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Asian Art in the San Antonio Museum of Art

Asia in the Heart of Texas: A History of Collecting in San Antonio by Martha Blackwelder, Maddux-Cowden Curator of Asian Art at the San Antonio Museum of Art. The author reflects back on how the collection developed and who has been instrumental in amassing over the past 70 years some 1400 works from East, South and Southeast Asia and the Himalayas. Most notably is the commitment made by Lenora and Walter F. Brown to guide the development of the Asian collection and their numerous donations which comprise early Chinese pottery, including from the Liao period, and late Ming and early Qing porcelains. The late Gilbert Denman provided the first funds for the new Asian art wing and the Himalayan gallery owes an enormous amount to him. Elizabeth Coates Maddux significantly endowed the museum and this gift was matched by Fay Langley Cowden. Other donors include John T. Murray and Bessie Timon whose interests were in Chinese textiles, furniture and decorative objects; Kay and Tom Edson who loaned their collection of Japanese paintings and lacquer and recently donated a pair of Edo period screens; a pair of Edo period screens are also among David Douglas Duncan's gifts; Floyd L. Whittington enriched the collection with ceramics from Thailand, Cambodia and Vietnam; and Ann and Robert Walzer have expanded the South Asian collection.

The Lenora and Walter F. Brown Asian Art Wing at the San Antonio Museum of Art by Martha Blackwelder, Maddux-Cowden Curator of Asian Art at the San Antonio Museum of Art. The museum will celebrate the opening of the new Lenora and Walter F. Brown Asian Art Wing in May. The author gives a tour of the six newly-installed galleries and highlights in the collection selected for discussion reflect a comprehensive view of Asian art. For example, powerfully modelled Chinese tomb figures and striking examples of vessels from the Song kilns of Yaozhou, Jun, Cizhou and Longquan; Qing period textiles; an 18th century garniture de cheminee from Jingdezhen reflecting northern European Baroque interior design taste; monumental sandstone sculptures from Rajasthan; glazed ceramics featuring distinctive Vietnamese iconography; and an Edo period screen of scenes in and around Kyoto.

Tales told in Porcelain: Jingdezhen Blue-and-White Wares at the San Antonio Museum of Art by Julia B. Curtis, an independent scholar who lives in Virginia and specializes in 17th century Chinese porcelain and iconography. The collection provides an expansive overview of the art of the Jingdezhen potters from the Yuan and to the Qing periods and the breadth of decorative schemes in cobalt blue, based on religion, history, poetry, novels and dramas, enable the visitor to explore the meanings which reveal the many facets of China's natural, ethical and political culture.

Nomura Yozo: A Bridge Across the Pacific by Thomas Lawton, a specialist in Chinese art. He was director of the Freer Gallery of Art (1977-87) and founding director of the Arthur M. Sackler Gallery (1982-87). The author gives an account of Nomura Yozo's early development as a student in Japan in the second half of the 1870s, a time when Western influence was pervading every aspect of Japanese life, and how his interests and goals developed through travel to the United States and Europe. By opening a curio shop in Yokohama on his return to Japan, Yozo became a bridge across the Pacific sharing his enthusiasm for Japan and its unique culture. He acted as Charles Lang Freer's guide on his first visit to Japan in 1895 and had close ties with Mrs Charles M. Cooke, who established the Honolulu Academy of Arts, but he also developed close friendships with many Japanese collectors and artists.

Imagining Efficacy: The Common Ground between Buddhist and Daoist Pictorial Art in Song China by Shih-shan Susan Huang, Assistant Professor of Chinese Art History at the Art History Division, School of Art, University of Washington. The author looks at the supernatural experiences associated with some examples of Song dynasty Buddhist and Daoist religious paintings in order to shed light on a new way to think about and view religious art.

Wai Kam-ho (1924-2004) Chinese painting scholar Wai-kam Ho died in Shanghai on 27 December 2004. Maxwell K. Hearn pays tribute to his art-historical expertise and extensive contributions to the field concluding that 'Wai-kam Ho belongs to the same traditions of Daoist free spirits and reclusive sages whom he often invoked in his scholarship. Now, he has taken his rightful place in that pantheon of China's immortals.'

