

Oriental Magazine, Vol. 38 (2007), No. 3

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TOC: Oriental Magazine Vol. 38 (2007), No. 3 April issue

In an age when the acquisition of art is seen in terms no less different than the buying and selling of stock, 'Through Six Generations: The Weng Collection of Chinese Painting and Calligraphy' which opened on 10 March at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, reminds us that in traditional China it was much more. Classical connoisseurship included the appreciation of beauty and artistic prowess, the gathering of knowledge, the upholding of ethical values and a communion of the like-minded.

Basing their studies on works from the Weng Collection, our contributors this month demonstrate that many of these practices are alive and well. Hao Sheng, through a discussion of artworks and primary sources, traces the collecting history of the Weng family. The collection's present owner, Wan-go Weng, discusses cherished works by Shen Zhou and Wang Hui. Qianshen Bai sheds light on how the evidential approach to scholarship in the 19th century affected connoisseurship and in turn pictorial depiction. Xiang Gao highlights the significance of model-letters in the study of calligraphy, while Sheng-chih Lin and Anning Jing present their own interpretations of a well-known Daoist illustration traditionally attributed to Liang Kai. This issue is also a tribute to Wan-go Weng, who for more than sixty years has served as a bridge for East-West cultural understanding. In our version of a Proust questionnaire, Weng reflects on the act of connoisseurship. Some twenty years after her first interview with Weng for Oriental Magazine, Anita Christy reprises her role, this time offering even richer insights into a life lived in interesting times.

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TOC: Orientations Magazine, Vol. 38 (2007), No. 3. In: ArtHist.net, Apr 21, 2007 (accessed Dec 22, 2024),

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