EDITORIAL

OUR SEPTEMBER–OCTOBER 2010 cover celebrates the 50th Anniversary of the Min Chiu Society. This society is one of most important private collectors’ clubs in Hong Kong and, in this Publisher and Editor’s opinion, is one of the most prestigious of its kind in the world! Established in 1960 by a group of collectors of Chinese antiques, the members of Min Chiu Society have been very active in all areas of Chinese art connoisseurship.

One of my old friends, Mr Tam Man Long, was an early member of the Min Chiu Society. We used to exchange gifts of antiques. In the early 1960s Mr Tam invited my husband and I to the Min Chiu Society clubhouse in Sunning Court, Hoi Ping Road, Causeway Bay. At the time we had been living in my husband’s pre-marriage bachelor flat in nearby Percival Street opposite the Royal Hong Kong Yacht Club. Mr Tam’s was amongst the few Chinese families that lived on the Peak in a large house he himself had built. Founder of Tom Construction Company, Mr Tam claimed to be the contractor who first came across the Bronze Age double-F pattern shards in the washed building sand supplied by the government, from possibly seashore Lantau Island if not elsewhere.

From September 25th to December 27th, 2010, the Hong Kong Museum of Art will showcase local collections of eminent works of Chinese antiquity from members of the Min Chiu Society. For Arts of Asia readers, two exclusive articles relating to the eagerly awaited first-class exhibition were commissioned for our September–October 2010 edition.

Peter Y.K. Lam, Honorary Member of the Min Chiu Society (Associate Member since 1981), is Director of the Art Museum, Chinese University of Hong Kong. He is therefore the ideal person to write about the history of the Min Chiu Society. Rose Wing Chong Lee, Curator of Chinese Antiquities at the Hong Kong Museum of Art, writes on the Min Chiu Society Golden Jubilee Exhibition jointly represented by Hong Kong’s Leisure and Cultural Services Department and the Min Chiu Society. The special exhibition will feature around 340 items from Min Chiu member collections, representing the cream of Chinese art and antiques. Curator Rose Lee’s article introduces thirty-eight highlight exhibits selected from the following three categories: Chinese painting and calligraphy; ceramics; and arts and crafts. This September–October 2010 issue will be a spectacular edition as part of our magazine’s own 40th Anniversary celebrations.

Skinner, Inc. of Boston, Massachusetts (www.skinnerinc.com), one of America’s leading auction houses for antiques and fine art, the major auction house headquartered in New England, reported its auction of Asian Works of Art held on Friday, June 25th and Saturday, June 26th grossed US$4,822,312 (including buyer’s premium). Of the 1700 works offered, 95% sold by lot and 99% by value, many far exceeding presale high estimates.

Chinese material was especially sought after with four works exceeding the US$100,000 mark. The auction’s top seller was a large jade vase in the shape of a double gourd, which sold for US$578,000. Another large jade vase of flatterened hu form sold for US$501,000. A huanghuali cabinet from the late Ming/early Qing dynasty sold for US$292,000. Also topping the US$100,000 sale price was a handscroll, si ji shang wan tu (Appreciating the Four Seasons) from the 19th century, selling for US$106,650. The scroll was part of the personal collection of the late Professor Charles J. Chu, painter, calligrapher, curator, scholar and educator. In total the Chu estate did very well with 120 lots bringing in US$562,176.

Georgia Chrischilles first contacted me in October 2003 to tell me of her plan to start the Brussels Oriental Art Fair (BOAF). I thought it was a splendid idea and gave her very strong encouragement and my support since her first fair in 2005. Unfortunately I was unable to attend BOAF 6 held from June 9th–13th, 2010 in the area of the Sablon, right in the middle of Brussels’ historical town centre. It was kind of Rosanne Chan, founder of CA Design (www.cadesign.com.hk), to send Arts of Asia a selection of her photos from some of the participating art galleries and their owners—six of which I am happy to reproduce in this Editorial. Rosanne says, “Brussels is a lovely city, not only for the Fair but the food there”. As recommended by Renzo Freschi, who is also a friend, she was told, “the best chocolate maker there is Marcolini, and one of their best products is macaroons”. Yes, they are delicious and we all enjoyed the box Rosanne brought back for us! I am sure Arts of Asia readers will also enjoy these treats and the marvellous art displays in the galleries when they visit BOAF 7 next year from June 8th–12th.