In her review of 'Rules by The Masters: Paintings and Calligraphies by BaDa and Shi Tao - Collections from the Palace Museum and Shanghai Museum' at the Museu de Arte de Macau from 3 September to 21 November 2004, Hwang Yin uses examples of works in the show to illustrate her discussion on the roles played by Bada and Shitao in the development of Chinese ink-and-brush painting.

As noted by Carol Morland in her review of 'Dream Worlds: Modern Japanese Prints and Paintings from the Robert O. Muller Collection' at the

Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Washington DC from 6 November 2004 until 2 January 2005, this exhibition served as an excellent introduction to the superb quality and rich variety of the Muller collection.

New ideas and research presented at three recent conferences are discussed in this issue. Katja Triplett reviews the papers delivered at 'The Worship of Stars in Japanese Religious Practice' organized by the Centre for the Study of Japanese Religions, SOAS, London on 16 and 17 September 2004; Maggie Wan examines the discussions presented at 'Noble Riders from Pines and Deserts: The Artistic Legacy of the Qidan' organized by the Art Museum and the Department of Fine Arts of The Chinese University of Hong Kong on 25 October 2004; Inne Boos surveys the topics addressed at 'Text and Image: Tibetan Books and Their Illuminations' organized by Circle of Tibetan and Himalayan Studies at SOAS, London on 6 November 2004.

Kathmandu Valley Preservation Trust Shortly after King Gyanendra declared a state of emergency in Nepal on 1 February, the Kathmandu Valley Preservation Trust (KVPT) held a conference in New York. Three former US ambassadors reviewed the gravity of the situation and concluded that international development assistance should continue 'now more than ever'. Peter Burleigh emphasized that support of worthy projects should be encouraged, and Michael Malinowski identified KVPT as 'a fine example of an aid organization which functions with great effectiveness despite the obvious challenges of the present situation'. Founded in 1991, this US-based non-profit organization is the only international charity exclusively dedicated to preserving architectural heritage in the Kathmandu valley, and has an impressive track record saving historically significant religious and secular buildings. The trust's field operations are directed by Rohit Ranjitkar and it employs more than eighty craftsmen and project personnel. Ongoing projects include the preservation of Itum Baha, a 13th century Buddhist monastery in old Kathmandu, and three 17th century structures in the Kathmandu Darbar Square: the stone shrine of Kal Bhairav, and the Jagannath and Kageswar temples. Local participation has played a major role in these four projects. Support from the sangha of Itum Baha and a consortium of Nepalese businessmen, led by Prabhakar Rana, was used as leverage to obtain international funding from the World Monuments Fund, the Robert W. Wilson Challenge Grant Program, the German Foreign Ministry and the American Ambassador's Discretionary Fund. Work on three other temples in the Darbar Square - Indrapur, Narayan and Mahavishnu - has recently been completed, and the trust has plans to restore Bansagopal, Lakshmi Narayan and Mahadev. KVPT will hold its annual fundraising event, 'New York for Nepal', on 18 May in New York. At the cocktail and dinner, KVPT's executive director, Erich Theophile, and the board will honour the achievements of Mary Slusser. They will also announce the establishment of an annual research scholarship in her name. Slusser was a founding board member of KVPT, and her research, scholarship and documentation of the valley has

proved invaluable to its conservation projects. For further information on KVPT and the fundraising event, contact KVPT, email: kvpt@hotmail.com; tel: 1 212 727 0074; or see www.kvptnepal.org.

