

Mapping the Artistic Trajectory in Central Taiwan

The central region of Taiwan is defined by its eastern hills and western plateaus, traversed by rivers and streams. With its mild climate and abundant natural resources, Central Taiwan fostered the rise of gentry lineages, and later became a commercial hub, especially after the railway system was established during the Japanese rule. It was during this period that Taiwan's artistic scene saw the introduction of Impressionism primarily through official exhibitions and the return of Japanese-trained artists. Members of the local gentry, such as Lin Xian-Tang and Yang Zhao-Jia, supported these artists as a means of asserting Taiwanese cultural identity within a colonial context. Artists such as Yen Shui-Long and Liao Te-Cheng developed practices deeply rooted in the Taiwanese milieu, drawing on subjects ranging from local agriculture to Indigenous cultures, and employing colour and composition that articulated a distinctly local atmosphere. Since the Japanese era, Central Taiwan has played a vital role in shaping these artistic trajectories. Its natural resources and transportation networks further supported the development of crafts traditions such as lacquerware and ceramics, represented by figures like Wang Ching-Shuang and Lin Bao-Chia.

After World War II, painting and sculpture in Central Taiwan continued to evolve in dialogue with styles shaped during the Japanese rule. Artists influenced by Lee Shih-Chiao, Ye Huo-Cheng, and Yang Qi-Dong, as well as practitioners of Eastern gouache painting associated with Lin Chih-Chu, cultivated circles of students who would later become central to provincial exhibitions and artist collectives. By the 1950s, American modernism began to permeate the region, prompting artists such as Chen Ting-Shih to shift toward abstraction. In the 1960s, following Li Zhong-Sheng's relocation from Taipei to Changhua, more artists turned to abstract expressionism, including June Huang and Chen Hsing-Wan. The 1980s marked the rise of public cultural institutions—cultural centres, art museums, and other exhibition venues—that, given Central Taiwan's geographic position, hosted a broad range of artistic activities. Inheriting this rich historical foundation, the Taichung Art Museum seeks to forge a vision that moves beyond the local while remaining rooted in place, positioning itself as a site that connects Taiwan with the global art landscape, and cultivates an artistic terrain for the future.