition of Imari Porcelain Wares
130	The Enduring Beauty of Celadon: A Special Exhibition of Goryeo Celadons
144	The Far-Reaching Fragrance of Tea: The Art and Culture of tea in Asia”
168	Treasures from Across the Kunlun Mountains: Islamic Jades in the National Palace Museum’s Collection
182	Radiating Hues of Blue and White: Ming Dynasty Blue-and-White Porcelain in the National Palace Museum’s Collection
203	Public Education
204	From One to Eternity
208	Following Hanuman to Get to Know Asia: Children’s Creative Center
213	Love Without Limits: The NPM Southern Branch’s commitment to Accessibility
221	Plan your Visit
222	A Brief Introduction of Local Attractions
227	Getting Here
229	General information

Introduction



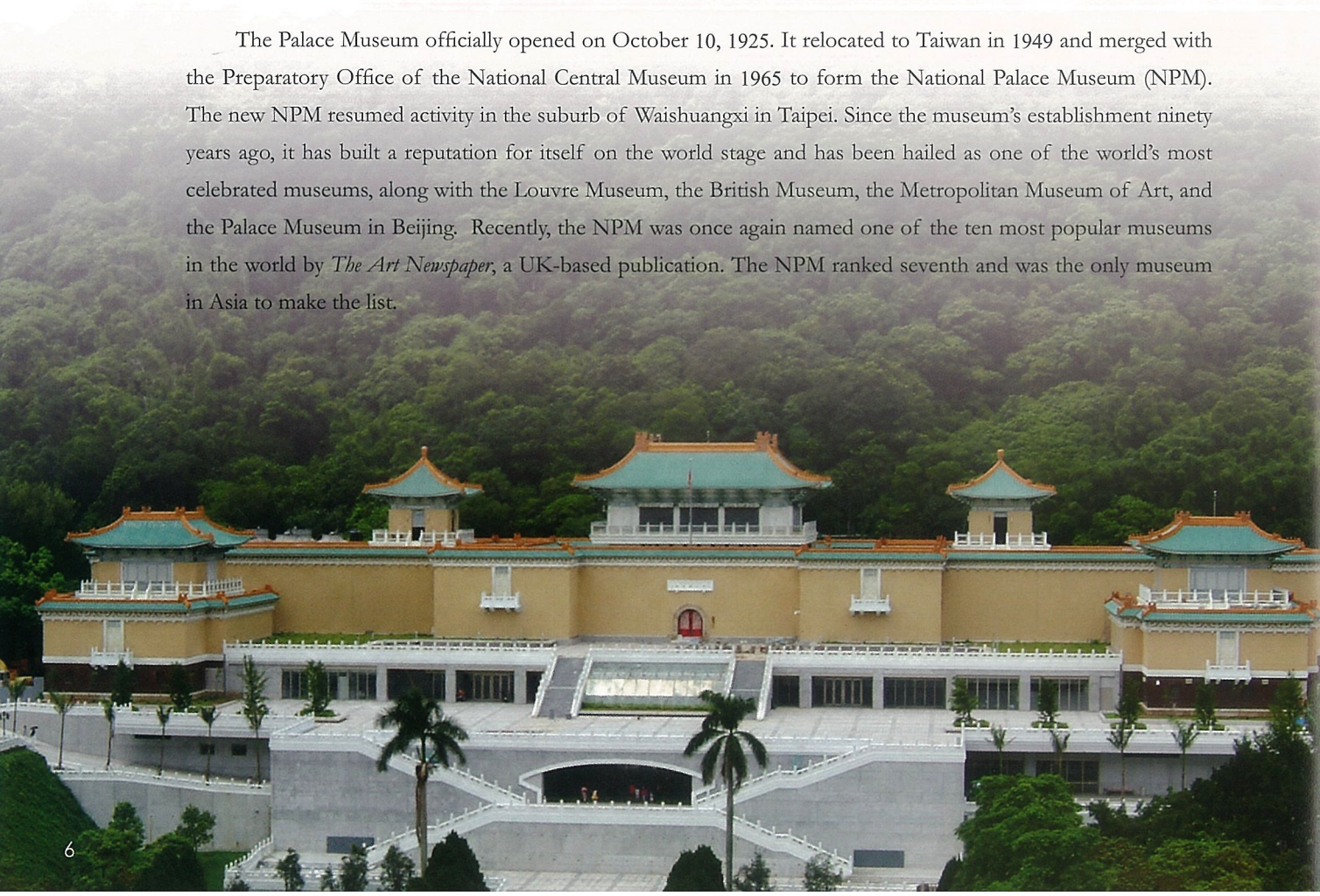
Introduction to the Southern Branch of the National Palace Museum: Asian Art and Culture Museum and its Inaugural Exhibitions

The long-expected Southern Branch of the National Palace Museum: Asian Art and Culture Museum finally launches a soft opening on December 28, 2015, fulfilling the promise that the government had made to the public, in particular to the people in southern Taiwan. From its inception to fruition, the fifteen-year long Southern Branch project underwent the administrations of the two presidents of the Republic of China, Chen Shui-bian and Ma Ying-jeou, as well as the leadership of five consecutive directors: Tu Cheng-sheng, Shih Shou-chien, Lin Mun-lee, Chou Kung-shin, and Fung Ming-chu.