Mary Slusser by Gautama V. Vajracharya It would take more than a full-length article to do justice to Mary Slusser's contributions in the field of Nepalese studies. In this all too brief tribute, I hope to provide the readers with a glimpse of her achievements. Mary has modestly described herself as an enthusiast whoached to unravel the past. She first arrived in Nepal as a wife following her husband's career. Without any specific training with which to approach the cultural wealth she encountered, she embarked on research as a means of assuaging her curiosity about the fascinating world that she hadunknowingly fallen into. Early on, she realized the merit of scholarly teamwork, and in areas where she was not proficient, she sought the help of many specialists. In doing so, she was able to implement immaculate research methodology that combined interdependent disciplines such as art and architecture, cultural history, epigraphy, Sanskrit and classical Newari. Mahesh Raj Pant, a well-known Sanskritist and historian assisted in these areas, as did I. My own involvement in her work resulted in a series of joint articles on Nepalese sculpture and architecture. Because of her training in anthropology, she was fully aware of the valueof historiography, and approached the subject diachronically and synchronically. She quickly realized that some elements of ancient Nepalese culture had remained intact in various aspects of Newar culture of the Kathmandu valley. Long before she started writing her magnum opus, Nepal Mandala, she began systematically to collect information not only from international and local publications, but also from conversations - notwithstanding her rudimentary Newari - with Buddhist and Hindu priests, and wandering yogis heading toward the sacred Himalayan lake, Gosainkunda. Mary's most remarkable contribution is perhaps the establishment of a chronology of Nepalese art and architecture that follows available sources as closely as possible. She also discovered that the annual Newari customof circumambulating the city in honour of the ancestors was a continuation ofa much earlier practice. This proved to be crucial as it enabled her to precisely define the ancient borders of various cities and towns in the valley. The importance of the annual ritual of exhibiting artefacts during the rainy season retreat in Buddhist monasteries of the valley, and the reliability of traditional chronicles for the investigation of ancient Nepalese sculptures would not be known if she had not drawn our attentionto them. The Kathmandu valley is deservedly famous for the so-called `pagoda-style' temples. But it was only after Mary's investigation that scholars began to realize the greater significance of secular architecture that ranged from simple resthouses to royal palaces. She also found early wood carvings depicting elegant salabhanjika-type female figures on the struts of the Newar architecture that were unknown to

previous scholars. Given her shortcomings, her accomplishments are even more admirable - perhaps only one who has undertaken a similarly ambitious project, with the same spirit and enthusiasm, can understand the gravity and depth of her lifelong passion.

From the 8 to 12 June some eighty exhibitions will be staged, including dealers from abroad who lease spaces in and around Place du Grand Sablon in Brussels. Specialists in Asian art will participate under the banner BrusselsOriental Art Fair organized by Georgia Chrischilles. She will be joined by Philippe John Farahnick, Contes D'Orient, Soo Tze Oriental Antiques, Carlo Cristi, Moke Mokotoff, Art of the Past, Alexis Renard, Bachmann Eckenstein, Wei Asian Art and Jacques Barrere.

In his report 'The Red Sun Rises over China's Auction Scene', Bruce Doar gives an account of the unchecked proliferation of mainland auction houses, their capricious and careless attitude to authentication, and the various reported scandals over the past six months (notably, thefts and losses of objects in the custody of auction houses, and the damage inflicted on them). He concludes that issues of management and security need to be addressed if the mainland market is to provide a viable alternative for the overseas collectors who share a concern for China's heritage with their Chinese counterparts.

China's Request: Is the US Government on the Verge of Shutting Down the Market in Chinese Antiquities? by Laura B. Whitman, former auction house specialist on Chinese paintings and an art advisor in New York. The mood was tense as a group of influential experts in the field of Chinese art and archaeology assembled in a dreary annex of the State Department on a wintry day in Washington, DC. They had come to the capital to participate in a public hearing of the Cultural Property Advisory Committee (CPAC). The committee was considering the request of the People's Republic of China for US Customs restrictions against the import of all Chinese cultural property over 95 years old, submitted under Article 9 of the 1970 UNESCO convention - the most important piece of US legislation ever proposed in the area of Chinese art. For all that it was inspiring to see democracy at work, the hearing was grim and urgent, as CPAC's decision to support, oppose or modify China's request will have far-reaching implications for the cultural lives of Americans, not to mention the livelihoods of people involved in Chinese art and archaeology: for as this request stands, it is in effect an embargo. The purpose of the 17th February hearing was to give specialists in the field an opportunity to comment on the controversial Chinese proposal and to answer questions raised by the committee. The meeting was run in a fair and organized manner by chairman Jay Kislick, and despite clear differences in opinion between certain interests, it was a tea party compared to some recent academic conferences on Chinese painting! Thick packets containing all of the speakers' written submissions were available to everyone in

