EDITORIAL

THE JANUARY–FEBRUARY 2010, Volume 40 Number 1, was the first of our 40th year six series of bimonthly magazines celebrating Arts of Asia’s Foundation in 1970. As a mark of esteem for our friend Dr Kenson Kwok and his eighteen years as a curator and founding director of the Asian Civilisations Museum in Singapore, that issue was largely devoted to wide ranging articles contributed by that outstanding museum’s expert staff, as well in addition “Beyond Sanctum 111: New Additions to the Denis Low Collection of Snuff Bottles”.

With the March–April 2010 issue Arts of Asia’s attention focused on a relatively lesser known New York museum, the Rubin Museum of Art. I first heard the name of the museum’s founder, Mr Donald Rubin, some ten years ago when he had already been collecting Tibetan and Nepalese paintings since 1975. As well as writing the initial article of the March–April 2010 magazine, “Looking to the Future, Rubin Museum of Art at Five Years”, Donald Rubin encouraged major curators of his and other associated museums to support the edition with their own contributions on Tibetan and Bhutanese subjects.

Once again, Arts of Asia returns with the May–June 2010 magazine to Hong Kong, my residence, since I married my husband in 1959, a practising architect at that time with two partners and a large qualified staff in one of Hong Kong’s oldest British architect and engineering firms. I am proud that I have lived here continuously, and even more so that two of my four Hong Kong born sons continue to live with their own families here, including my grandson.

The May–June 2010 issue’s cover article by curator Joan Y.H. Ho discusses the evolution of late Ming porcelain, exhibiting larger variations in shape, glaze and decorative pattern than previously. A fascinating exhibition of 120 examples currently on display in the University Museum and Art Gallery of The University of Hong Kong until May 23rd, 2010 is chosen from the collection of the University Museum and six Hong Kong private collectors.

The themes of Ms Ho’s article include the reasons for the changes of style of décor on late Ming porcelain. Investigated is why and how the simple decorative style of early Ming period gave way to highly decorative patterns of the late Ming period. By the reign of Jiajing, blue and white porcelain manufactured by private kilns began to be accepted by official kilns. Interestingly, the development of the publication of woodblock prints during the Jiajing (1522–1566) and Wanli (1573–1620) periods was reflected in the décor of porcelains.

The thirty-two colour images accompanying her text were carefully selected to illustrate not only blue and white and polychrome ceramic wares that can be found in many other museum collections, but also monochrome pieces which are rare with some that are unique. Ming furniture is particularly well covered in this outstanding issue with articles by two major resources and specialists in this field. Grace Wu Bruce has long been a friend of Arts of Asia and has written scholarly articles for the magazine from 1991. In the May–June 2010 number her articles take two forms. Part 1 is an interview with two major Belgian collectors who prefer to remain anonymous, with the collectors expressing the enjoyment which living with their Ming furniture collection brings. Grace follows with a cataloguing of the collectors’ favourite pieces ranging from round corner cabinet, travel bookcase, display cabinet, high continuous yokeback armchair, continuous horseshoe armchair, horseshoe armchairs, high waist S-brace table, Eight Immortals table, recessed-leg painting table, square kang table and set of six stools.

Part 2 of Grace’s articles recounts for Arts of Asia readers the price appreciation for Chinese furniture since the early 17th century. She continues to follow enormous escalation in prices for classic Chinese furniture closer to present times. Ming furniture formerly of The Museum of Classical Chinese Furniture in America is used to compare the market
prices of Ming furniture in the early 1990s with sales at Christie’s New York in 1996.

Philip Mak, an associate of the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto, wrote on "The Art of Chinese Wooden Stands" for our July–August 2008 issue. For our May–June 2016 edition he follows the historical development of Chinese furniture from the mat culture of the Warring States period (475–221 BC) up to the Tang dynasty (618–907), wherein a new lifestyle was based on elevated furniture. He takes readers through 16th and 17th century Chinese furniture examples from the Zhezun collection belonging to Professor Hon C. and Mrs Regina V. Kwan. In addition to this specialised catalogue, some thirty-five illustrations cover the historical aspects and developments of furniture through both well-known paintings and lesser known books on the subject. His selected bibliography with twenty-three entries, with accompanying Chinese characters, is especially useful.

