EDITORIAL

FOLLOWING THE success of our September–October 2007 magazine with its extensive initial coverage of “The First Emperor—who China's Terracotta Army” authored by Jane Portal (Assistant Keeper in the Department of Asia at the British Museum), exclusive to Arts of Asia as a preview, the British Museum has sent me several pictures of the exhibition’s opening on September 11th. I have chosen two pictures as most representative: Britain’s Prime Minister Gordon Brown (second from the left in the first picture) is shown applauding with Niall Fitzgerald, British Museum Chairman of Trustees, and Neil MacGregor, Director of the British Museum. On the right is Chinese official Professor Chen, Vice Chairman of National Committee of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference and President of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. He is seen stepped down from the podium after making his speech and accompanied by his lady translator. In the British Museum’s second picture, Professor Chen is at the podium making his speech.

Gordon Brown, in his own speech, welcomed Professor Chen and Madame Fu, the Ambassador of the People’s Republic, and congratulated the great partnership between the British Museum, between China and Morgan Stanley, which has made the record breaking exhibition possible. He said, “It is the largest sponsorship of a museum event ever, already the high point of a five year exchange between the British Museum and museums in China.” Ticket sales have already passed the 100,000 mark and it is set to become one of the most popular exhibitions that the British Museum has ever held. The show will continue until April 6th, 2008.

With jade the main subject of this November–December 2007 issue, for those readers who would like to learn more I list a short selection from the numerous articles, saleroom reports and book reviews that Arts of Asia has published on the subject since 1971:

“Modern Carving of Kiangsu or Shanghai” by Stephen Markbreiter, July–August 1986, pages 130–135.
Although the earlier of the above issues are now out of print, the current one includes a section on ‘The Jade of the Ming and Qing Dynasties’. This section discusses the imperial collection of jade at the Palace Museum, Bejing, which holds the best jade collection in the world, with some 30,000 pieces in total. Most of the jade objects were originally in the former Ming imperial collection, and are now housed in the Palace Museum. The collection includes an impressive range of jade objects, from small decorative pieces to large ceremonial objects. The collection is considered one of the finest in the world, with pieces dating back to the 14th century AD. It is estimated that more than 1,000 of the objects are made from nephrite jade, which is considered the highest quality type of jade. The collection also includes objects made from other types of jade, such as serpentine, quartz, and rock crystal.

The Jade of the Ming and Qing Dynasties, edited by Michael S. Lau, is a comprehensive guide to the collection, providing detailed descriptions and images of each piece. The book also includes information on the history and cultural significance of jade in China, as well as details on the techniques used to create these objects. It is an essential resource for anyone interested in the art of jade carving and the rich history of jade in Chinese culture.
The Liao dynasty (907–1125) occupied the present-day Inner Mongolia and Liaoning, Hebei and Shanxi provinces of China. Contemporary with the Liao dynasty is Northern Song and during this period amber was widely traded. At my request Dr Xu Xiaodong, a lady curator who works at the Department of Antiquities of the Palace Museum, Beijing, explores for Arts of Asia readers amber’s characteristics through amber artefacts unearthed at the tomb of Princess Chen and her consort. First excavated in 1983 in southeastern Mongolia, the tomb is still undisturbed and the only one yet so found. Dr Xu shows necklaces, pendants, earrings and headdresses, together with their counterparts in similar painting and sculpture. I hope readers will be impressed by this well-researched article as it is a new subject for the magazine.

I started to collect jade in the early seventies when I only had a limited budget. At that time small white jade handling pieces carved in the forms of animals, children and auspicious symbols was one area of Chinese works of art that I could afford. I was particularly fond of jade’s tactile quality and during my spare time I would visit dealers on Mody Road in Kowloon or Hollywood Road in Hong Kong. Twenty-one jade carvings from my modest collection will be exhibited at the Art Gallery, Hong Kong University in Pokfulam from November 17th to February 17th, 2008. This exhibition of Chinese jades for the scholar’s table will also feature examples from the collections of Humphrey K.F. Hui, Andrew K.F. Lee, Anthony K.W. Cheung, Michael Liu and Thomas Fok. Tina Pang, Curator at the Art Gallery, who is coordinating the exhibition, said several jades have been borrowed from institutional collections including the Victoria and Albert Museum in the UK and the Art Museum of the Chinese University of Hong Kong.