Born into a family of art and antique dealers, Patrick Berko has always had a passion for the Academic, Realist, Orientalist and Romantic Schools of painting and for the “Belle Epoque” period of the late 19th to early 20th century. With his wife, Viviane, Patrick Berko has opened several galleries in Knokke-Le-Zoute (1976), Paris (1978), Brussels (1983), Antwerp (1984), New York (1987) and Tokyo (1989).

Specialising in quality Belgian painting, Patrick and Viviane Berko, together now with their children Maximin and Irima Berko, enjoy sharing their passion in their gallery at Knokke-Le-Zoute, and since October 2008 in Shanghai, with amateurs of art and collectors all over the world. They regularly participate in the most prestigious of art fairs, including Brussels, Paris, Maastricht, Palm Beach, Monaco, Moscow, London and Shanghai.
Georgia Chrischilles, founder and organiser of Brussels Oriental Art Fair

Anne Duchange and Philippe Riché, Duchange & Riché

Renzo Freschi, Renzo Freschi Oriental Art

Brussels Oriental Art Fair 6

Jacques Lebrat, Galerie Punchinello

Anita Quintero and François Rabier, Galerie François Rabier

George and Hugues Jean Lamy, Galerie Lamy

They have also published a number of art books and dictionaries such as the “Berko”, “Dictionary of Belgian Painters born between 1750 and 1875”, “Dictionary of Belgian and Dutch Flower Painters born between 1750 and 1880” and the “Dictionary of Belgian and Dutch Animal Painters born between 1750 and 1880”. Patrick and Viviane have also written a dozen monographs including “Fernand Toussaint”, “Georges Lemmers”, “Paul Mathieu”, “Paul Leduc”, “Caroline Stienon du Prê” and “Georges Rogy”. I have chosen for illustration The Blue Kimono (see next page), oil on canvas, by Louis Charles Verwee, a Belgian painter of portraits and genre scenes.

Asian Art Dealers New York (www.asianartdealersny.com) is a dealer-run and self-vetted organisation whose thirty-one international members include the following prominent specialists who in some cases have been seen in the pages of Arts of Asia during the past forty years: Art of the Past, Leiko Coyle, Arnold Lieberman, Kapoor Galleries, Theresa McCullough, Nancy Wiener and Doris Wiener specialising in Indian, Himalayan and Southeast Asian works of art; Chinese art, ancient through contemporary, will be shown at the Ralph M. Chait Galleries, China 2000 Fine Art, Kaikodo and MD Flacks; with Joan B. Mirviss, Scholten Japanese Art and the Kang Collection representing Japanese and Korean art, ancient through contemporary. Throughout September, fourteen members of Asian Art Dealers New York (AADNY) will present a schedule of exhibitions, focusing on a wide range of subjects.

Danon is pleased to announce the opening of their new gallery located in a beautiful townhouse on the Upper East Side, 24 East 64th Street, New York. Beginning September 2010, on display in the new space will be masterpieces from the Danon Collection of imperial Chinese carpets, including their Qing dragon carpet (see page 6). For enquiries please contact info@danongallery.com.

During this year’s Asia Week, Flying Cranes Antiques Ltd will stage an exhibition “Make Mine Meiji” which will be on view and for sale in gallery #58 at The Manhattan Art and Antiques Center. Represented by the superb quality of their metalwork, cloisonné, ceramics, carvings and lacquers, the Japanese artisans of this period played a powerful role in establishing the late 19th century as a fertile, dynamic aesthetic
Qing dragon carpet, Beijing imperial workshops, Guanxu period (1875–1908) at Danon

Bronze vase with chiselled bird of silver and shibuichi by renowned Meiji metalworker Suzuki Chokichi at Flying Cranes Antiques

The Blue Kimono by Louis Charles Verwee (died 1882), Belgian School at Berko Fine Paintings

“Furniture from a Scholar’s Studio” at Altfeld Gallery. Painting table and pair of scholar’s cap armchairs

presence worldwide. Encouraged by Emperor Meiji’s fierce determination to provide an art export market for his country, these master craftsmen channelled their knowledge of technology and materials to their creative vision, thus defining Meiji’s reign of forty-four years as the Golden Age of Japan.

