



AiA Art News-service



Art of Peace

A piece of art that symbolizes unity and peace is going to be on display at the G7 summit venue to inspire participants.

The mural, created by a Japanese team, is a reproduction of a painting that was reportedly destroyed by the Taliban along with the giant Buddha statues in Afghanistan.

The original was once located in a cave at the famous Bamiyan ruins. Estimated to have been painted in the 6th century, it was considered one of the best examples of its kind.

The Persian sun god is at the center of the mural, surrounded by priests, mythological Indian birds and winged Greek goddesses. It reflects how different religions and cultures co-existed in ancient Afghanistan.

Kosaku Maeda, an 83-year-old archaeologist, launched the reproduction project. A leading figure in Afghan studies, he has been involved in restoration work in the Bamiyan Valley for 50 years.

Maeda was shocked by the cultural vandalism that had been carried out by the Taliban when he visited the site in 2002.

As regional conflicts are fought worldwide, he wants to use art to promote peaceful coexistence.

"The gods from different cultures and histories are represented in this mural. They met here, and tried to work together," Maeda says. "I want to reproduce the image, and share this basic concept with many people."

The project started in September last year. Masaaki Miyasako, a Japanese-style painter and professor at Tokyo University of the Arts, teamed up with Maeda.

Advanced technologies were combined with Japanese traditional painting techniques to reproduce the painting on Japanese washi paper.

"This is the dramatic moment when the god of sun appeared. The sun was rising, and blue skies began to appear," Maeda says.

Project members used photos from the 1970s as a guide, taking 4 months to complete the work.

When it was included in a Tokyo University of the Arts exhibition, the reproduction drew the interest of the Japanese foreign ministry.

The ministry asked to borrow the piece because its themes fit with the summit goals.

"I'm happy and excited, wondering how G7 leaders will react. I hope the leaders will understand the meaning and spirit behind the painting, and agree to work together for world peace," Maeda says.

It's a piece of art that has been carefully reproduced in Japan, with a global message in mind.