A fully illustrated exhibition catalogue will be published to cover the over one hundred examples of carved jades from the Song (960–1279) to the Qing dynasties reflecting scholarly and imperial taste ranging from small fondling jades to large archaic vessels. Ming Wilson, Curator of the Victoria and Albert Museum, will be giving a talk on the afternoon of Saturday November 17th in conjunction with the exhibition.

Denis S.K. Low, one of the world’s leading collectors of Chinese snuff bottles, would like Arts of Asia readers to know that his new book, Chinese Snuff Bottles: From the Sanctum of Enlightened Respect III, was officially launched at the Asian Civilisations Museum in Singapore on July 11th. It was very kind of Denis to invite me to the opening and I regret that I was unable to attend. However, another good friend and collector, Humphrey Hui, said it was a very successful and enjoyable ceremony.

The 432-page book is the third volume on the outstanding snuff bottle collection of Denis Low, and provides a unique opportunity for readers to gain an insight into the mind of a world-class collector. It is published by the Asian Civilisations Museum in association with Laurence King Publishing Ltd, and the launch coincided with an exhibition of 353 snuff bottles running until November 7th. On show are masterpieces from the 17th century until the end of the imperial China and beyond, including bottles made from porcelain, glass, jade and lacquer to amber, coral, hornbill and bamboo. Denis is seen second from the left in the group photograph with (from left to right) Prof. Tommy Koh, Ms Low Jen Ma, Mrs Low Seok Eng, Ms Priscylla Shaw, Mr Michael Koh and Dr Kenson Kwok. If readers would like to order a copy of the book please contact Ian Pringle (email: ian@apdsing.com). Denis has arranged, he says, with APD/Thames & Hudson for a special rate of US$220 with free airmail/courier delivery only for readers of Arts of Asia.

From September 20th to December 30th, 2007 works by painter and poet Chan Ky-Yut (born 1940 in Canton) will be shown at Musée Cernuschi in Paris, France (www.cernuschi.paris.fr). The chronological exhibition of his works comprises illustrated poems, autograph manuscripts and large paintings on paper as well as on scrolls of rice paper mounted on silk.

After completing his classical education and receiving his university degree, Chan Ky-Yut took a leave of absence from the world he knew to live in silence in a retreat in the mountains of China, for five years. The purpose of this was to explore Zen and Tibetan spiritual lore along with the Tao and the teachings of Confucius. His inner voyage heralded the travels that would lead him across Europe and eventually to North America.

In the seventies Chan Ky-Yut was inspired by a strong affinity for the works of Matisse and Van Gogh. He pursued novel ways of painting that took him away from the traditional use of ink, watercolour and paper, to the abstract painting in oils. Towards the end of the 1990s he returned to ink, watercolour and paper to create monumental artwork, as he had previously with oil painting, such as those on exhibit at the Musée Cernuschi in Paris and other museums.
in Europe, including the Victoria and Albert Museum in London.

Renzo Freschi received his first glimpse of Japanese landscape paintings in the mid-sixties when he bought a small book of haiku’s. The short Japanese poems brightened his weary days at secondary school and brought him closer to Zen and the Oriental world. Forty years on Renzo Freschi is delighted to announce that he has arranged an exhibition and sale of Zen paintings at his gallery in Milan from October 24th to December 1st, 2007. The exhibition includes twenty-seven paintings from the 18th to early 20th century: paper scrolls painted with ink by famous or anonymous artists who present the most typical subjects of Zen painting and doctrine. A catalogue is available illustrating sixteen of the works, including the introduction to Zen painting by Lennart Uterström, a Swedish scholar who lived in Japan for many years.

Asian Art in London will be celebrating its 10th anniversary from November 1st to 10th. This enterprise draws collectors and scholars from around the world to the many exhibitions and other events held by dealers, auction houses, museum and important institutions in London. One of the features will be the exhibition “Mountain Landscapes by Li Huayi” held in the gallery of leading dealer Eskenazi Ltd from November 1st to 30th.