Among the themes featured on vases, sculpture and bowls in the exhibition are exquisite creatures in silver and gold, oni cavorting on bronze sculpture, a Miya-o celestial being floating in the air and a cicada on a grape leaf expressing Makuzu Kozan’s fascination with nature. A Komai shrine is covered with imperial scenes in rare metals and on a bronze okimono, minogame weave in and out of swirling waters. The great Chokichi sculpts and enamels the subject selected for a majestic vase (see above and www.flyingcranesantiques.com).

According to the firm’s owners, Clifford and Jean Schaefer, “This particular exhibition illustrates not only the passionate enthusiasm manifest in works by master Meiji artists, but also reflects the firm’s thirty-five plus years of immersion in the arts of Japan’s Golden Age”.

During September an exhibition of “Furniture from a Scholar’s Studio” is being presented at Altfeld Gallery (www.altfeld.com.hk). Dating back to the Tang (618–907) and Song (960–1279) times, the “Golden Age” of China’s cultural development, and reaching its apogee in the Ming dynasty (1368–1644), the scholar’s studio provided the space for the scholar to live his literati life, pursue the four arts—calligraphy, painting, music and chess—and appreciate artefacts, that nourish the mind and spirit and express refinement and erudition. Such décor reflected the taste and living habits of the scholar dweller. Therefore, emphasis was put on careful selections of furniture for practicality as well as expressing the refined taste of the scholar.

Featuring in Altfeld’s exhibition will be fine classic pieces, such as painting tables (the main item of furniture in the studio for setting writing implements and practising calligraphy and painting), chairs, foot rests, day beds, kang tables, book cases, stools, tables and stands for displaying objects of art or placing an incense burner, a potted bonsai or a vase of orchids and seasonal flowers, floor screens and table screens for added privacy, curio shelves for displaying treasured antiques, seal and document chests for storing stationary implements.

Eskenazi Limited, respected dealers in Chinese art, are celebrating their golden jubilee in London with an exhibition of twelve exceptional pieces which have been acquired over the past ten years and set aside especially for this event. Their “Fiftieth Anniversary Exhibition: Twelve Chinese Masterworks” will be held in November at 10 Clifford Street, London W1, from Thursday 4th to Tuesday 30th. The exhibition coincides with the thirteenth staging of Asian Art in London, November 4th to 13th, 2010, an annual event that unites London’s leading Asian art dealers, major auction houses and societies in a series of selling exhibitions, auctions, receptions, lectures and seminars that attract visitors from around the world. It was in 1960 that Giuseppe Eskenazi, with his late father, first opened a London office for the Milan family business. During the subsequent fifty years Giuseppe has built up a reputation for handling the very finest and rarest of pieces which have found homes in the world’s greatest museums and private collections.
Among the most prized of these pieces is a falangeai puce-enamelled porcelain pear-shaped vase (zhuichun ping), Qing dynasty, Yongzheng reign mark and period (1723–1735). Superbly painted, the main subject is two dragons with scaly, serpentine bodies each chasing a flaming pearl. Flames issue from the dragons and clouds swirl above them. This highly individual vase was made to order for the emperor and reference is made to it in the imperial records. It would have been decorated by a court artist in Beijing after manufacture at Jingdezhen. The only other comparable piece was, like this one, in a private collection in Japan where it was nominated “Important Art Object” in 1931, but was almost certainly destroyed in World War Two.

The earliest piece of the twelve is an archaic bronze wine vessel and cover (hu), middle to late Western Zhou, 10th-9th century BC, that testifies to the high artistry in China three thousand years ago. The vessel bears an important inscription, Duke of Rui respectfully made this ritual vessel for Lord Li, and has appeared in a wide range of publications. In the 19th century it belonged to Viceroy Duan Fang (1861–1911) of Shanghai, one of the foremost collectors of ancient bronzes. He was an official of the highest rank, serving both the Guangxu emperor and his mother Cixi, the powerful and notorious Empress Dowager.