It has been three years since I was appointed the director of the National Palace Museum. Concluding the construction project of the Southern Branch had been one of my ultimate goals as the director during the past over one thousand days. It had been a great pleasure for me to collaborate with the Construction and Planning Agency under the Ministry of the Interior, KRIS YAO | ARTECH, Lee Ming Construction Co. Ltd., as well as with my colleagues from the NPM in accomplishing this challenging task and present to the public a new cultural institution that combines collecting, exciting exhibitions, splendid landscape art, and environmentally friendly architecture into one integrated whole in Chiayi. I am proud of the accomplishments of my colleagues at the NPM and gratified by the new Southern Branch Museum. I am greatly indebted to the efforts of all parties involved.

Heritage and A New Source for Development

The Palace Museum officially opened on October 10, 1925. It relocated to Taiwan in 1949 and merged with the Preparatory Office of the National Central Museum in 1965 to form the National Palace Museum (NPM). The new NPM resumed activity in the suburb of Waishuangxi in Taipei. Since the museum's establishment ninety years ago, it has built a reputation for itself on the world stage and has been hailed as one of the world's most celebrated museums, along with the Louvre Museum, the British Museum, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and the Palace Museum in Beijing. Recently, the NPM was once again named one of the ten most popular museums in the world by *The Art Newspaper*, a UK-based publication. The NPM ranked seventh and was the only museum in Asia to make the list.



Over thirty years ago, at a time when the NPM's international reputation was beginning to grow, the Taiwanese public pushed for the museum to reach out and demonstrate the relevance of the museum's collection, which consisted mainly of former imperial artifacts, to local culture. As a result, the NPM's top management reconsidered the museum's direction and instructed the Department of Rare Books and Historical Documents to edit and publish historical documents and maps of Taiwan in the Qing imperial collection, and organized several exhibitions of the documents on Taiwan written during the Qing dynasty. In 1994, the Department of Antiquities launched the "Great National Treasures of China" special exhibition at Kaohsiung Museum of Fine Arts, which consisted of 370 groups of objects organized under four themes. The exhibition was warmly welcomed by the public in southern Taiwan and traveled to various places in central, southern, and eastern Taiwan and the outlying Penghu Island beginning in 1997 to achieve cultural equity between the northern and the southern regions of Taiwan.

On July 17, 2001, the former NPM director Tu Cheng-sheng put forward a project entitled "The National Palace Museum in the New Century" that included the construction project of the Southern Branch. On January 7, 2003, a 70-acre plot of land in Taibo, Chiayi County was designated as the site for the construction of the Southern Branch of the National Palace Museum. In order to distinguish the new branch from the NPM in Taipei, and to foster new research directions in cultural history by applying the art historical conception of a "Greater Asia" through collecting and research efforts, as well as international loan exhibitions under the broader viewpoint that covers the entire Asia, the new branch was set to a museum on Asian art and culture. The Southern Branch project was approved by the Executive Yuan (i.e. the cabinet) on December 15, 2004. The new branch was originally scheduled to open in 2008, but the project stalled due to a series of contractor disputes. On August 30, 2007, the former NPM director Lin Mun-lee revised the project for the first time and postponed the opening to 2011. Unfortunately, on August 8, 2009, Typhoon Morakot brought torrential rain to Taiwan and the site was completely inundated, since the peripheral drainage work had not been completed yet. The flood led to the termination of the construction and design contracts.

As a result, President of the Republic of China, Ma Ying-jeou, then instructed his administration to review the project in order to resolve contractual disputes. On October 22, 2010, under the leadership of the former NPM director Chou Kung-shin, the second revision of the project design was completed. After the approval by the Executive Yuan, the opening date was set to the end of 2015. Under the new plan, the Construction and Planning Agency under the Ministry of the Interior would take charge of the infrastructure construction, while the NPM would be responsible for interior design, exhibition planning, art design, operational planning, and landscape design of the 50-acre park. The project finally saw a major break through: ground was broken on February 6, 2013, and the beam was raised on June 5, 2014. After years of construction, the Southern Branch will launch a soft opening on December 28, 2015, crowning the series of celebrations for the NPM's ninetieth anniversary and accomplishing the task entrusted to the NPM by the government.



Architecture of the New Century

The Southern Branch of the National Palace Museum focuses on the art of Asia. It occupies 70 acres of land that includes both a museum complex and an outdoor landscape. The construction project was funded with NTD \$7.934 billion and received another NTD \$4.5 billion investment for the build-operate-transfer (BOT) project, making it the major cultural project in our country in the recent years. Kris Yao and his firm KRIS YAO | ARTECH designed and supervised the construction of the 20-acre main architecture complex. The design accentuates the Southern Branch's identity as a museum of Asian art and culture. Inspired by the three Chinese ink painting and calligraphy strokes, the thick ink, the half-dry, and smearing, the design includes three integrated components: a solid form, a "void" form, and a bridge that spans over the lakes that may serve to contain the water during flooding time. The three components intersect, with elegant curves and a monumental structure.

The Thick Ink; the solid form, sitting on the west and housing storage rooms and exhibition halls. Through public selection, the three-story structure was named “Moyun”. To comply with museum standards and control the amount of sunlight in the exhibition spaces, this building does not include large windows, but incorporates instead 98 cylinder windows covered with stippled varnish to allow natural light into the exhibition corridor.