Since 1971 Arts of Asia has published over seventy articles featuring jade and jade carving, and the subject continues to be of tremendous interest to many of our worldwide readers. It is now more important than ever to refer to established collections in museums such as the Fitzwilliam Museum at Cambridge, which houses more than two hundred jade and hardstones from four major donors, namely Arthur W. Young in 1954, Cecil E. Byas in 1938, Oscar Raphael in 1946, and Mrs May Cippico in accordance with the wishes of her aunt, the late Mrs Constance Goeze in 1951. Oscar Raphael was one of the twelve founder members of the Oriental Ceramic Society, a close friend of Sir Percival David, and the youngest son of George Charles Raphael, a wealthy bullock merchant. Dr James C.S. Lin, Assistant Keeper of Applied Arts at the Fitzwilliam Museum, is the knowledgeable author of the latest Arts of Asia jade article, "The Collection of Qing Dynasty Jades in the Fitzwilliam Museum." Of special note is the article by Tang Hing-sun, a Hong Kong curator since 1991, researcher and organiser of exhibitions of Chinese painting and calligraphy, who contributes Series 8 of our 20th–21st Century Artist section on "Chao Shao-an (1905–1998): Disciple of the Tianfeng (Heavenly Wind) Studio... Chao not only nurtured generations of students, he also lectured and exhibited widely, both at home and abroad, with the aim of promoting the art of Lingnan School." This year's Brussels Oriental Art Fair will be held from June 9th–15th at The Salomon. Starting from May a map and invitation can be downloaded from their web page www.bofart.be. Amongst the strong exhibitors, Christophe Hisco recently joined in Brussels Antiques and Fine Arts Fair from 2007 and exhibited at the Salon Du Collectionneur in Paris in 2009. This year will be his fourth participation in the Brussels Oriental Art Fair.

Christophe Hisco's gallery (12 Rue de Penthièvre, www.galeriehisco.com) is located just off the Avenue Matignon, in the antiques district of the 7th arrondissement of Paris, where the focus is on Indian art, Buddhist statuary from Southeast Asia, ancient art from Vietnam, and more specifically Dong Son culture and Chinese archaeology. The role of Vishnu Vasudeva, artist, India, Pala era, 12th century, height 94 cm, is a magnificent representation of the supreme god identified by the symbols he holds in his hands—the mace, chakra, lotus and conch. To the right of Vishnu is Lakshmi, goddess of good fortune, holding a fly-whisk. To his left is Sarasvati, goddess of knowledge, wisdom and the arts, playing the vina.

Also coming to Paris is Galerie Alexis Renard, Art Islamique—Art Indien, 5 Rue des Deux Ponts, Be St Louis, 75004 Paris, France (www.adlxiennard.com). During Brussels Oriental Art Fair, the Alexis Renard Gallery will exhibit at Henri Vanhovenacker Gallery, Rue Joseph Stevens 30, 1000 Brussels. Selections are made of their Lopburi Glass, bronze, Thailand, 13th to 14th century, height 7.6 cm, and a Sefik mirror with sphinxes, can bronze or brass, Khorasan, Seljuk period, 11th to 12th century, diameter 10 cm.

Mirrors of this type derive from the Chinese prototype and were produced in Anatolia and Central Asia under the influence of the Turkish Seljaks. The Kufic inscription is composed of blessings to the owner. The two sphinxes are creatures connected with the solar system.

Also intending to exhibit at Brussels Oriental Art Fair 2010 is the Astamangala Gallery (Drs Sjoerd de Vries, Kerkstraat 168, 1017 GS Amsterdam, www.astamangala.com). Their fire-gilded copper repoussé plaque is a fragment of a large prabhmandala of Vajrakila, southern Tibet, circa 14th century, 62 x 33 cm. Illustrated are a fire-gilded copper repoussé portrait of a lama, and a standing figure of Manjushri, painted and gilded wood, circa 10th–11th century statue, probably from the western Himalayas.

Established in 1995, Gliistra Japanese Art & Antiques is the first gallery in Italy specialising in Taisho and Showa period Japanese art. The gallery in Torino (www.gliistra.com) shows a rich collection of Japanese screens, lacquer boxes and furniture, bronze vases and scrolls, and functions as a consultancy agency to help establish art and design collections for its customers. On display at the Brussels Oriental Art Fair will be a two panel screen, natural colour on silk, Taisho period, 188 x 116 cm.

