



PHOTOS: BLOOMBERG AND COURTESY OF REN DAN RU CHU TEA STUDY GROUP

## The National Palace Museum Tea Ceremony Exhibition

(故宮文創系列活動 — 茶事展演) is something new in the annals of this venerable museum. It is a novel departure on many fronts, not least as being the first time guests can partake of tea and snacks as an actual part of the overall experience of art appreciation.

The current exhibition is a pilot project for a cultural creativity center (創意中心) that has been much touted by the National Palace Museum's recently installed director Chou Kung-shin (周功鑫). Speaking at the opening of the activity at the museum's Second Exhibition Area in the Library Building (圖書文獻大樓), Chou said that the museum, as the most esteemed and sophisticated cultural conservation agency in the country, would be able to provide a solid basis for the development of Taiwan's "creative cultural industry" (文化創意產業).

"In Taiwan, we have lots of creative talent, and industry is what we built this country on," Chou said. "We can provide a foundation that will inject a richer cultural content into the efforts of our young creative artists and entrepreneurs."

The move is part of a larger effort, which has already seen the establishment of highly successful musical evenings and the creation of a Children's Gallery, to expand the museum's role and interact more energetically with contemporary social and cultural developments.

For the current activity, the museum has commissioned the Ren Dan Ru Chu Tea Study Group (人澹如菊茶書院) to create an exhibition on the theme of tea, relating it to both the physical and spiritual environment of the tradition. While the museum's collection contains many artifacts and paintings related to tea drinking, the current exhibition is housed in seven spaces created by interior designers working together with tea experts and members of the study group.

### A CUP OF CALM

Interior designer and curator Chen Cheng-tao (陳正道), in explaining his own exhibit — a simple steel frame hut, the shadow of a tree falling against the wall, a low wooden table placed on a mat floor — said that the environmentally friendly nature of the materials he used, and even the shadow on the wall, were all part of an atmosphere that was integral to creating an environment for appreciating tea and the meditative calm that this activity can induce.

A new student of tea master Li Shu-yun (李曙韻) who was serving as an assistant at the

event was effusive about the beauty of the spaces, saying they almost brought tears to her eyes.

The careful combination of materials, light and utensils are designed to suggest poetic atmospheres that stimulate the senses.

"In the workplace, you have to do many things that you might not want to, so you close down your awareness to things," she said. "Tea appreciation helps you to open up your awareness again, as you focus on subtle things in the act of making and serving tea."

Some of the spaces are traditionally decorated, ranging from re-creations of traditional Hakka architecture from Beipu (北埔) in Hsinchu County, to highly contemporary affairs, such as one enclosed in a giant transparent plastic bubble and another hung about with reflective strips of material.

### SUP AND LEARN

There is plenty to think about in viewing the exhibition, and a free English-language pamphlet available at the door goes some way to explaining the concepts involved.

As with many contemporary art shows in Taiwan, the explanatory notes next to the exhibits, some in poetry form, are excessively abstract.

Volunteers will be on hand every day to answer questions, and there are lectures to be given by tea masters every Friday, Saturday and Sunday until April 18, on subjects such as The Aesthetics of Taiwan Tea Culture (台灣紅茶篇), the Potential of the Taiwanese Tea Room (台灣茶室的可能), and A History of the Changing Flavor of Prize-Winning Dongding Oolong Tea (凍頂比賽茶的變遷史).

A full schedule of the lectures is available on the museum's Web site (Chinese only) at [www.npm.gov.tw/zh-tw/learning/education/education\\_08.htm?docno=101](http://www.npm.gov.tw/zh-tw/learning/education/education_08.htm?docno=101). Seating for the lectures is limited and bookings are recommended. Call (02) 2881-2021 X2113 to make a reservation.

The Ren Dan Ru Chu Tea Study Group will provide tea and traditional tea snacks in the lobby outside the exhibition area for NT\$100, giving visitors a chance to appreciate some tea after they have contemplated the artistry of the seven tea drinking areas.

### EXHIBITION NOTES:

**WHAT:** The Cultural Creativity Series — National Palace Museum Tea Ceremony Exhibit (故宮文創系列活動 — 茶事展演)

**WHEN:** Until April 19

**WHERE:** National Palace Museum (國立故宮博物院), 221 Zhishan Rd. Sec 2, Taipei City (台北市至善路二段 221號)

**ADMISSION:** Free (tea tasting, NT\$50; tea snacks, NT\$50)

**ON THE NET:** [www.npm.gov.tw](http://www.npm.gov.tw)

# Teatime

## at the National Palace Museum

*The many facets of tea appreciation are the focus of a new exhibit at Taiwan's most venerable cultural institution*

BY IAN BARTHOLOMEW  
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