The design is referred to as *The Yellow River Chart and Luo River Diagram*, referencing the ancient Chinese mathematics tradition. The exterior of the architecture is layered with steel, concrete, and mosaic tiles, with over 36,000 cast aluminum disks attached, reminiscent of the sturdy bronze wares in the NPM's collection.



The reflections on the cast aluminum disks also reveal “moving” dragon designs along with the progression of sunlight and the physical movements of the viewers.

The Half-dry: A light grey glass and steel structure entitled “Feibai”, consisting of multi-layer insulated glass walls and serving as the “void” form. It stands erect on the east side of the site, next to the lake. The airy green building allows natural light to enter, while the glass walls introduce the watery landscape outside into the interior spaces. The protective window shades form beautiful and rhythmic curves. This building will house the public service spaces, including a lobby, a library, the children’s creative center, conference rooms, and a multi-purpose auditorium, the Jixian Hall.

Smearing: An elegant museum courtyard in which the twelve Chinese Zodiac animal heads are displayed is situated between the structures inspired by the elements of thick ink and half-dry strokes. A streamlined “Zhimei” bridge connects the boulevard leading to the museum with the park’s main path. Architect Kris Yao uses these three components, the thick ink, the half-dry, and smearing to represent the interactions of Chinese, Indian, and Persian civilizations. Each remains independent yet integrates and interacts to form a multi-faceted Asia, altogether serving as the cultural origin of the architectural design of the Southern Branch complex. The Southern Branch was constructed as a green building in order to minimize energy consumption and carbon dioxide emissions. The architecture utilizes environmentally friendly technology, materials, design, and green energy. It



has been awarded with a diamond-grade certification. In addition, the main structure was built with maximum earthquake resistance, using 210 seismic base isolators of five different kinds to protect the structure from earthquake damage, while the two 14-acre lakes, Zhishan Lake and Zhide Lake, not only serve as landscape art but also contain floodwater that might be used in time of drought. This building project has reached the highest standard for intelligent building projects.

Exhibition: Broad Perspectives, Diversity, Cosmopolitanism

Some people may wonder how the NPM can have a sufficient number of Asian artworks to sustain the Southern Branch, a museum of Asian art and culture, since the core of its collection consists of imperial Chinese treasures. The fact is that Chinese culture has always been part of the East Asian civilization. Historically, different cultures in the pan-Asian region interacted with and influenced each other; on the other hand, Chinese artifacts actually include many elements from other parts of Asia, and artifacts seen as originating from Central, West, South, Southeast, and Northeast Asia also show signs of Chinese cultural influence. As mentioned above, through such efforts as collecting, research, and international loan exhibitions, the NPM shall foster new research directions in cultural history under the broader viewpoint that covers the entire Asia.

To accommodate the spatial design of the solid form, the Southern Branch of the National Palace Museum has five permanent exhibition galleries, one special exhibition gallery, a multimedia orientation gallery, and a gallery for loan exhibitions. Ten curatorial teams have been set up, consisting of almost all of the current and retired researchers from the NPM, as well as experts and scholars from Taiwan and overseas. Ho Chuan-hsing (Deputy Director), Lee Yu-min (former Chief Curator of the Department of Painting and Calligraphy), Tsai Mei-fen (Chief Curator of the Department of Antiquities), and I led the teams in reviewing the NPM's collections and organizing loan exhibitions to create ten exhibitions to inaugurate the Southern Branch. The five permanent exhibitions are: "Imprints of Buddhas: Buddhist Art in the National Palace Museum's Collection," "Boldness of Forms and Colors: Asian Textiles in the National Palace Museum's Collection," "The Far-Reaching Fragrance of Tea: The Art and Culture of Tea in Asia," "Through the Annals of Time: A Brief History of Chiayi," "Understanding Asian Art: Multimedia Gallery Guide." The three temporary exhibitions are: "The Aesthetics of Diversity: South Asian Costumes in the National Palace Museum's Collection," "Treasures from Across the Kunlun Mountains: Islamic Jades in the National Palace Museum's Collection," "Radiating Hues of Blue and White: Ming Dynasty Blue-and-White Porcelain in the National Palace Museum's Collection." The two exhibitions of loaned artifacts are: "The Enduring Beauty of Celadon: A Special Exhibition of Goryeo Celadon," "The Spread and Export of Imari: A Special Exhibition of Japanese Imari Porcelain."

The curatorial teams used a broad perspective to review the NPM collections and plan exhibitions to inaugurate the Southern Branch. We hope to bring the museum goers in southern Taiwan a feast of art and culture that is distinct from what can be seen at the NPM in Taipei. It is the first museum that focuses on the exchange of Asian art and culture on both sides across the strait. To meet popular demands in southern Taiwan, the Museum has set up a Zhibao Hall to display the famed national treasure, the Jadeite Cabbage, for the opening of the Southern Branch. The premiering ten exhibitions are described below.

故宮南院 璀璨登場

2015.12.28
隆重開幕

GRAND OPENING

2015.12.28 - 2016.03.31

試營運期間憑預約免費入館

2016.04.01 - 06.30

「雲嘉南鄉親專屬」預約憑證免費入館
(入場時，請出示身分證明文件)

主辦單位
Organizer



國立故宮博物院南部院區
SOUTHERN BRANCH OF THE NATIONAL PALACE MUSEUM

參觀資訊

開放時間 | 每日9:00至17:00 (週一休館) · 參觀需事先網路預約 地址 | 61248嘉義縣太保市東勢里故宮大道888號

Hours | 09:00-17:00 daily (closed on Mondays). On-line reservation is required for visiting the Southern Branch museum.