In the West since Impressivism, a 19th century art movement that began as a loose association of Paris-based artists, it was quite common for younger artists to show their works in conjunction with restaurants. However, I was rather surprised to receive an invitation from Lau Phuong Meuleau, the founder of Asian Art of Vivre (www.asianartofvivre.com), for the Vernissage reception of "Art of T" event from 6 pm on March 1st to view art pieces by four artists displayed around The Clipper Lounge on the Mezzanine Floor of the Mandarin Oriental, Hong Kong (www.mandarinoriental.com). The idea to organise the event and the title of the March exhibition came from Antoine Melas, Director of Food and Beverage, who is in charge of all restaurants in the hotel. Lau Phuong Meuleau chose the artists “as their works bring back to life the cultural heritage of their countries”: Koea (ceramist Young Sook Park), Japan (jewel paper screen designer Toshimichi Kitamura), Vietnam (painter Pham An Tho) and Hong Kong photographer Plaxi Leung.

In the photograph below taken at the exhibition opening are (from the left): Plaxi Leung, Lau Phuong Meuleau, Toshimichi Kitamura, Young Sook Park, Japan Consul General Shigezaka Sato, and Mandarin Oriental Hotel Manager Edward Shiapard. Young Sook Park, the guest of honour, had her white porcelain dish (shangi) or moon-jars mainly exhibited in the Lobby of the Mandarin Oriental. Moon-jars were popular in Korea in the 10th/11th century and were generally used for display. Mr. Hayashi Seizo, honorary member, Tokyo National Museum, says: "Choson dynasty moon jars represent the national spirit of the Korean people. Sadly not many pieces have survived to the present day. Perhaps this is one of the reasons why Young Sook Park has dedicated the last five years of her life to recover them. I have asked myself how difficult it would be to make something so magnificent. I can only assure her will and desire has guided her through this journey, a journey which I hope will continue into the future.”

Another exhibition I am looking forward to seeing is "Leiby Integrative: Donation of Works by Wu Guanzhong" from March 26th to July 4th, 2010 at the Chinese Fine Art Gallery (4th floor), Hong Kong Museum of Art (www.hk. art. museum). In 2006, internationally acclaimed master of painting Wu Guanzhong (born in 1919 in Yixing, Jiangsu province) offered Hong Kong another generous donation of thirty-three paintings. Following his donations in 1995 and 2002, the new gift includes twelve oil paintings and twenty-five...
one ink paintings done between 2005 and 2009. The donation will become a significant permanent collection of the Hong Kong Museum of Art.

In the March–April 1992 issue, Arts of Asia published an article about Wu Guanzhong with illustrations of his works. As well as rare photographs of the artist painting in his studio in Beijing, he was seen receiving France’s highest cultural award (L’Officier de L’Orde des Arts et des Lettres) in 1991 from Claude Martin, French Ambassador to China, on behalf of the French Ministry of Culture and Communication. To honour Wu’s generous donations and to share this heartfelt gift with the community, the Hong Kong Museum of Art will stage a special exhibition of fifty artworks of Wu’s latest donation along with the museum’s collection.

Bonhams (www.bonhams.com), founded in 1793, is one of the world’s oldest and largest auctioneers of fine art and antiques. In response to a growing Japanese art market, from February 2010 they opened a new office in Tokyo. The move is part of a strategic decision to increase the company’s presence in Asia and follows on from the successful opening of their Hong Kong office in 2007. The new Tokyo office at Level 14 Hibiya Central Building 1-2-9, Nishi-Shimbashi, Minato-ku, provides a major opportunity to enhance existing relationships with important Japanese clients, as well as expand and develop alliances with new buyers and sellers. Representative Hiromi Ono will act as a link to their specialists and auctions held in Hong Kong and around the world. Bonhams has a strong Japanese art department in Europe and the USA, with specialist sales each year in London, New York and San Francisco. In November 2009, they achieved one of the best results in London for a mixed-owner Japanese sale in almost a decade.

Art fairs in London take place throughout the year providing collectors with the chance to bring home something special. Whether you are after large scale paintings or miniature sculptures, there are many different art fairs to choose from. Masterpiece London (www.masterpiecefair.com), one of the exciting new fairs showcasing “the best of the best from around the world”, will be held at the former Chelsea Barracks, London SW1 from June 24th to 29th, 2010 with a preview on June 23rd. Organisations behind the venture are Mallett, Apter-Fredericks, Ronald Phillips and Asprey, and the event will be organised by Nicola Winwood, formerly of The Grosvenor House Art & Antiques Fair. I have been informed that visitors will enjoy a remarkable array of works of art, from fine and decorative arts to contemporary design, vintage cars and other premium collectors’ items. Masterpiece London seeks to showcase some of the greatest works on a scale not seen in the capital since the Great Exhibition of 1851. The fair aims to attract art lovers and enthusiasts on a global level, reinforcing London as a leading artistic and cultural hub.

