

VI. National Artists

A Living Human Treasures System

Strengthening transmission is one of the most important means to safeguard ICH. UNESCO encourages States to create national systems of "[Living Human Treasures](#)" that honour exemplary tradition-bearers and encourage them to transmit their skills and knowledge.

Introduction

In 1985, Thailand launched a National Artists Project, which recognizes and honors the professional artists who have created priceless works of art for the benefit and good use of the nation. The main objectives of the project are to preserve the refined high quality of artworks and to honor, acclaim and make known the artistic wisdom of artists whose expertise has contributed to the greatness of the Thai cultural heritage. In the framework of the project, the government supports artists to enable them to enjoy better living and working conditions and to continue creating valuable products for the public, so that their knowledge will be passed on to the next generations.

Domains of the Intangible Cultural Heritage Concerned

Within the framework of the project, an internationally recognized system of categorization of art forms is used as a basis for annually selecting candidates for nomination as National Artists.

1. Visual Arts: painting, sculpture, graphic and design arts, photography, etc.
2. Performing Arts:
 - dance and drama, choreography, theatres, plays, and film directing, etc.
 - singing and music composition, etc.

3. Literature: poetry and prose, novels, documentaries, plays, etc.
4. Architecture: construction techniques, buildings, etc.

Responsible Bodies in Charge of the System

In 1984, the Minister of Education assigned the Department of Cultural Promotion (DCP), which has been the center for cultural works since 1979 to honor, praise, promote and help artists who have produced artistic works that are regarded as valuable components of the national heritage. This Office is a subsidiary organization of the National Culture Commission and constitutes an integral part of the Ministry of Education.

Four Sub-Committees for each of the form categories distinguished under the system as well as a Steering Sub-Committee are appointed by the National Culture Commission. The Sub-Committees have been set up to undertake activities such as the annual selection and nomination of the National Artists, the promotion of the National Artists Day, and fund-raising activities for the Cultural Promotion Fund which will add to the welfare of the National Artists.

Selection Process

Department of Cultural Promotion issues an announcement inviting public and private provincial authorities and institutions to nominate National Artist candidates. Nominations can be filed by provincial culture sub-committees and councils; cultural centers; universities and colleges; art-related government offices, private offices, associations and foundations; National Artists and the media.

The four sub-committees (visual arts, architecture, literature and performing arts respectively) evaluate and select the best nominees by applying the criteria for selection. The Steering Sub-Committee scrutinizes the selection of nominees made by the Sub-Committees. The selected nominees are then submitted to the National Culture Commission, who will make the final decision and announce the best National Artist nominees for each art form category.

Once nominated, the National Artists are granted a royal audience on National Artists Day (24 February) for the award ceremony. A reception and a performance are held to celebrate the National Artist award. A programme including academic and celebratory activities related to the National Artists and their work is presented at the Thailand Cultural Centre. National Artists Day is publicized and promoted nationwide by the media, and funds are raised for the welfare of the National Artists. Outside Bangkok, provincial and district cultural centres also organize festivals and fairs to join in the celebration.

Rights and Obligations of the National Artists

Each National Artist is given a plaque of honor and a golden insignia.

He/She also receives:

- a monthly stipend;
- medical coverage;
- financial assistance in case of accident;
- a set of gifts when in sickness or on important occasions;
- insurance premium against accident occurred during official trips to publicize his/her works;
- death benefits (a contribution for cremation, funeral and religious rites expenses);
- financial contribution for post-mortem publication of books publicizing his/her works; and travel benefits for expenses incurred during official trips. (for further details, consult the Regulations of Cultural Promotion Fund Committee on the Welfare Administration of the National Artists and Persons with Outstanding Cultural Works)

The responsibilities of the National Artists are:

- to ensure the transmission of their knowledge, skills and techniques in particular to younger generations, through teaching, training, writing, lecturing, etc.;
- to continue creating works of art for the public;
- being open for consultation by those interested in their branch of arts.

Promotional Activities

A Supreme Artist Hall opened to the public in 2001 and displays works of National Artists. The Hall provides National Artists with a venue for exchanging experiences and transmitting knowledge to other artists, students and the public. The Hall is also to be a center of education, research, and information on art and culture within and outside the country. The Hall currently houses various exhibition rooms for National Artists in the field of literature, visual arts and architecture, and performing arts.

Selection Criteria of National Artists

1. Qualification for National Artists
 - A. Having Thai Nationality and still alive.
 - B. Having outstanding knowledge, abilities, and skills
 - C. Continuing to create and develop in the field of expertise
 - D. Being active in transmission, dissemination or role model in the field of expertise
 - E. Having moral, dedicate, and advocate to art works
 - F. Having works that useful for social and humanity
2. Standard of National Artists Works
 - A. Works that presenting good will, truth, beauty, passion, and soul
 - B. Works that expressing ideas, creating knowledge and developing conscience.
 - C. Works that reflecting emotion and imagination
 - D. Works that creating uniqueness, high skills, creative strategies, and no intention to copy or imitate other's works
3. Dissemination and Acceptance of National Artists Works
 - A. works have been displayed transmitted or disseminated in public continually
 - B. works have been awarding or recognition in regional, national or international levels which through the process of consideration that is standardized and accepted to public