Address | No.888, Gugong Blvd., Taibao City, Chiayi County 61248, Taiwan (R.O.C.)

服務諮詢專線 | 05-3620777

Service Line | + 886-5-3620777

<http://south.npm.gov.tw>

2015.12.27 雲嘉南鄉親專屬
故宮南院贈票活動

參觀時間: 2015.12.28(一)下午2時至5時(依票面參觀時段入場)

索票時間: 2015.12.27(日)下午1時30分至3時30分

索票地點: 故宮南院景觀園區遊客中心

索票方式: 限設籍於雲林、嘉義、台南鄉親，憑證(身分證)取
票，每人限領2張，限量1000張，送完為止。



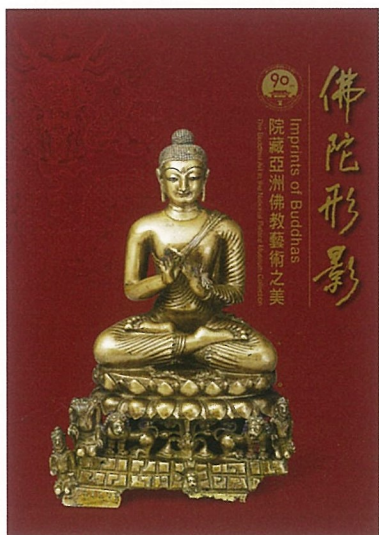
Five permanent exhibitions

1. Imprints of Buddhas: Buddhist Art in the National Palace Museum's Collection

“Imprints of Buddhas” is one of the Southern Branch’s permanent exhibitions. Buddhist art were chosen as the subject for this inaugural permanent exhibition for two reasons. First, Buddhism is an important element of Asian culture: after Siddhārtha Gautama founded the religion in India in the sixth century BCE, Buddhism evolved and, with the support of Indian ruling houses and the efforts of the Buddhist clergy, spread to Central Asia, Sri Lanka, Southeast Asia, and China, etc. From China, the religion also spread further to Korea and Japan. Since then, Buddhism has flourished and now exists in diverse sects around Asia, hence the large variation in the representation of Buddhist deities. All such factors contributed to the diversity and splendor of Asian Buddhist art.

Secondly, the NPM has a rich collection of Buddhist artifacts. In addition to the splendid Han and Tibetan Buddhist scripture and statues in the former imperial collections of the Qing dynasty, we are also fortunate enough to have 407 gilt-bronze Buddhist statues donated by Mr. Peng Kaidong (aka Nitta, Muneichi, 1912–2006) in 2004, 2006, and 2008. Mr. Peng’s collection covers an extensive geographical region and includes East Asian works from China, Japan, and Korea, South Asian works from India, Pakistan, Nepal, Kashmir, and Tibet, and Southeast Asian works from Burma, Thailand, Cambodia, and Indonesia. This inclusiveness neatly encapsulates the philosophy behind the southern branch. The grand scale of the collection has made it possible to build an entire exhibition on this theme.

This exhibition is divided into five sections: “The Joy of Birth,” “The Wisdom of the Buddha,” “The Compassion of the Bodhisattva,” “The Legacy of the Buddhist Scripture,” and “The Mystery of Esoteric Buddhism.” Each section presents the exhibits in a chronological fashion to show the beauty of Buddhist art and the splendor of Buddhist sutras.





2. Boldness of Forms and Colors: Asian Textiles from the National Palace Museum's Collection

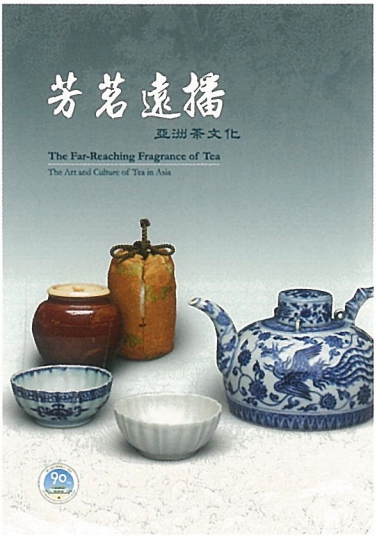
As a living necessity, textiles have evolved into manifestations of local customs, social classes, group identities, and tastes from the simple shelter against the cold weather. Textiles also indicate the development of the civilization and evolve with the changes in materials and production methods even to the present time. “Boldness of Forms and Colors: Asian Textiles in the National Palace Museum’s Collection” is one of the five permanent exhibitions to be presented at the opening of the Southern Branch Museum. That the NPM is able to organize a permanent exhibition with textiles from its collection should be attributed to the Museum’s active purchasing efforts for Asian art objects in the past ten years. The NPM’s efforts were also aided by a number of well-known overseas collectors who were willing to sell their lifetime collections to the NPM. The Mis Collection and the Pip Rau Collection are among the most notable examples. Marcel Mis was born in Turkey. He owned and managed a textile and apparel business, from which he acquired professional expertise on traditional fine textile craftwork and materials. His Italian wife Zaira is a contemporary art designer and curator, with a very refined taste in art. Their world-renowned collection of Asian textiles was gradually compiled during the last half-century. When the National Palace Museum announced the plans of building a museum for Asian arts, the aged Mis sent a catalog on their textile collection entitled *Asian Costumes and Textiles: From the Bosphorus to Fujiyama*, expressing their willingness to sell their collection. After three years of negotiation and acquisition procedures, over 1,340 pieces of Asian textile of high quality entered the NPM’s collection at the end of 2010. Afterwards, the NPM acquired Central Asian textiles from the Pip Rau’s collection which had been compiled since 1976, and which greatly enriched the NPM’s collection of Asian textiles.