attendance. Numerous other citizens who could not attend the proceedings had written letters; it was reported that 175 pages of material were submitted. The fact that the quality of the submissions was much higher than that usually reviewed by the committee bears testament to the state of the field in Chinese art and archaeology. With about 65 people in attendance, it was standing room only. Twenty-two specialists each gave five-minute presentations, followed by intelligent questioning by the 11-member committee. Many in the audience quickly ran down the list of speakers like a horse-racing sheet, ticking off names opposed to or in support of the request. Although technically 15 to 7 in opposition to the request, some pro-request speakers admitted that China's demand was unreasonably broad, and should be modified to focus only on the protection of certain archaeological sites and materials. The speakers were reminded that their remarks should focus on 'the very specific criteria' in question. These criteria, part of governing legislation called the Convention on Cultural Property Implementation Act (CPIA), must be met before the State Department can grant this request: a. that the cultural patrimony of the State Party is in jeopardy from the pillage of archaeological or ethnological materials of the State Party; b. that the State Party has taken measures consistent with the Convention to protect its cultural patrimony; c. (i) that the application of the import restrictions set forth in section 307 with respect to archaeological or ethnological material of the State Party, if applied in concert with similar restrictions implemented, or to be implemented within a reasonable period of time, by those nations (whether or not State Parties) individually having a significant import trade in such material, would be of substantial benefit in deterring a serious situation of pillage, and (ii) that remedies less drastic than the application of the restrictions set forth in such section are not available; and d. that the application of the import restrictions set forth in section 307 in the particular circumstances is consistent with the general interest of the international community in the interchange of cultural property among nations for scientific, cultural, and educational purposes. Those opposing the request included four major US museum directors (The Metropolitan Museum of Art was notably absent), a private collector, cultural property lawyers, a former CPAC committee member, art dealers and auction-house staff. They spoke of the positive effects of free trade in Chinese art, including international understanding and awareness, scholarship and cultural exchange. All agreed that even though the request was, according to the CPIA criteria, flawed on various levels, looting in China was nonetheless a grave issue that needed to be addressed. Those in favour of the request included archaeologists, a cultural property lawyer, and three members of a fledgling interest group. However, they varied in their levels of support: some readily conceded that China did not readily meet all of the criteria and that her demands in this request were unreasonably broad; but one self-described 'fully-cloistered academic' felt that the!