In the winter of 2009 Daniel Eskenazi, scion of the London oriental art business family, founded in Milan in 1925, went to Anhui province to take photos of rural villages with a group of friends, who collaborated to publish a book in aid of the Smile Train Charity. The Smile Train is an international charity that provides cleft lip and palate surgery to children in need (www.smiletrain.org).

Daniel has since collaborated as a result with Kate Daudy, an artist who works with text and poetry, to present their first exhibition together, “Yellow Mountains and Red Letters”. This (by kind permission of Bonhams) will be presented from November 4th to 12th, at Bonhams main board room (101 New Bond Street, London W1). The exhibition of ten photographic images of Chinese scenery taken by Daniel, are enhanced with quotations from classical Chinese and modern Western poetry, applied in polychrome lettering by Kate Daudy whose work is established internationally in several important museums and private collections.

Subscribers may recall the article in our September–October 2009 issue (Collectors World, pages 139–142) about my visit to the successful International Antiques & Art Expo 2009 in Taiyuan, Shanxi where Arts of Asia had a booth. Just in time before we go to press, I am happy to include on the following page of my Editorial a selection of photographs supplied by organisers William and Priscilla Chak from their second Expo in Taiyuan which was held from July 16th–18th, 2010. The Expo returned to the World Trade Hotel in Shanxi, however this year the organisers wanted the event “to be on an even larger scale in terms of overseas exhibitors” and to prove to collectors and participants that they could do an even better presentation with a “greater variety of goods and masterpieces”. Many of the overseas exhibitors felt that their participation in Taiyuan was a valuable opportunity to explore the art market in China. Although Hong Kong is the most established meeting place for important collectors in Asia, there are serious collectors in Beijing and other parts of China, as well as an
William Chak welcomes guests and participants at the International Antiques & Arts Expo’s Grand Opening Reception on July 15th, 2010

William Chak welcomes guests and participants at the International Antiques & Arts Expo’s Grand Opening Reception on July 15th, 2010

Imperial blue and white “dragon” vase, Qianlong seal mark and period, height 59 cm. One of the masterpieces showcased at Chak’s Co., Ltd

Cedric Curien, Winnie Chu and Olivier Ferraris, Asian Art Singapore Pte Ltd

Jacky Leung and his son Andy, My Gallery from Hong Kong

Snuff bottle specialist Robert Hall from London

Catherine Yip, Mr Yip Wai Tat, Calvin Zheng, Jade Gallery Co., Ltd

increasing number of wealthy mainlanders who are keen to enter the art market.

When Qian Qian Hao (William and Priscilla’s daughter-in-law) returned to Hong Kong she had the following to say about the Expo: “I am certain that this year was much better than last year. Our security system was more experienced, the fair team was more experienced, even the crowd was more experienced! The number of visitors to our fair was very long, but people were all in line. We had 40,000 to 50,000 people at our fair. The exhibitors had a great time meeting new local collectors as well as collectors from all over the country. We will definitely be going back to have our third Taiyuan fair in 2011. The only thing we regret is the limited space at the World Trade Hotel. We wish they could provide a bigger area so more exhibitors can join us. Unfortunately, the most we could take is fifty to sixty exhibitors, and many of them have already signed up for the next fair. This means there is limited space for other exhibitors who want to join us in 2011.”

Surely, this special September–October 2010 issue to mark our 40th Anniversary is one of the best editions Arts of Asia has produced and I want to take this opportunity to thank our international readers for their wonderful support. I am delighted to continue receiving positive letters of appreciation and congratulations for forty years of publishing. I have been told that our contribution to the “Arts of Asia” has influenced and inspired many now known in this field. Arts of Asia is indeed something very special and we will endeavour to continue to the best of our abilities. As always, we look forward to welcoming our subscribers and scholars to the Arts of Asia offices, library and study centre.

For a decade the Arts of Asia subscription rate has not changed, and we need to announce that from January 1st, 2011 it will increase from US$85 to US$100 (inclusive of delivery by surface mail). Readers will understand as our production and operating costs, paper, printing and mailing are far higher than ten years ago. I am certain you and your friends will continue to enjoy reading and learning from Arts of Asia for many more years.

Tuyet Nguyet Publisher & Editor