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CHINA'S NATIONAL PALACE AND CENTRAL MUSEUMS ART

TREASURES TO BE SEEN IN THE UNITED STATES

NATIONAL GALLERY IN WASHINGTON WILL INAUGURATE EXHIBITION TO

BE HELD IN FIVE CITIES : TREASURES DATING BACK 3000 YEARS

TRACE CHINA'S CULTURAL HERITAGE

WASHINGTON, D.C. (April 00, 1961) -- A collection of rare art treasures, part of the vast store acquired over many centuries and known in China as the National Palace Museum collection, but including a small portion from the National Central Museum as well, will be seen for the first time in the United States when it is shown at the National Gallery of Art in Washington.

Paintings that once were displayed in palace halls eight centuries before America was discovered are included in the more than 250 pieces now being assembled here. The public showing in Washington begins May 28th, and will be followed by exhibitions in New York, Boston, Chicago and San Francisco.

Porcelains of rare beauty and unmatched quality, dating from the Sung Dynasty (960-1279 A.D.) to the Manchu Dynasty of the 18th century are included, as are bronze and metal pieces that were used in religious ceremonies prior to 1000 B.C. or during the Western Chou Dynasty (771-221 B.C.). Silk tapestries (k'o-ssu) of the Sung Dynasty are also a part of the exhibition which includes jades, enamel ware and rare examples of Chinese calligraphy, all identified with dynastic eras covering some 3,000 years of Chinese culture and tradition.

Chinese Art Treas.

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Of the total 253 pieces to be seen in the United States, 112 are paintings, 10 calligraphies, and 85 pieces are porcelains; there are 10 rare jades, 19 examples of magnificent enamels and lacquers, 5 ancient bronzes, 8 carvings, and 4 silk tapestries.

These examples from the Museums' collections have been chosen from among the finest pieces in each category of Chinese works of art, the aim being to show only the best rather than to represent the widest possible range of types and style.

Other than being works of art, they have been carefully preserved, first on the mainland and more recently on Taiwan, as a constant reminder of China's long and traditional cultural heritage.

The exhibition is under the joint honorary patronage of President John F. Kennedy and President Chiang Kai-shek, and the two First Ladies. Portions of the exhibit recently were seen in a brief showing at the Taiwan Provincial Museum in Taipei, before being packed for shipment to the U.S. on the U.S.S. Bryce Canyon in mid-February.

The Metropolitan Museum in New York, the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, the Art Institute of Chicago and the M. H. de Young Memorial Museum of San Francisco are the other galleries which, together with the National Gallery of Art, are participating in arrangements for the exhibition on its tour that will last a full year in the United States. Following the San Francisco exhibition, all of the art objects will be repacked for shipment to Taiwan where a return public showing is to be arranged.

PALACE MUSEUM COLLECTION IS "WELL TRAVELED"

The history of the Palace Museum, which originally housed most of the collection, is as absorbing as the tale of the treasures themselves and the

almost fabulous series of journeys on which they have been embarked for a quarter century.

Although assembly of many of the pieces began in the 18th century, the National Palace Museum at Peking was created as recently as October 10th, 1925, the occasion of the 14th anniversary of the founding of the Republic of China. At that time a museum board was organized under the auspices of the Nationalist Chinese Government.

There was already established a National Central Museum at Nanking and China's art exodus began as a separate movement of both collections when the Japanese invaded Manchuria in 1931. The Palace Museum crated some 13,000 strongboxes of treasures for shipment south to Shanghai for safekeeping while warehouses were being built at Nanking, then the capital of China.

But when the Japanese military threat to China proper appeared certain, the Palace Museum treasures were again on the move to safety, eventually finding haven at Chungking, there to be joined by parts of the Central Museum collection secreted out of Nanking.

There were some 35,000 pieces in the three shipments that were eventually brought to safety for storage in underground warehouses near Taichung, in central Taiwan, built especially to house the huge, combined art collection. These vaults were designed to control temperatures and humidity and thus insure the preservation of rare paintings, porcelains and other treasures. Every item of the cargo has since been carefully checked, catalogued and stored since 1949; not a single piece has been lost or damaged since the Ministry of Education placed the two museum collections under a joint administration.

Following Government plans for its preservation and display, a small showroom was built in 1956 and almost continuous exhibitions have been

arranged since then for the thousands who wished to see the collection. Because of limited exhibition area, changes have been made every month to permit most of the collection to be placed on view; it would take almost fifty years of such periodic exhibitions for the entire collection to be seen thoroughly.

ART TREASURES LINKED INDELIBLY WITH CHINA'S HISTORY

To the Chinese everywhere who are mindful of China's traditional influences, these art treasures represent an indelible link with their country's history and culture. The paintings reveal an unbroken story of Chinese life through the centuries; incense burners, and bronze wine and food vessels of some 3,000 years past, have their counterparts in the work-a-day wares to be seen in present day temples and innumerable rural homes.

When a preview of the present exhibit was opened to the public recently in Taipei (February, 1961) thousands waited in line for hours to enjoy a brief reunion with their past. President and Mme. Chiang Kai-shek, Vice President Chen Cheng and his wife, and other government dignitaries made it the occasion to inspect these priceless Chinese treasures.

In Washington, the Chinese Art Treasures will be on display for more than two months; in each of the other four cities, the exhibition will last approximately six weeks. Several million persons are expected to attend the five-city art treasures display that will close in June, 1962.

Cultural and educational groups, American and Chinese, are being organized in each area, while in Washington and New York, with their concentration of diplomatic and United Nations officials, special functions will be arranged.