

Ideal Autonomy: Redefining Prewar Creative Activities of Tai-Yang Art Association (1934-1944)

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ABSTRACT

The creative activities of the Tai-Yang Art Association (hereafter referred to as Tai-Yang) can rightly be described as one of the most critical chapters in the history of modern art in Taiwan, second only to government-sponsored fine arts exhibitions. Its impact spanned through the Japanese colonial period to the post World War II era. Nevertheless, influenced by the anti-Japanese historical perspective, the role of Tai-Yang in the pre-war years remained ambiguous and unexplored. This paper combs through Tai-Yang's early history, examining first its internal organization, exhibitions, members, and interaction with Taiwanese literati, followed by analyzing its social activities of auction sponsorship or patriotic donations, and the diverse subject matters and styles of its artworks. In conclusion, this paper points out that Tai-Yang was engaged in dynamic interaction with Taiwanese literati and was inspired by the ideal of autonomy, translating it into the realm of art and striving for the subjectivity of Taiwanese Art under the colonial regime. However, the development was still constrained by the prevailing political situation with the ideal often veiled behind obscured expressions.

Keywords: The Tai-Yang Art Association, The Taiwan Fine Arts Exhibition, Taiwanese Art History, The Autonomy of Art