Li Huayi’s works have received high praise in the United States and can be found in the Asian Art Museum, San Francisco; the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; the Cleveland Museum of Art; The Art Institute of Chicago; and the Spencer Museum of Art, University of Kansas. The exhibition at Eskenazi will be his first to be held in Europe and comprises twenty new paintings, including one of the largest works he has executed, a monumental landscape measuring 8 by 4 feet. Creating huge yet highly detailed landscapes in ink on Chinese or Japanese paper using Chinese and Japanese brushes is a slow process, making the demand for Li Huayi’s work greater than the supply. The exhibition will be accompanied by a fully illustrated catalogue with an introduction by Dr Michael Knight, Curator of Chinese Art at the Asian Art Museum in San Francisco which staged a major exhibition of Li’s work in 2004.

To coincide with Asian Art in London, S. Marchant and Son, established 1925, has arranged an exhibition from October 29th to November 12th comprising fourteen pieces of Chinese porcelain from the Chongzhen (1628–1644) to Shunzhi (1644–1661) period. All the pieces have been carefully selected by a distinguished collector in the United States and a colour catalogue will be available for US$50 including postage. Many have very interesting provenance, such as a tall trumpet neck vase painted with the young scholar Sima Xiangru writing his vow on a pillar while his young wife Wenjun holds the inkstone, collection of Daisy Lyon-Goldschmidt; and a brush pot painted with a lady and three attendants in a balcony scene, two with musical instruments, the reverse with a lady seated in a boat holding a lotus flower and another holding the rudder, formerly in the collection of Harvard University and the collection of David Berg.

Roger Keverne’s “Winter Exhibition of Fine and Rare Chinese Works of Art” will open on November 1st. The exhibition will feature over one hundred works of art with a fully illustrated catalogue. Highlights include a kneeling camel from the Northern Wei dynasty (386–534), a blue and white Wanli mark and period (1573–1620) box painted with “One Hundred Boys”, and an exquisite pair of Daoguang mark and period (1821–1850) bowls and covers painted in the famille-rose palette with golden lychee.

Among the jades is a very rare 18th century white disc bearing the “Eight Trigrams” on one side and the “Ten Heavenly Stems” on the other, that comes with a delightful boxwood stand in the form of an elephant. Roger also has jade boulders worked with figures and landscapes, and charming jade animals of the Ming (1368–1644) and early Qing dynasties.
Anthony Carter will exhibit at The Francesca Galloway Gallery during Asian Art in London. Among the pieces he will display is a beautifully carved early Qing dynasty jade animal group depicting a reclining water buffalo and kylin. The iconography is unusual but it can be found in a boxwood group in the Palace Museum, Beijing. Anthony will also show a circa 1800 fine imperial white jade dragon basin, superbly carved with dragons, clouds, rocks and water. This piece, from a private collection, has not been on the market for at least twenty years. In addition there is a small, delicately carved cinnabar lacquer narrative dish\(^\text{10}\) of the Yuan dynasty from an English collection, illustrated in *From Innovation to Conformity, Chinese Lacquer from the 13th to 16th centuries* by Krah and Morgan, 1989, Bluett & Sons Ltd, no. 9.

For November 2007 Asian Art in London, Knapton Rasti Asian Art will be holding two exhibitions: “Important Ming and Qing Ceramics” and “Chinese Works of Art”.\(^\text{11}\) From their porcelain catalogue highlights include a rare Chenghua period (1465–1478) blue and white flowerpot of flaring hexagonal form (the only other known example is in the National Palace Museum, Taiwan), and a Zhendge six-character mark and period (1506–1521) blue and white circular two-tiered box and cover with panels of Arabic and Persian invocations. The highlight from their works of art catalogue is an important white jade meiping from the collection of William Clayton, London. They say it is very rare to find a jade vase of meiping shape, and the present example is the only known one in white jade. Its subtle carving and elaborate design reflect the high standard of the jade carvers in the Imperial Workshops during the Qianlong period.

Martyn Gregory Gallery in London, the world’s leading specialist in China Trade paintings and pictures related to the Far East in the period 1700–1950, will be exhibiting for the second year running at The Rotunda, Exchange Square, Hong Kong from November 14th–17th, 2007. The exhibition will include works by both Western artists who travelled to the East, and also works by Chinese artists, such as Lamqua,\(^\text{12}\) who painted in the Western manner for the merchants and ships’ officers who came to the China coast. This will be a good show for collectors in Hong Kong and the region who are interested in historical port scenes of Canton, Hong Kong, Macau and Shanghai, as well as Chinnery sketches.

