

# When art gets a dose of generosity

A selection of donated paintings and calligraphy from the Zhejiang Art Museum is on display at the National Art Museum of China in Beijing. **Lin Qi** traces their history.

Shortly after the opening of the Hangzhou-based Zhejiang Art Museum in 2009, the staff was contacted by the families of Fu Juanfu (1910-2007) in the United States. They hoped to make a considerable donation to the museum, including Fu's artworks and his art collection.

Fu, who was trained to be a calligrapher and ink-brush painter from childhood, grew up in a neighborhood on Nanshan Street, which is close to West Lake. It is the same street where the Zhejiang Art Museum is located.

Fu moved to Taiwan in 1949, never to return to Hangzhou. He then became one of the spearheads of the ink-art movement there and devoted himself to fine-arts education.

He moved to San Francisco in 1990 and died there.

Fu's family believed that the donation of his works to the museum would be the best way to mark the intense homesickness he felt over the years.

The Fu family transported to Hangzhou a treasure trove of more than 570 works, in four batches, from 2010 to July 2016. The works included Fu's ink-brush paintings, drafts, calligraphic pieces, diaries and carved seals, as well as his collection of works by established modern artists and his letters to some of them.

A selection of these are now on display at the National Art Museum of China in Beijing.

The exhibition, *Sincere Heart and Flying Dreams*, is named after Fu's studios: one used when he lived on the mainland and then in Taipei and the other used after he settled in San Francisco.

One part of the show focuses on Fu's artworks as a testament to his cultural attainment.

At an early age, he studied calligraphy, classical poetry and seal art under his grandfather. He later learned ink-brush painting at the Xiling Calligraphy and Painting Society for seven years.

In his mountain-and-water landscapes, Fu infuses his love of West Lake and the scenes in southwestern China where he traveled extensively in the late 1930s and early '40s.

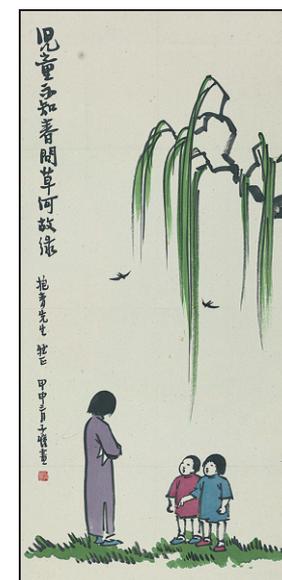
After moving to Taipei, he was amazed by the clouds at



Fu Juanfu's paintings, calligraphy and art collections are on display at the National Art Museum of China in Beijing.

## If you go

9 am-5 pm, closed on Mondays, through Sunday. 1 Wusi Dajie, Dongcheng district, Beijing. 010-6400-1476.



The exhibition *Sincere Heart and Flying Dreams* features Fu Juanfu's paintings (top and above left) and his collection of works by such established modern artists as Feng Zikai (above right) and Zheng Yuebo (above center). PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Ali Mountain and the breathtaking views on the eastern coast.

Fu said that before 25, he worked at his desk, but after 25, nature was his teacher.

His eldest son, Fu Li-sheng, says that the painter traveled extensively to do sketches at scenic places such as Kenting and along the Suao-Hualien Highway. And because transportation then was not good, his father cycled first, then

transferred to buses and then to trains.

Fu Li-sheng says his father loved calligraphy so much that he practiced it almost every day. "I used to play with classmates in front of my home, and I always saw my father writing at his desk by the window."

The other part of the exhibition focuses on Fu's social circle, which included prominent artists, such as Chen Zhifo, Xu

Beihong and Feng Zikai.

Fu received from them paintings and letters, which are also on display.

The section also features works by painters with whom Fu teamed up to establish several painting and calligraphy societies in Taiwan.

Fu's artworks and his collection were first exhibited at the Zhejiang Art Museum from July to August 2016.

During that time, Liu Yong,

a writer, painter and collector from Taipei who lives in New York, read about the show in a newspaper.

Liu, whose father hails from Lin'an, Zhejiang, then donated 31 paintings by modern ink artists to the museum in October. The paintings include works by prominent figures, such as Ren Bonian, Zhang Daqian, Fu Baoshi and Huang Junbi.

A month later, these works

were on show at the Zhejiang museum.

