

Late Chinese leader's works to go on display

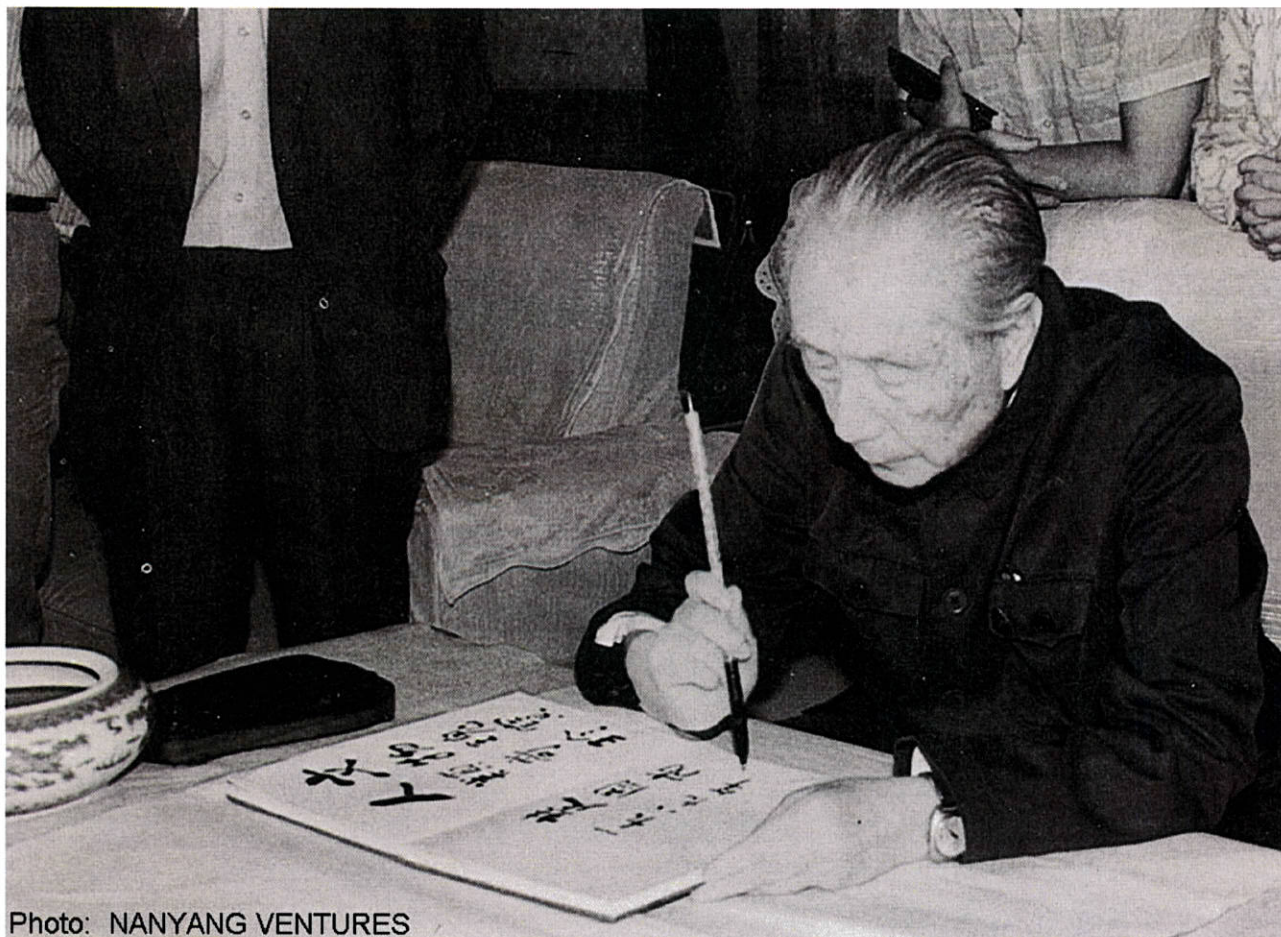


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Leong Weng Kam
 The Straits Times

An exhibition of Chinese calligraphic works and items from the art collection of the late Chu Tunan, a founding father of the People's Republic of China, will be held in Singapore this week. It marks the 115th birth anniversary of the Chinese leader, who was among those who stood with Chairman Mao Zedong at the Tiananmen Square to declare the birth of a new China on Oct 1, 1949.

Some 60 calligraphic works from the 1960s to the early 1990s and at least 10 items from his collection, including a poem written in brush by Mao and a guqin - a stringed instrument from the Tang Dynasty - will be on display when the show opens at the Chui Huay Lim Club in Keng Lee Road on Wednesday evening.

Chu was a chairman of the Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries and vice-chairman of China's Parliament, the National People's Congress. An accomplished calligrapher, art collector, academic, writer and translator, he died 20 years ago in Beijing, leaving three sons and a daughter. He was 95.

His daughter-in-law, Madam Liu Qin, 63, said this is the first time his artworks are being shown outside China. "The family thought it is time to introduce his works and legacy to the rest of the world," she told The Sunday Times.

Her nephew, Dr Patrick Fan, 45, who founded an investment and property investment consultancy here two years ago, is helping to organise the show with several local and Chinese partners including the Singapore-China Friendship Association. He hopes to take the show to Japan and Taiwan later.

"Most of my father-in-law's calligraphy pieces on show were poems he wrote in his own unique style," said Madam Liu, who will arrive here with her husband and Chu's second son, Zehan, 75, a scientist and university professor, tomorrow.

One of the calligraphy pieces will be auctioned during the show and the family hopes to raise \$60,000 for Hwa Chong Institution's Art Gallery Fund.

Dr Fan said he agreed to organise the show because Chu was a great leader, educationist and artist but is little known outside China.

"I am even planning to start a Chu Tunan Art Fund to promote Chinese art and his legacy here," he added.

Born in Yunnan province in 1899, Chu was a teacher before he joined the Chinese Communist Party in 1926 and was soon involved in the communist underground and anti-Japanese activities during the Sino-Japanese War from 1937 to 1945.

After 1949, he returned to teaching and travelled extensively to promote China's friendship with the world, retiring in 1985.

Singapore-China Friendship Association president K.K. Phua told The Sunday Times: "It is a rare show and a good opportunity for Singaporeans to get to know the late Chinese leader and calligrapher."

The show will be open to the public from Thursday to Sunday between 10am and 8pm. Admission is free.

wengkam@sph.com.sg

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