The permanent exhibition “Boldness of Forms and Colors: Asian Textiles in the National Palace Museum’s Collection” combines the original NPM’s collection of Song dynasty silk tapestries (ke-si) and embroideries from the Ming and Qing dynasties with the newly acquired Asian textiles. In order to protect the organic materials such as silk, cotton, wool, etc., the textiles on display will rotate every three months. The exhibition will be divided into

six sections: “Homeland of Silk: East Asia,” “Grace of Sarong: Southeast Asia,” “Myriad of Colors: South Asia,” “Colors of the Steppes: Central Asia,” “Crossroads of East and West: West Asia,” and “Types of Handcraft and Decoration Techniques.” These sections introduce the beauty of Asian textiles and describe the vast areas of Asia to the visitors. They also illustrate how different geographical and environmental factors influence the customs and traditions of different ethnic groups, resulting in the colorful and diverse culture of textiles and costumes. At the end, I would like to thank Shenyang Palace Museum for generously loaning to the National Palace Museum six Qing dynasty imperial dragon robes and fabrics, thereby constituting the first section of the exhibition, “Homeland of Silk: East Asia.” My special thanks also extend to the National Museum of Prehistory for contributing eight Taiwanese aboriginal costumes to be displayed, adding to the exhibition’s richness and diversity.

3.The Far-Reaching Fragrance of Tea: Tea Art and Culture in Asia

“The Far-Reaching Fragrance of Tea: Tea Art and Culture in Asia” is one of the five inaugural permanent exhibitions at the Southern Branch of the National Palace Museum. There were four main reasons for organizing an exhibition on tea culture. Firstly, tea plant is indigenous to China, and the history of tea drinking in China can be traced back to very long time ago. The tea culture that evolved out of such context has influenced not only Asia but also the rest of the world, with tea drinking being an almost universal activity. Secondly, Taiwan is suitable for planting tea trees, confirmed by the multitude of wild tea plants in the mountainous regions in southern Taiwan. The Minnan gongfu tea drinking culture was brought into Taiwan by immigrants from the southeast coast of China during the period between the late Ming and early Qing dynasties, and now Taiwan has become one of the most renowned producers of gaoshan high mountain tea. Almost everyone in Taiwan drinks tea, and tea ceremony and tea drinking is popular throughout the island. An exhibition on tea culture not only

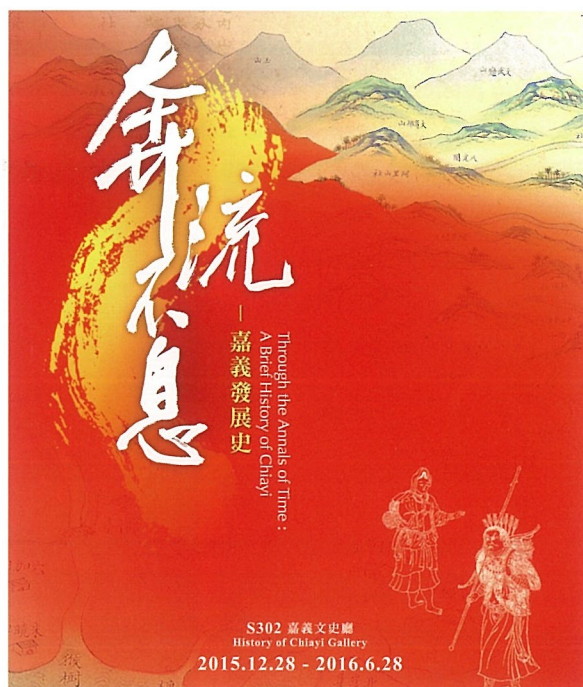


allows us to explore an aspect of local culture, but also demonstrates the impact tea drinking has throughout Asia. Thirdly, the National Palace Museum has within its collection some excellent tea-related objects: not only tea and tea wares, but also vessels for butter milk tea used at the Qing court. Also in the collection are Minnan gongfu tea wares and objects of Japanese tea drinking culture that entered the museum's collection over the recent years. Lastly, the Museum has set up the Sanxitang Teahouse since 1983 to promote tea culture and its related research, as well as to cultivate scholars of tea culture. Such factors all contribute to the successful realization of “The Far-Reaching Fragrance of Tea: Tea Art and Culture in Asia.”

