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## ***Flower Power: Spirit of the Summer of Love in Full Bloom at the Asian Art Museum***



San Francisco, April 12, 2017 — The 50th anniversary of the Summer of Love in San Francisco conjures images of hippies frolicking in the park with daisies in their hair. But the power of flowers to inspire peace and love goes back far more than 50 years and far beyond our city shores. From June 23 – Oct. 1, 2017 the Asian Art Museum presents ***Flower Power***, an original exhibition of pan-Asian artworks that reveals the powerful language of flowers across times and cultures.

The exhibition brings to light unexpected connections among gloriously gilded folding screens, modern-looking lacquers, rare porcelains, sumptuous textiles, and **contemporary installations of live flowers and sensory-igniting multimedia**. Drawn primarily from the museum's renowned collection, dozens of masterpieces are displayed in a way that highlights their shared botanical bounty. Visitors to *Flower Power* will discover that for centuries humans have used flowers to **communicate ideals from the refined to the revolutionary**.

"*Flower Power* offers a unique take on the spirit of the Summer of Love and its connections to Asian artistic practices, past and present," says Museum Director Jay Xu. "In addition to serving as an oasis of beauty during this lively anniversary year, our exhibition shows why artists return again and again to floral imagery to express themselves during times of social uncertainty and cultural change — a message that is more relevant now than ever before."

### **Powerful Flowers Explore the Human Experience**

"The anti-materialist and pacifist spirit of the Summer of Love was really a starting point for developing the exhibition," says *Flower Power* curator Dany Chan. "Ultimately, we were guided in organizing *Flower Power* as much by the richness of the artworks as by the

*Me and Kai and Kiki*, 2010, by Takashi Murakami (Japanese, b. 1962). Silkscreen; platinum leaf on paper; ed. 12/50. *Asian Art Museum, Museum purchase*, R2016.39.3. © Takashi Murakami. Photograph © Asian Art Museum.

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philosophy behind an ancient Chinese proverb: 'If you have two pennies, spend one on a loaf and one on a flower. The bread will give you life and the flower a reason for living.'

The exhibition uses **a thematic approach that invites audiences to explore** the lasting appeal and surprising stories of six flowers as distinctive as their blooms. These themes are organized into different galleries and range from the mystical, to the worldly, to the quietly activist, tracing subjects that continue to inspire us in our everyday lives:

- The **transcendence** of the luminous, though swamp-dwelling, **LOTUS**. Visitors to the gallery will be greeted by a Thai painting nearly two hundred years old and over thirteen feet long that depicts the spectacle of Buddha overcoming demonic forces, transforming weapons into tranquil lotus blossoms. The image echoes legendary Beat poet Allen Ginsberg's coining of the expression "flower power" as a call to join peaceful anti-war demonstrations in the 1960s.
- The **sophistication** of the carefully cultivated, globe-trotting **TULIP** and **ROSE**. Gallery highlights include an intriguing Ottoman-era dish that stylizes the esteemed tulips and roses of Western Asia. Such artworks help tell the story of cross-cultural pollination and the circulation of treasured bulbs and seeds across continents and empires — leading to moments like the fabled tulip mania bubble in 17th-century Amsterdam.
- The **transience** of ephemeral **PLUM** and **CHERRY BLOSSOMS**. Gallery highlights include lyrical scenes of courtly cherry blossom viewing from the *Tale of Genji*. The essence of this Japanese classic, perhaps the world's first romance novel, is poignantly captured on shimmering gold-leaf screens that deploy these short-lived flowers to suggest the fragility of love.
- The pause for **reflection** demanded by the auspicious **CHRYSANTHEMUM**. Gallery highlights include a "hundred flowers" vase, with each blossom rendered in perfect lifelike tones. The all-over pattern on this delicate Qing-dynasty porcelain from China creates a dizzying array, reminiscent of sixties psychedelic fashions, which conveys tidings of health, longevity, and the introspection and insightfulness from which such lasting prosperity arises.



Installations by contemporary artists touch on **themes of social engagement, provocation,** and the enduring power of flowers to express our most cherished values. Together, these artworks underscore how the community-oriented heart of the Summer of Love still beats strong in the Bay Area today.