As a change of focus—Chieftown Auction Group has asked me to remind my readers that they will be holding their first auction in Hong Kong at the Grand Hyatt Hotel on November 25th, 2007. The viewing, a few days earlier, will be held at the Hong Kong Exhibition Centre (China Resources Building), November 23rd and 24th. The one-day auction of Chinese paintings, ceramics, works of art and Buddhist art will be conducted in Putonghua and English. There will also be a special session featuring over thirty pieces of various Chinese cloisonné enameled, including a five-piece altar set and an 18th century Qianlong period guardian in blue armour and turquoise flowered helmet, unusually attractive for its later French ormolu stand (former T.B. Kitson Collection). Amongst the white and celadon jade carvings offered will be a pair of bowls, plaques, animals and children, double pomegranate vase, incense holder and parfumier.\(^\text{13}\)
I would also like to inform my readers of a very important event, the inaugural Beijing International Chinese Antiques Fair (BICAF), which takes place from November 30th to December 4th, 2007 at the historical Beijing Hotel and within walking distance of the Forbidden City. BICAF, hosted by Beijing Municipal Administration of Cultural Heritage, Beijing Daily Group and Beijing Television, is the first of its kind to be held in China and aspires to be an annual event of the highest standard. The purpose is to gather, at the most notable level, art dealers, experts, scholars, private collectors of Chinese antiques, and to serve in the development of the fast growing Chinese antiques market, not only in China but all over Asia. Mr Shankai Yuan, Executive Director of BICAF Organization Committee, said the fair aims to “attract museum quality Chinese antiques to enter China for the enrichment of collections of the increasing number of museums as well as of individual collectors, and to promote the connections between all those concerned in the trade”.

The Vice-Chairman of the National People’s Congress, the Vice-Chairman of the Political Consultative Conference, the Secretary of the Ministry of Culture, and the Director General of the State Administration of Cultural Heritage have been invited to the opening ceremony which takes place at 3:30 pm on November 30th. The Mayor and other important personalities, including top members of the Beijing Daily Group, and the Director General of Beijing Municipal Administration of Cultural Heritage, the representative of exhibitors and the representative of sponsors will make speeches at the opening ceremony.

Chinese art is playing an increasingly important role; its galleries, exhibitions and auctions are becoming more and more significant in the overall global art market. According to official records, the number of museums across China has grown dramatically from around 300 in the 1970s to 830 within a decade, and more than 2000 by the turn of the century. It is expected to reach 3000 in another fifteen years. The auction industry is also flourishing as the gross trading volume of the top twenty auction houses in Beijing amounted to RMB10 billion (about US$1.35 billion) over the last two years.

During the five-day fair, private viewings will be organised for the directors and experts of important Chinese museums, as well as for leading private collectors. The event also has the support of the Chinese government for cultural projects and an Advisory Committee composed of acclaimed experts will ensure the authenticity of pieces exhibited. At the venue there will be a separate exhibition devoted to the display of cultural relics, and a special charity dinner will be arranged where the funds raised will be used for education on conservation of cultural relics. Mr Shankai Yuan believes BICAF will complement and affirm the status of Beijing as the international trade centre for Chinese fine arts and antiques, and open up opportunities for traders and buyers, bridging the already thriving industry in China to the world.

Since my long career as publisher, editor and founder of Arts of Asia, I have done my very best to make the arts and cultures of Asia better known, wider understood and loved. I have wanted our readers to become both serious and knowledgeable collectors, so they can enjoy enhanced lives. With knowledge comes further enjoyment.

I have not increased our subscription rate over the last seven years (38 issues). During that time our production costs and mailing charges have doubled. However, I still wish to keep our reasonable subscription rate at the same level of only US$85 for six consecutive issues (inclusive of surface mail postage) so that our valued readers, museums, universities and public libraries can continue to enjoy the informative articles and notable advertising in our magazines. I therefore do need your support in recommending us to your friends with similar interests who are not as yet subscribers. With Christmas and New Year approaching this is most surely a good time to think of Arts of Asia as an appropriate personal gift to family members and colleagues as well (gift subscriptions only cost US$70).

I would like to take this opportunity, my last Editorial of our publishing year, to thank most sincerely our worldwide readers, contributors and advertisers for their wonderful support throughout 2007.