The exhibition is divided into three main sections: “The Home of Tea: Chinese Tea Culture,” “The Way of Tea: Japanese Tea Culture,” and “The Draw of Tea: Taiwanese Tea Culture.” The Chinese section is further divided into three subsections: “Tang and Song Periods,” “Tea Gatherings of Ming,” and “Drinking Tea in Qing Dynasty.” The Japanese section is divided into two parts, exploring the two different ways of preparing tea in Japanese tea culture, *matcha* and *sencha*, by looking at their respective tea implements and evolutions. The Taiwanese section introduces the *gongfu* way of preparing tea, contemporary teahouses, and Taiwanese *gaoshan* high mountain tea. Tea drinking is a form of lifestyle, a form of culture, and a form of art. It also reveals the prevalent tastes in a society. Tea originated in China and the custom of drinking tea spread from the Han Chinese to minority groups in border regions through trades and diplomatic exchanges. Influenced by the consumption of dairy products among nomadic groups, tea drinking at such border regions as Manchu, Tibet and Mongolia developed into the custom of drinking milk tea, a new drink made by adding milk to tea. During the Tang and Song dynasties, tea drinking from China was also absorbed into Japanese culture and local customs through Japanese missions (*Kentoshi*) and Japanese monks, as well as through trades, evolving into the ritualized Japanese tea ceremony. During the late Ming dynasty, monks from Fujian brought to Japan a new way of preparing tea from Minnan as well as tea wares from Yixing. The new influx of tea drinking customs then blended with the literati lifestyle and became *sencha*. During approximately the same time, tea drinking also spread to Taiwan and Southeast Asia through migrations from the southeast coast of China and took over European markets through international trades. Tea drinking then became a shared language among world cultures.

4. Through the Annals of Time: A Brief History of Chiayi

The Southern Branch of the National Palace Museum situates in Taibao City in Chiayi. A new media film, “Through the Annals of Time: A Brief History of Chiayi” is specially produced by the NPM basing on the historical documents housed in





the NPM and related collection to maintain an on-going dialogue with the local society. The film is 70 minutes in length, produced with the assistance of prominent scholars in such areas as the history of Taiwan, religion, maritime trade, anthropology, and archeology. Beginning from Chiayi in the mythical period during the prehistoric times, the film is divided into three parts: “The Beginning,” “The Rise,” and “The Progress.” The third part is further divided into three sections: “The Arts,” “The Crafts,” and “The Faiths,” recounting the evolution of landscape, emergence of civilization, and further developments of Chiayi after it entered the historic age. The film traces the development of Chiayi from the Zhuluo County by exploring its legends, religions, culture, crafts, art, industry, and sports so as to introduce the viewers to the diversity of Taiwan.

5. Understanding Asian Art: Multimedia Gallery Guide

“Understanding Asian Art” will be the first explanatory and informational exhibition that the visitors will enter, introducing the exhibitions at the Southern Branch Museum through the new media exhibition. It also includes three specially produced videos, “Getting to Know the Art of Asia,” “The Cultural Sphere of India,” “The Cultural Sphere of China,” basing on the idea of looking at Asia from Taiwan in order to introduce the viewers to the culture of Asia and elicit a deeper understanding of the exhibitions at the Southern Branch among visitors.

Three temporary exhibitions

1. Treasures from Across the Kunlun Mountains: Islamic Jades in the National Palace Museum's Collection

Islamic culture exerted profound and lasting influence on Asia, and is therefore an indispensable theme in the inaugural exhibitions at the Southern Branch Museum. This exhibition, “Treasures from Across the Kunlun Mountains: Islamic Jades in the National Palace Museum’s Collection,” aims to reinterpret this group of “Hindustan” jade objects highly treasured by Emperor Qianlong (Qing Gaozong) under a broad perspective, situating them within the larger context of Islamic culture. As pointed out by one of its curators, Teng Shu-ping, Islamic culture spread far and wide. Due to the distribution of raw jade materials and Chinese cultural influence, however, it was only during the period between late 14th to early 19th centuries, in the four Islamic kingdoms in Central, South, and Western Asia to Eastern Europe—the Timurid Empire (1370-1506), Ottoman Empire (1299-1922), Safavid Dynasty (1501-1736), and Mughal Empire (1526-1857)—that different levels of jade carvings emerged. After these jade objects were introduced into the Qing court, Emperor Qianlong believed that all the jade objects with flower and leaf decorations had come from a place in South Asia called “Hindustan.” Consequentially, all jade objects with flower and leaf decorations that came from tributes from Xinjiang were called “Hindustan jade.” However, comprehensive research done by the curators has shown that some of these jades in the Museum’s collection include ones from the Ottoman Empire extending from Western Asia to Eastern Europe and unornamented jade objects from Central Asia. Therefore, these objects were referred to as “Islamic jade” to acknowledge their broad regional distribution.