David Lester’s London International Fine Art Fair at Olympia (www.lifaf.com) will run from June 4th to 13th, 2010. The fair promises an even bigger selection of art and antiques, with a target of attracting more than 30,000 visitors from around the world to London for this event. Fair organiser David Lester said the London International Fine Art Fair 2010 “will offer a supreme selection of first-rate art and antiques for sale with over 180 of the world’s most prestigious galleries exhibiting. An astonishing variety of exclusive items, varying from antique Chinese ceramic objects to Art Deco jewellery and the 20th century Design Classics, will not leave you disappointed.” I have selected for illustration a Chinese export box of naturalistic root carving form, huanghuali wood, circa 1780, 28 x 19 x 17 cm, courtesy of Peter Petrou, London. Another unusual object that will be on view is a rare table clock, with an Oriental-inspired face and Arabic numbers inside a yellow gold and red enamel casing on a carved onyx and jade base. Surmounted by a carved jade lion with diamond accents, circa 1925, the clock is courtesy of Hancocks, London.

David and Lee Ann Lester, International Fine Art Expositions (IFAE) Principals, are behind the changes at the fair (formerly the Summer Olympia Fine Art and Antiques Fair). The Lesters, a successful husband and wife team, have organised over sixty-five international art fairs in cities such as Hong Kong, Los Angeles, Beverly Hills, New York, Chicago, Dallas, Miami and Palm Springs. David is excited about the opportunity to make his mark on London. He said, “The fair has a storied tradition that we intend to build upon this year and into the future. The 2010 London International Fine Art Fair will comprise a fresh series of several events and talks with expert art and antique traders and collectors of all levels. Special fair tours will also be a new feature of this exciting event in London Olympia.”

19th Century Shop (www.19thcenturyshop.com) based in New York City, founded and owned by Stephan Loewenstein, is looking forward to participating at London Olympia. An important collection of early photographs of China will be the highlight of the exhibition by the American book and photograph dealer. The collection, assembled privately over many years, is now being offered for the first time.

One highlight of the exhibit is John Thomson’s celebrated
Foochow and the River Min (1873), a series of eighty magnificent photographs. Only a handful of complete sets are known to survive. The English photographer, “regarded as the most gifted photographer to travel in China in the 19th century”, was “the first to introduce the beauty of China’s inland scenery to the West”. In addition, the company will offer other important 19th century Chinese photographs as well as landmark Western books relating to China.

For nearly three decades the 19th Century Shop has been one of America’s leading dealers in important books, photographs and manuscripts of all ages representing mankind’s greatest achievements. Many of the most important books and manuscripts to surface in the world during that period have passed through the company’s hands. Specialties include China, literature, history, science, economics and philosophy. In London this June they will also be exhibiting Adam Smith’s Wealth of Nations, Charles Darwin’s Origin of Species, Talleyrand’s copy of Hume’s classic Treatise of Human Nature, and other landmark first editions.

The Russian Fine Art Fair in 2009 was one of the social highlights of the year for the Russian community in London. The Charity Gala Evening was attended by HRH Princess Marina Lobanov Rostovsky (seen on the left of the photograph with fair co-directors Al Hambly and Annya Sand), other high profile members of the London Russian community, celebrity clientele, politicians and VIPs. The spotlight for Arts of Asia was on the Russian paintings and the important dealers such as Leonid Shishkin gallery from Moscow.

The 2010 fair will open June 9th–12th at the Park Lane Hotel, with a Royal Private View on Wednesday June 9th in the presence of HRH Prince Michael of Kent GCVO. The 2010 Charity Gala Evening in aid of the Children’s Burns Trust taking place on Friday June 11th, 2010 will again be a glamorous occasion. Tickets costing £25 are available from the organisers (www.russianartfair.com) and require advance booking. Tickets for the public days (£10) are available in advance or at the door.