request should be granted regardless. Specific examples cited of discoveries nearly lost were emotionally powerful. Presenters in both groups suggested methods to protect archaeological sites and support archaeological work in China without necessarily completely cutting off access to non-archaeologists, scholars and collectors. In reviewing the criteria, the majority of speakers allowed that China had failed to meet the requirements in protecting its own cultural heritage. Marc Wilson, director of the Nelson-Atkins Museum, stated: 'China maintains the world's largest archeological apparatus... No other nation has so large or capable a network.' According to Arthur Houghton, a former CPAC member, currently with the American Council for Cultural Property, China 'cannot be a potted plant', and she 'must make more efforts at self-restraint'. Referring to William Perlstein's comments on the 48 major (and dozens of other minor) auction houses operating in China, all sanctioned and at least partially owned by the government, Houghton further argued that the US 'should at least allow what the Chinese themselves allow'. Some of these domestic auction houses, notably the Poly Group, have sold excavated tomb figures, even promoting them on the covers of their catalogues. 'The Chinese art market is the most international of all art markets,' said James Lally, whom many consider the de facto dean of the US Chinese art trade. 'But,' he continued, 'the most important trend is the rise of mainland Chinese buyers, brought about both by increasing wealth and the fact that China actively encourages collecting by her citizens.' Given the explosive development of China's domestic art market, Lally argued, 'it is not logical that the US market is the root cause of looting in China.' China itself is virtually an archaeological repository: there is even a newspaper dedicated to publishing the notable 'Findings of the Week!' Anne Underhill, a practising archaeologist at The Field Museum, held up a copy of the paper during her presentation stating that 'this is an unprecedented period of collaboration with Chinese colleagues in my field' and that 'ratifying this Request was absolutely essential'. If the Chinese government, scholars and even those in the commercial art world are in agreement about the need to protect China's archaeological material, why did the PRC find it necessary to make such an all-encompassing request, covering works of art in virtually every media, from the Palaeolithic era to the Qing dynasty? No one from the PRC was present to answer that, or any other elementary questions. Why has China not submitted similar requests to other signatories of the UNESCO Convention, or sought assistance from other countries which have established markets in Chinese artefacts? Even the briefest study would show that China's domestic market is or will soon be larger than US demand. Marc Wilson was the only presenter willing to bring up the unspoken politics many suspect is behind all this: the growing conflict between national and provincial/local officials in China. A New York-based Chinese collector agreed with this position, reporting that the new head of the Cultural Relics Bureau is 'trying to make his mark' and 'deflect criticism from

internal piracy'. 'The fact is, construction and development are more destructive than looters,' said Wilson. And 'government engagement in art trade' is 'ambiguous' at best. Remarkably, this deeply informed director, whose museum has just completed a major survey of Chinese archaeology documenting literally thousands of sites, asserts that this request 'will not save a single chopstick! On the contrary, he argued, the biggest loss will be to the American people, who will lose opportunities to understand and appreciate Chinese culture. That would be a throwback to McCarthy-era restrictions of the 1960s, 'when all Chinese art imported to the US required proof that it was not owned by a communist', Lally reminded the committee. It was ironical that the hearing was held only a few blocks from the Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, which together constitute the US national museum of Asian art. Whether opposed to or in support of China's request, nearly all of the people in the room had worked with each other at some point in their careers. All of them love China and her astonishingly rich heritage, and all want to protect her unknown treasures. Wayne Sayles, a representative from a coin collectors' group, and one of the few 'unknown' faces in the crowd, reminded the committee: 'We don't need a shotgun solution.' CPAC is known for being fairly radical and granting nearly all of the requests that have been proposed over its twenty-year history. Let us hope that the committee takes its time to consider the full ramifications of China's request vis-a-vis China's legitimate needs. Laura B. Whitman is a former auction house specialist on Chinese paintings and an art advisor in New York. Directors from four museums with sizeable collections in Asian art appeared before CPAC, namely, The Art Institute of Chicago, the Asian Art Museum of San Francisco, The Cleveland Museum of Art and the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art. When read together, their written submissions are a comprehensive analysis of the level of cultural relics protection, collecting and the art market within China, and the effects of a trade embargo on US cultural life. They made constructive suggestions on how China can help herself and how the US can assist in these efforts. Emily Sano, Katharine Lee Reid and Marc F. Wilson urged China to study the Japanese model where a ranking system administered by the Agency for Cultural Affairs determines whether exports of important artefacts are possible, while James Cuno believes that joint excavations and the sharing of finds (partage) should be made a condition for US protection of endangered objects. For more information, please refer to <http://exchanges.state.gov/culprop/index.html>.

Fakes, Copies and Question !

Marks: Forensic Investigations of Asian Art by Donna Strahan, Head of Conservation at the Asian Art Museum of San Francisco. This month's commentary highlights the sensitive issues that arose in staging the exhibition 'Fakes, Copies and Question Marks: Forensic Investigations of Asian Art' at the Asian Art Museum of San Francisco from 25 September 2004

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to 27 March 2005. The show comprised 38 objects drawn from the museum's collection to examine authenticity in art.

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Philippe Horovitz
Orientations Paris

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