The exhibition is divided into five sections: “The Eastward Transmission: the Imperial Frontier-expanding Enterprise,” “Breathtaking Splendor: Imperial Appreciation,” “Distant Domains: Styles and Characteristics,” “Aesthetics: Usage and Appreciation,” and “Influences: the Sparks of Colliding Civilizations.” It accounts the military campaigns in northwest China undertaken by the emperors Kangxi, Yongzheng, and Qianlong for national defense and border settlements until 1759, when the Qing army defeated the Uygurs, thus gaining control of the territory north and south of the Tianshan Mountains. Since then, Islamic jade wares flooded

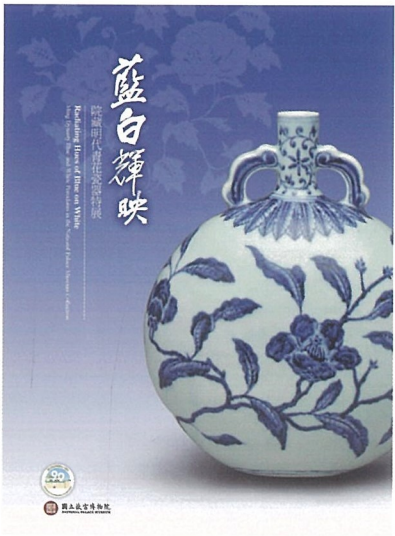


eastward across the Kunlun Mountains into the Qing court. Emperor Qianlong specially appreciated the thinness, transparency, lightness, and luster of the jade, and the vivid organic shapes in the leaf-and-flower decorations carved in low relief. His appreciation for Islamic jade then stimulated Chinese jade-carvers to emulate the Islamic style, resulting in cross-cultural influences in jade carving techniques between the two cultures. This stylistic collision sparked the production of new kinds of jade objects. Indeed, as Curator Teng says, the essence of Islamic jade art, such as geometric patterns and flower-and-leaf decorations, had by then imperceptibly blended into and become a part of Chinese culture.

2. Radiating Hues of Blue and White: Ming Dynasty Blue-and-White Porcelain in the National Palace Museum's Collection

Cultures receive new impetus by interacting with each other. In Asia, we have witnessed many encounters, cross-fertilizations, borrowings, and re-creations between art and cultures. Underglaze blue-and-white porcelain is a prime example. When people think of Asia, blue-and-white porcelain is bound to spring to mind. This is the main reason why “Radiating Hues of Blue on White” is one of the inaugural exhibitions of the Southern Branch of the National Palace Museum. Another important reason is that, although the NPM’s collection of Ming dynasty blue-and-white porcelain enjoys acclaim across the world, it has never been displayed at such notable scale.

Chinese white ceramics made its way to Western Asia in the 7th century. Although Western Asia did not produce porcelain clay, tin-glazed earthenware replicas were made, and were decorated with cobalt blue pigments. This type of blue-and-white earthenware could also be found in kilns in Tang dynasty in China, but its production was discontinued when foreign glaze became difficult to acquire. In the mid-14th century, foreign pigments were introduced to Jingdezhen, the porcelain capital of China, and magnificent blue-and-white porcelain was produced in Yuan dynasty, becoming the primary type of ceramic wares continuously produced at the imperial kilns during the Ming and Qing dynasty. The blue-and-white porcelain became highly prized items in nations across Asia thanks to such diplomatic exchanges and tributes and gift exchanges. The Ming court spared no expense and used national revenue to enlist craftsmen to produce large quantities of blue-and-white porcelain wares under





rigorous quality control. As gifts to other nations, many of the porcelain wares took their shapes from Central Asian metal vessels, with foreign elements remaining in the decorations, making the blue-and-white porcelain into a combination of pan-Asian elements.

Ordered chronologically, this exhibition is divided into four sections: “From Hongwu to Xuande: 1368 - 1435,” “From Zhengtong to Zhengde: 1436 - 1521,” “From Jiajing to the End of Ming: 1522 - 1644,” and “Blue-and-white Porcelain in Asia.” Basing the development of the Ming blue-and-white porcelain on the Museum’s world-class collection, the exhibition further explores the emergence and subsequent developments of such porcelain in Vietnam, Joseon, Japan, Persia, etc., under the Ming influence. Originated in China, blue-and-white porcelain enjoys widespread popularity across the world and has had far-reaching influence. The white and translucent body and the sophisticated blue decorations make this type of porcelain the manifestation of the art of living.

3. The Aesthetics of Diversity: South Asian Costumes in the National Palace Museum’s Collection

Due to the fragile nature of textiles, works on display need to rotate every three months and are therefore more suitable for theme-based special exhibitions. In light of such special characteristics of textiles, a gallery is specifically set up for thematic special exhibitions in the permanent exhibition gallery for textiles. The first special exhibition will be “The Aesthetics of Diversity: South Asian Costumes in the National Palace Museum’s Collection,” opening in March 2016.

The term South Asia refers to the geographical region that roughly covers India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Bhutan, Nepal, Sri Lanka, etc. It is bounded by the Himalayan Mountains in the north, Bay of Bengal in the east, Arabian Sea in the west, Indian Ocean in the south. Surrounded by the sea on its three sides, it enjoys a warm and humid climate. Ancient Indian civilization flourished along the banks of Indus River and Ganga River. Even in the present day, costumes from the countries in South Asia still share distinctive features: female wears sari

and usually with golden wares while male usually wears Dohti. Gujarat in the northwest of the Indian Peninsula boasts a flourishing textile industry, famous for such traditional crafts as weaving, dyeing, and embroidery. The nomadic ethnic groups in the north are especially skilled at embroidery and dyeing, wearing neatly cut clothes to accommodate their lifestyle on the horsebacks.

In stark contrast to the contemporary fashion trend influenced by the Western clothing style, countries in South Asia retain their traditional dress. This exhibition draws representative pieces from the Museum’s collection and presents the beauty of South Asian costumes through the three sections: “The Beauty of Sari,” “Fascinating Folk Costumes,” and “Royal Attire,” aiming to inspire audience to appreciate the costumes in the countries of South Asia.