Fair Director Peter London said, “With nearly every fine art fair in Europe built around Western art, The Russian, Eastern & Oriental Fine Art Fair is the only event of its kind to focus on fine art from the East. Now in its second year, the newly expanded Russian, Eastern & Oriental Fine Art Fair will feature fifty leading international galleries, showcasing 1000 years of art from across the Eastern world.” The fair has been expanded to include art from Asia and the Middle East. Reflecting the interest in London for art from the former Persia, India, China, Korea and Vietnam, specialist galleries will show a mix of traditional and modern fine art from these regions. Contemporary and traditional paintings will hang alongside Chinese and Japanese ceramics, sculpture, objets d’art, metalwork, furniture and carpets.

I was back in Hong Kong from my New York trip on
March 27th, just too late to attend the grand opening of “Hong Kong Ink 2010”, an exhibition of twenty-two top artists representing different styles of ink painting organised by Baoqu Tang Gallery of Art (www.baoquartang.com). Held at Artexpace, the largest private exhibition hall in Hong Kong, in an area of over 18,000 square feet, more than 150 selected works were on show from March 22nd to April 10th. Philip Tse, the Director of Baoqu Tang Gallery of Art and the Curator of the show, took several months of research and selection before gathering the artists for the event. He said, “These artists are representative of Hong Kong ink paintings. Their works radiate the character of each artist which reveal a sense of beauty, meanwhile you can realise that the techniques of the artists reach a very high standard. This is the criteria of our painting selection.”

The works included traditional ink paintings that inherit and develop comprehensively the style of Lingnan School, which integrated conventional skills with Western elements. Some paintings go beyond tradition with extraordinary media and contemporary concepts. The paintings are full of variety and their evolutions are very personalised. Philip said, “Hong Kong ink painting is at its flourishing state, with traditional and contemporary styles competing and complementing one another. This is the soul of Hong Kong ink paintings and it represents a unique force in the Chinese ink art scene.” Seen just before the opening, attentive staff are making final adjustments to the furniture placements;* Koo Mei’s Glimmering, ink on paper, circa 1972; Shen Mo’s The Great River to the East, ink and colour on paper, 2004;* and Wong Hau Kwai’s House of Clearwater series, ink and colour on paper, 2009 (detail No. 5 and No. 8).* Undoubtedly we will hear more from Philip and his gallery in the near future.

On March 29th we attended Treasure Auctioneer Limited’s press conference for its 10th anniversary auction taking place at the Grand Hyatt Hong Kong from 4th to 8th April, 2010 which coincides with the printing of this Arts of Asia May–June 2010 issue. The auction offers 750 works in Chinese ceramics, Chinese paintings and calligraphy, jewellery, watches and fine jadeite. Selected highlights have been showcased during March in travelling exhibitions to Shanghai, Beijing, Xiamen, Suzhou and Hangzhou.

For its 10th anniversary sale the company’s consultancy team comprising specialists and experts Andrew Yu, William Chak, Geng Baochang and Yang Xin from the Palace Museum in Beijing have gathered prized works for the special auction. An imperial fine blue and white Qianlong mark and period hu-shaped vase was collected as the star lot of the exhibition. Its blue and white floral pattern and dove-shaped double handles symbolise longevity. This well-preserved majestic vase consigned by a Taiwanese general has an estimate of HK$12–15 million.

Other highlights include a rare miniature Qianlong mark and period doucai “flowers” meiping (estimate HK$600,000–800,000), a Xuande mark and period blue and white melon-shaped cricket jar (estimate HK$3.3–4.3 million), and a Qianlong mark and period ivory dragon boat sculpture of “birthday greetings from the immortals” (estimate HK$480,000–600,000). Among the jewellery and watches, featured items are a jadeite and diamond pendant (estimate HK$2–2.8 million), a pair of 18K white gold and diamond ear pendant (estimate HK$4.3–4.5 million), as well as two Patek Philippe watches (estimates HK$3.4–4.4 million and HK$980,000–1.3 million). It will be interesting to know the prices achieved.

Candy Chuang, Chairwoman of Treasure Auctioneer Limited (www.treasure-auction.com), is seen in the centre of the press conference photograph with (from the left) Managing Director, Richard Hung; Ceramics Specialist, William Chak; Chief Advisor, Authentication Consultant Team & Antiques Specialist, Andrew Yu; and Chief Operating Officer, Auctioneer and Timepieces Specialist, Andrew Wu. Candy feels this is a truly exceptional occasion for collectors and connoisseurs.

With this issue we close our selection of letters of congratulations published in our Correspondence pages. Again, we thank everyone for writing to us and, most importantly, the friends, readers and business associates who have supported the magazine’s progress since its inception forty years ago.