SHANGHAI
FINE JEWELLERY AND ART FAIR

TUYET NGUYET AND ROBIN MARKBREITER

THE CHINESE central government has declared its aims to build Shanghai, which has long been China’s major business city, into an international financial hub by 2020. World Expo, the latest display of China’s strength following the Beijing Olympics, is seen as accelerating Shanghai towards that goal. Mayor Han Zheng told reporters last month that “Shanghai will make major breakthroughs this year in building a world financial centre”.

During Expo 2010 Arturo Di Modica, the artist who created and installed the Charging Bull statue on Wall Street in New York, created a 2.5-tonne bronze bull on the Bund in Shanghai. During our visit to Shanghai an inauguration ceremony was held to celebrate the arrival of the Bund Bull statue, commissioned by the Shanghai government to symbolise the financial services ambitions of the city once regaled as the Wall Street of the Far East.

Also coinciding with World Expo was the second Shanghai Fine Jewellery and Art Fair (SJFJ), held from May 16th–23rd, 2010 at Rockbund. Organised by Nicolò Filippo Mori, Maximin Berko, Vanna Teng and Bund18, it included an exclusive group of eighteen art galleries from around the world. The domestic and foreign galleries brought to Shanghai high-class works of art, both from ancient and modern times, such as paintings, sculptures, antiques, tapestries, furniture, rock crystal chandeliers, Art Deco glass by René Lalique, European silverware, modern and contemporary art, and fine jewellery. The first SJFJ was held in October 2007 (see Arts of Asia Publisher’s Editorial in the January–February 2008 issue, pages 6–17).

The SJFJ organisers had to contend with a number of serious challenges in the build-up to their second fair, including an unanticipated change in venue a month or so before the event. The opening reception held on the evening of May 15th was well attended by VIPs and elegantly dressed ladies wearing expensive high-heeled shoes. However, on the night three disappointed exhibitors were unable to prepare their booths in time as shipments of antiques were held at customs for almost one week.

With great relief two galleries had their valuable items safely delivered the following day. The organisers worked hard to solve the problem and the exhibitors showed great understanding and patience.

Overall the mood of the fair was upbeat and visitors including connoisseurs from China and abroad genuinely enjoyed the showcase of wonderful art. SJFJ was an excellent meeting place and platform for Chinese and foreign art aficionados to communicate with each other and exchange views. Exhibitors were impressed and encouraged by the level of knowledge and interest shown by visitors. The appreciation of works of art is an important factor for galleries who invest their time, money and effort exhibiting at important art fairs.

After the fair Gisèle Croës from Belgium said she sold a fine pair of Chinese huanghuali horseshoe armchairs and a beautiful imperial late 19th century silk and metallic thread carpet. It will be installed at a private club called Imperial Palace located in the former French Concession. Antoine Barrière, the major Chinese art dealer from Paris, was happy with the fair and would like to return. Organisers Nicolò Filippo Mori and Maximin Berko also declared the fair a success.

Nicolò said, “Almost all the galleries sold and amazing people came to see us during the final days and stayed until very late. Gisèle Croës and Robert Bowman sold well, made good contacts and were happy. There will also be a lot of business done after the fair. I feel a sense of achievement as our fair brought great art and culture to Shanghai.” It is indeed marvellous that courageous fair organisers and galleries introduce art treasures from around the world to educate the growing numbers of wealthy Chinese collectors keen to expand and develop their international cultural knowledge.
Viviane and Patrick Berko from Belgium exhibited 19th century European paintings.

Jacques and Antoine Barrère from Paris with their impressive 18th century bronze statue of Guanyu mounted on his horse.

Tuyet Nguyet, jewellery designer Lorenz Bäumer and Irina Berko, SFJAF General Manager.

Imperial Chinese “dragon” carpet and huanghuali armchairs at Gisèle Croës.

Carpets and tapestries specialists Michael and Sandrine Zada, and assistant Winnie Gu.

Teresa Coleman showed embroidered costumes and silk textiles from the Chinese imperial court.

Robert Bowman, a leading dealer in works by Auguste Rodin, and his wife Michele offered fine European sculpture from the late 19th century to the present day.

Hugo Liao, Director of JGM Galerie, is focused on contemporary sculpture.