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## ÉLOGE DE LA LUMIÈRE. IN PRAISE OF LIGHT

PIERRE SOULAGES. TANABE CHIKUUNSAI IV

Capturing the glow the night engenders, as if by magic certain works of surpassing beauty reveal the colours of the shadows. The collections in the Baur Foundation, Museum of Far Eastern Art are packed with these rare marvels, attracting visitors from throughout the world.

The display cases containing examples of Chinese stoneware from the Song dynasty (960-1279) provide wonderful examples, including **tenmoku** bowls whose colourful glazes are said to resemble "a hare's fur" or "drops of oil". More recent, seventeenth- and eighteenth-century monochrome porcelains are subtly shaded, creating their famous "tea powder" and "black mirror" effects.

The subdued lighting in the Japanese rooms is designed to induce the appropriate mood to appreciate the large number of pieces collected by Alfred Baur that exemplify the crepuscular aesthetic tradition described in Tanizaki Junichiro's masterly **In Praise of Shadows**. Also highlighted is an array of shiny black lacquer objects (scabbards, tea boxes, incense containers, desktop objects), often engraved, highly polished, decorated with gold dust or thread, or embellished by metal, mother-of-pearl or enamel features.

Taking its cue from this spectacle of chiaroscuro effects, the Baur Foundation is holding an exhibition of some of the masterpieces by the master of "bright black" painting, Pierre Soulages. His art echoes "the weight of silence", in the words of Tanizaki, and coincidentally, but at the same time quite evidently, it matches the "colours of the darkness" so dear to Japan's visual culture. His works have sometimes been likened to calligraphy or lacquerwork and might even be said to share some of the features of "reverse painting" ( **urazaishiki**).

The exhibition aims to offer a different perspective on the Land of the Rising Sun, laying the stress on the clean lines of its bamboo forests and the sounds and light filtering through them. "Abstract sculpture", created according to Pierre Soulages by "branches writing in the air", interacts with the long canes and joints of the bamboo, traced in chiaroscuro by an exceptional artist, Tanabe Chikuunsai IV. He represents the fourth generation of a family of artists employing ancestral traditions and techniques to make art from plants, to which he adds his own fresh, radiant, sculptural approach.

After graduating from École du Louvre, **Laure Schwartz-Arenales** went on to obtain her PhD at Sorbonne Paris IV, before beginning her career at Musée Guimet and at École du Louvre, in Paris, lecturing in the Art of the Far East. Her research into ancient Japanese painting, which she started in Japan in 1998 (University of Tohoku–Kyoto National Museum), received an award from the Kajima Foundation for the Arts, in 2007. She held a professorship at the University of Ochanomizu and later at Sophia University (Tokyo) and has been the director of the Baur Foundation, Museum of Far Eastern Art since 2018.

**Fabienne Fravallo** is at present the curator of the decorative arts collection at Fondation Gandur pour l'Art (Geneva). She obtained her PhD in the History of Art from the University of Neuchâtel and Clermont-Ferrand. She spent a period as a researcher at INHA in Paris and is the author of a monograph on the potter Émile Decoeur, published with Galerie Michel Giraud, in Paris.

Together with his daughter Zoé Niang, **Philippe Boudin** runs Galerie Mingei, which stands right in the heart of Saint Germain-des-Près. The gallery specialises in the art of bamboo basket making in Japan and has become the leading authority in the field in Europe, organising exhibitions, collaborating regularly with museums and providing expert advice to private collectors.

**Maezaki Shinya** is a Japanese interior decorator and designer. After obtaining his PhD at the University of London's School of Oriental and African Studies–SOAS, in 2009, he held the post of Associate Professor at Kyoto Women's University. He has published numerous works on 20th- and 21st-century Japanese interior decoration.

**Tanabe Chikuunsai IV** is the latest in a dynasty of bamboo masters from Kansai. His **go** (art name) Chikuunsai means “bamboo cloud”. He is internationally renowned for his skill in this form art, which is as yet little known in Europe. Even so, his works are to be found in all the world's leading museums.