International Loan Exhibition: Treasures from the Museum of Oriental Ceramics, Osaka

It was during my first trip to the Museum of Oriental Ceramics, Osaka (MOCO) in Japan in the fall of 2009 that I first witnessed the elegant beauty of Goryeo celadon and the splendid color of Imari porcelain. I was delighted to meet the Honorary Director of MOCO Ikutaro Ito, a prominent scholar of Goryeo celadon, who gave me a tour on the celadon pieces on display. His insights transformed my understanding of celadon and I was astounded by the breadth and quality of MOCO’s collection of East Asian ceramics. During our meeting, I proposed a future collaboration between MOCO and the Southern Branch of the National Palace Museum (NPMSB): Asian Arts and Culture Museum, still under construction at that time. Director Ito responded with enthusiasm, offering MOCO’s rich collection of Goryeo celadon and Imari porcelain to the NPMSB. Over the next five years, Director Ito, Director Degawa Tetsuro, and Curator Kobayashi Hitoshi visited our museum on multiple occasions and discussed logistics with our curatorial team. In the end, the MOCO graciously loaned 175 pieces of Goryeo celadon and 161 pieces of Imari porcelain for exhibition at the NPMSB over the periods of two and three years respectively. Scholars and experts from the MOCO would provide dates, measurements, research information, and high-definition images of the artworks, and the curatorial team at the NPMSB would focus on the curatorial aspects and on the publication of the exhibition catalog. The exhibition would constitute part of the celebration of the National Palace Museum’s 90th anniversary and of the celebratory occasion of the opening of the Southern Branch.



1. The Enduring Beauty of Celadon: A Special Exhibition of Goryeo Celadon

Produced in the Korean Peninsula during the Goryeo Kingdom (918-1392), Goryeo celadon continues to be the most representative of traditional Korean crafts today. Known for their warm, gentle luster, celadon pieces often feature organic decorations of fluted grass, flower, and leaf patterns as well as cloud cranes. Celadon wares for daily use had long been an integral part of Korean culture.

Director Ito and Curator Jung Eun Jin oversaw the selection of artworks for this exhibition and provided detailed information. Curators at the NPM then use such information to organize this exhibition and compose explanatory essay on each work. The exhibition consists of four sections. In the first section, entitled “Simple Elegance,” two national treasures from the NPM’s collection, the Northern Song Ru Ware Porcelain Flower-Shaped Warming Bowl and the Song Ru Ware Mallet-Shaped Vase will be displayed alongside similar Goryeo celadon wares to illustrate the influence of ceramic wares from Northern Song dynasty on Goryeo celadon. The special attention on vessel forms and glaze confirms further the close connections between them. The second section, “Incised Charm,” focuses on the intricacy of incised and carved designs on the surfaces of Goryeo celadon. The smooth and organic lines produce sculptural effects similar to those observed on shallow relief. The next section, entitled “Embedded Diversity” displays inlaid pieces, the most distinctive features of Goryeo celadon. Using inlaying as the primary decoration technique, the craftsmen also employed incised design, copper-red glaze, openwork design, and reverse inlaid design to create the most characteristic works of Goryeo celadon. The last section “Black Element” is the grand finale. Peony or chrysanthemum patterns were applied to the surface of a vessel with iron glaze, which then creates dark brown patterns covering the entire vessel after firing at high temperatures. The elegant and blooming leaf-and-flower decoration is another defining element of Goryeo celadon.



2. Sailing the High Seas: A Special Exhibition on Japanese Imari Porcelain

For the special exhibition “Sailing the High Seas: A Special Exhibition on Imari Porcelain,” it was Director Degawa and Curator Kobayashi, as well as Director Yukio Suzuta from Kyushu Ceramic Museum who oversaw the selection of artworks and provided relevant information on the selected artworks. Curators at the NPM then organized the exhibition basing on the information provided as well as on their own research. Conscious that Imari porcelain came into prominence as popular goods in international markets in the middle of the 17th century, the curators decided to first introduce the origin of the name “Imari” and the characteristics of Imari porcelain. The three succeeding sections, “Conspicuous Consumption,” “Banquet Tableware,” and “Palace Decorations,” portray exported porcelain wares from the Japanese port of Imari not only as treasures and daily vessels eagerly sought after by European nobilities during the 17th and 18th century, but also as palace decorations and important diplomatic presents. The fifth section of the exhibition, “Diplomatic Gifts,” features 13 sets of Imari porcelain from the National Palace Museum’s collection. Most of these works are in the *Kakiemon* and *Kinrande* styles that belong to different period but nevertheless are among the best pieces of Imari porcelain.

Conclusion

“Eternal Stability and Constant Harmony” is the auspicious words that I personally selected to be inscribed on the main beam of the museum complex of the Southern Branch of the National Palace Museum. I hope that the National Palace Museum, now operating for 90 years, will continue to expand and flourish through the construction project of the Southern Branch Museum, and play an increasingly important role in cultural education.



President of the Republic, Ma Ying-jeou, attended the Groundbreaking Ceremony of Southern Branch of the NPM.
(from the left) Legislator Wong Chung-chun of the Legislative Yuan, Director Fung Ming-chu of the NPM, President Ma Ying-jeou, and Mayor Chang Hwa-kuan of Chiayi County.