- Taiwanese American artist Lee Mingwei's *The Moving Garden* invites visitors to pluck a single stem from beds of flowers placed in a channel in his sculpture — on the condition that they give the blossom to a stranger, expressing social solidarity at a moment of heightened political insecurity. Lee will speak at the museum on July 27.

- Japanese paper and print artist Ayomi Yoshida's *Yedoensis* comprises hundreds of ephemeral hand-printed cherry blossoms that invoke the unfolding catastrophe of climate change. "As the earth's temperature rises, the trees that used to flower in April are now flowering in March ... I once believed that the coming of spring and the cherry blossoms would always happen, but lately I am less certain. Will there come a time when the trees fail to bloom?" Yoshida will lead a participatory workshop on July 2.
- San Francisco-based artist Megan Wilson, a celebrated Mission district muralist best known for her colorful repurposing of pop motifs to address capitalism's impact on civic society (with a particular focus on issues like gentrification and homelessness), creates a rainbow pathway of giant flowers to lead audiences from her LIZ (Living Innovation Zone) mural on Fulton Street Plaza to the front entrance of the Asian Art Museum and into the exhibition.

*Flower Power* also includes recent artworks by the exuberant maestro of smiling daisies Takashi Murakami and the digital collective teamLab.

## **Botanical Crafts, Artist Encounters, and Plenty of Family Fun**

On weekends and Thursday evenings, visitors to *Flower Power* can enjoy a range of related programs and activities:

- Ikebana (Japanese flower-arranging) lessons with a master from the Ohara school;
- Bamboo artist demonstrations and workshops;
- Floral tea brewing with petals and herbs foraged from residents' own backyards;
- Local contemporary artists exploring topics like mysticism and cultural identity through one-night-only presentations and performances ("Artists Drawing Club");
- Weekend family fun days with free crafts and storytelling tours;
- Guided Zen meditation sittings in galleries ... and more!

For details, which are subject to change, including dates, times, and additional participation fees, please visit the events page on the museum's website:

[www.asianart.org](http://www.asianart.org)

## **Exhibition Publication and Organization**

*Flower Power* is organized by the Asian Art Museum. Presentation is made possible with the generous support of Doris Shoong Lee and Theodore Bo Lee, The Akiko Yamazaki and Jerry Yang Fund for Excellence in Exhibitions and Presentations, Phoebe Cowles, Warren Felson and Lucy Sun, Cathy and Howard Moreland, California Association of Flower Growers & Shippers, Julia K. Cheng, Lawrence and Gorretti Lui, Nordstrom, and Dr. Hoe Tian Poh and Mary Frances Poh. Media sponsors: Wall Street Journal, NBC Bay Area, KQED.

## About the Asian Art Museum

The Asian Art Museum—Chong-Moon Lee Center for Asian Art and Culture is one of San Francisco's premier arts institutions and home to a world-renowned collection of more than 18,000 Asian art treasures from throughout Asia spanning 6,000 years of history. Through rich art experiences, centered on historic and contemporary artworks, the Asian Art Museum unlocks the past for visitors, bringing it to life while serving as a catalyst for new art, new creativity and new thinking.

***Flower Power* Exhibition Hours:** Tuesdays through Sundays from 10 AM to 5 PM, extended hours on Thursdays and Fridays until 9 PM. Closed Mondays.

***Flower Power* Exhibition Admission:** FREE for museum members and children (12 & under). On weekdays, \$20 for adults and \$15 for seniors (65 & over), youth (13–17) and college students (with ID). On weekends, \$25 for adults and \$20 for seniors (65 & over), youth (13–17) and college students (with ID). On Target First Free Sundays and on Thursday evenings, 5-9 PM, admission to the exhibition is \$10.

**General Museum Admission:** FREE for museum members, \$15 for adults, \$10 for seniors (65+), college students with ID, and youth (13–17). FREE for children under 12 and SFUSD students with ID. General admission is FREE to all on Target First Free Sundays (the first Sunday of every month). On Thursday evenings, Feb. 23 – Sep. 28, 2017, 5–9 PM, \$10 general admission.

[www.asianart.org](http://www.asianart.org) Don't miss a moment: @AsianArtMuseum #FlowerPowerNow

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