Si Shunwei, director of the Zhejiang Art Museum, hopes that the two displays will create "a chain effect" encouraging more donations.

Though many public museums are granted funds to boost their collections, museums are unable to compete in a booming art market.

The Zhejiang Art Museum has around 1 million yuan

(\$145,000) a year for collecting art, but a museum-quality work by Zhang Daqian or Fu Baoshi can cost anywhere between tens of thousands of yuan to several million yuan.

"The (Zhejiang) museum now houses more than 22,000 works, and 80 percent of them were donated by artists and their families," Si says.

The museum received its first donation from modern art master Wu Guanzhong (1919-2010). Wu, who studied at the Hangzhou Fine Art School (now the China Academy of Art), donated 40 paintings and 16 collections soon after the museum opened.

He also persuaded one of his collectors in Singapore to donate to the museum.

Zhejiang boasts of a long history of traditional art and a booming contemporary art scene.

Si says that the museum focuses on collecting classical Chinese art from the past century.

He says it especially solicits donations from people who graduated from the Hangzhou Fine Art School, which was founded in 1928, and now live abroad, or from their families. Their contributions showcase the evolution of Zhejiang's art landscape.

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## Exhibition shines the spotlight on urbanism

By LIN QI

In her two installations called *I Love Heavy Metal*, Beijing-based musician and artist Ai Jing interprets an Eastern philosophy that hardness can be complemented with softness in a harmonious way.

Two stainless-steel poles that bear many carved-out inscriptions of the word "love" in an exhibition hall at the National Art Museum of China. They are part of an ongoing exhibition titled *New Tale of the Orient* that reflects how contemporary Asian artists inherit and develop tradition through various mediums of art.

"The word 'love' conveys a message of warmth while the stainless steel looks cold and tough," says Ai. "They feel so different but are able to achieve harmony and coexistence in the works."

The subject of love recurs in Ai's art. A piece in her solo exhibition at the National Museum of China in 2012 showed a 16-meter-high hanging carpet that had the word "love" woven in many vibrant colors.

*I Love Heavy Metal* is featured in one section of the exhibition called "urbanism and new mediums". Curator Liu Chunfeng says this is where artists use installations,



Left: Beijing-based musician and artist Ai Jing in front of her installation *I Love Heavy Metal*. Right: A young visitor views the Han Dynasty-style woman's gown by Taipei-based artist Rosalie Huang.

PHOTOS BY JIANG DONG / CHINA DAILY



videos and mixed media to demonstrate the relationship between tradition and urbanism.

The exhibition showcases work by 16 Chinese artists and one from Japan.

Liu says that viewers will not find tags for the artists such as up-and-coming or established. Rather, they will see different types of works revealing different ways of

thinking when it comes to translating classical Eastern culture into a modern context.

"Handmade items and a craftsman's spirit are central to this show," says Liu.

Behind Ai's works is an eye-catching installation by Taipei-based artist Rosalie Huang. Huang was inspired by her work experience in film and TV production to create

the piece. It features a luxurious Han Dynasty (206 BC-220) style woman's gown and a glittering warrior's suit, both of which stand before a wall of mirrors. The costumes boast sophisticated embroidery.

"These days we've again recognized the value of craftsmanship, because we realize it is art of its time, and it is about how people learn to

focus on one tiny work," says Huang.

"When people walk between the two costumes, they see numerous reflections in the mirrors. It feels like time travel that takes them to a past when these traditions built a civilization. And it encourages people to think about what future we want to create."

Beijing-based Yang Kai explores the distinction between reality and dreams in his installation. He paints trees using ink on a reprocessed piece of aged silk, and he employs a similarly elegant touch of Song Dynasty (960-1279) painting. Above the painting he places an acrylic

board on which he draws the same subject.

He frames the two paintings together, and viewers see shadows from the acrylic subject appearing on the silk and, therefore, creating a third painting.

"The world has become lustrous but also complicated. So it is difficult to tell what is real from what is not. People seek simplicity, which was hailed by our ancestors," says Yang.

The exhibition is part of a project initiated by the Ministry of Culture to support young curators at art museums nationwide.

Liu says few visitors to the museum know what a curator does, and the project will help people know how a curator works.

"We conceive the idea for an exhibition, find artists and work with them to make their works fit the museum environment," she says.

"Together, we tell people what is happening to the art world and how art engages them."

## If you go

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