



Vairocana Buddha, The Great Buddha Hall, in the annual ritual of wiping

Road of Light and Hope, National Treasures of Todai-ji Temple, Nara

The history of the city of Nara can be traced back to its years as the ancient capital of Japan from 710 to 784 when it was known as Heijokyo. Japan's administrative systems and legal codes were reformed by the central government in Nara on the basis of the newly adopted state religion, Buddhism, as well as Chinese Confucianism and legalism. As part of this national transformation, a central temple was built in each province, and in order to oversee these provincial religious centres, the Todai-ji temple was established in Nara by Emperor Shomu.

The Great Buddha Hall which houses the seated statue of the Vairocana Buddha with a height of over 15 metres is the centrepiece of the Todai-ji temple. The Hall was once surrounded by buildings, towers, and other facilities on a grand scale. Repeated periods of destruction were followed by rebuilding, and the surviving buildings and artifacts at the Todai-ji temple are part of the precious heritage which many Japanese identify with, as well as an important example of human civilization recognised the world over.

At the time of the construction of the Todai-ji temple in the eighth century, the Eurasian continent was ruled by myriad powers: from the western Kingdom of the Franks under Charlemagne, the Byzantine Empire, the Umayyad dynasty and Abbasid-Seljuq Empire, to the Tang dynasty under Emperor Xuanzong in the east. [CONTINUED]

Exhibition Road of Light and Hope National Treasures of Todai-ji Temple, Nara Photographs by Miro Ito

Co-presented by Media Art League,
Japan Camera Industry Institute,
and The Japan Foundation, Toronto.
Photographed with the special
permission of Todai-ji, Japan.

March 15 - June 28, 2017
The Japan Foundation, Toronto

GALLERY HOURS

Mon 11:30 am - 6:30 pm EXTENDED HOURS
Tues 11:30 am - 4:30 pm
Wed 11:30 am - 4:30 pm
Thurs 11:30 am - 6:30 pm EXTENDED HOURS
Fri 11:30 am - 4:30 pm

Saturday openings: 11:00 am - 4:00 pm
March 18, April 8, 22, May 13, 27, June 10, 24

Closed: Other Saturdays and Sundays
Closed for Easter: April 14 to 17
May 22 (Victoria Day)

ADMISSION FREE

The Japan Foundation, Toronto
2 Bloor Street East
Hudson's Bay Centre, 3rd floor
above Royal Bank of Canada
www.jftor.org 416.966.1600 x229



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Cover image: Tamonten/Vai rava a, one of the Four Guardian Kings, Kaikdan-do. Brochure design: bryangeedesign.com.

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Four Guardian Kings/Caturmaharaja, Kaidan-do



Vairocana Buddha, The Great Buddha Hall

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Nara is considered to be the easternmost terminus of the Silk Road extending through Eurasia from Rome. Trade and cultural exchange in the eighth century led to these statues, structures, musical instruments, and craftsmanship to be accumulated at this temple. The influence from the West can be detected in many of these cultural treasures, which are the signs of a flourishing cultural exchange.

This photo exhibition is a tribute to the remarkable historical exchange among various ethnic and religious groups, philosophies and teachings, arts and artisanship, as well as diverse folk cultures of the Eurasian continent.

Miro Ito is one the few photographers who have been permitted to document the national treasures at the Todai-ji Temple.

Miro Ito states:

"Amid today's religious divisions and clashes as well as the countless – seemingly endless – conflicts, the Eurasian history of interactions may well hold a key for bringing the world together..."



Nikkō Bosatsu/Surya-prabha,
Todaiji Museum