For the Ayala Foundation’s 50th anniversary, the book *Philippine Ancestral Gold* was launched at the Asian Civilisations Museum in Singapore in February 2012.

(Above) Fernando Zobel de Ayala, Minda Calaguian-Cruz, Dr Paul H. Kratoska, Michael Koh and Jaime Augusto Zobel de Ayala.

(Right) Dr Florina H. Capistrano-Baker and Dr John N. Miksic.

HEADING MY EDITORIAL for this exciting 172-page January-February 2013 issue are photographs taken on the occasion of the Ayala Foundation’s 50th anniversary celebration. To mark this momentous event the book *Philippine Ancestral Gold* by Florina H. Capistrano-Baker, John N. Miksic and John Guy was co-published with NUS Press. The book was launched at the Ayala Museum in Manila and the Institute of Fine Arts in New York City, where Kaja McGowan, Associate Professor at Cornell University, hailed the publication as “…groundbreaking material…[that] opens a whole new chapter of scholarship.” Ayala Foundation and NUS Press jointly launched the book at the Asian Civilisations Museum in Singapore in February 2012. *Philippine Ancestral Gold* was reviewed by Jonathan Best in the *Arts of Asia* July-August 2011 issue, pages 126-128.

The first photograph shows (from the left) Fernando Zobel de Ayala, President and COO, Ayala Corporation; Minda Calaguian-Cruz, Philippine Ambassador to Singapore; Dr Paul H. Kratoska, Managing Director, NUS Press; Michael Koh, CEO, Singapore National Heritage Board; and Jaime Augusto Zobel de Ayala, Chairman and CEO, Ayala Corporation, at the official ceremony during the Singapore book launch and reception of *Philippine Ancestral Gold* at the Asian Civilisations Museum, February 21st, 2012. The second photograph shows Dr Florina H. Capistrano-Baker, editor-author of *Philippine Ancestral Gold*, and co-author Dr John N. Miksic, Associate Professor, Southeast Asian Studies, National University of Singapore.

Dr Capistrano-Baker and Ditas R. Samson, Curator at Ayala Museum, have been most helpful in coordinating the six expertly written essays on the Ayala Museum’s gold and fine arts collections. I would like to thank them both as well as Neal Oshima, as photographer of the gold objects in the articles, for this *Arts of Asia* special issue.

Many readers complimented us on our November-December 2012 edition for the Shanghai Museum’s 60th anniversary and felt it was our finest publication to date. In early November 2012 my son Robin Markbreiter, *Arts of Asia* Director and Executive Editor, and his wife Nancy were in Shanghai for a weekend to attend two important exhibitions: “Splendors in Smalt: Art of Yuan Blue-and-White Porcelain” and “Masterpieces of Early Chinese Painting and Calligraphy in American Collections.” Upon their arrival there was an orderly queue of people who waited for more than forty minutes to enter the museum. Their patience was rewarded as the two remarkable exhibitions encompass outstanding pieces of artistry and workmanship from over thirty museums in Turkey, Iran, UK, USA, Japan, Russia, China and other countries. Chen Xiejun, Director of the Shanghai Museum, states in the Preface for the “Splendors in Smalt: Art of Yuan Blue-and-White Porcelain” and “Masterpieces of Early Chinese Paintings and Calligraphy in American Collections”. Upon their arrival there was an orderly queue of people who waited for more than forty minutes to enter the museum. Their patience was rewarded as the two remarkable exhibitions encompass outstanding pieces of artistry and workmanship from over thirty museums in Turkey, Iran, UK, USA, Japan, Russia, China and other countries. Chen Xiejun, Director of the Shanghai Museum, states in the Preface for the “Splendors in Smalt: Art of Yuan Blue-and-White Porcelain” and “Masterpieces of Early Chinese Paintings and Calligraphy in American Collections.”

Nancy and Robin enjoyed spending a whole day at the...
Shanghai Fine Jewellery and Art Fair (SFJAF) held at the Shanghai Exhibition Center. Founded in 2007, the third SFJAF presented precious antiques from the East and West, as well as fine jewellery that were appreciated by Chinese and overseas connoisseurs. The fair was an excellent platform for bringing together people from different cultural, social and economic backgrounds.

Robin was well-prepared and photographed Nicolò Filippo Mori, Vice-President of SFJAF, posing next to the Morgan, a bespoke British sports car, which made an immediate impression at the fair’s impressive entrance. Nicolò had taken the car for a test drive and said it was fast and handles extremely well. He was also proud that SFJAF 2012 presented "works of Pierre Bonnard, Pablo Picasso, Jean Durand, Chu Teh-Chun, Zao Wou-Ki, masterpieces of Buddhist sculpture, royal French silverware, works from the Italian Renaissance as well as a day bed by Henri-Auguste Fourdinois exhibited in the World Expo of 1878, to mention a few".

Oi Ling Antiques, a family-run business specialising in Chinese antiques located on Hong Kong’s famous Hollywood Road, returned to the fair with a large booth. This year, Oi Ling brought fine Chinese paintings and calligraphy from the Qing dynasty, classical furniture, brush rests and a collection of teapots with accessories. Interestingly the iron teapots were from Japan and are currently in high demand by mainland Chinese collectors who use them for serving tea as the flavour is enhanced. Oi Ling said, "We have a client in China who specifically asked me to bring all my Japanese teapots to the fair and they have already agreed to purchase them. The prices for such teapots have increased so much in recent years. It is increasingly difficult to find them in Japan, although it is possible to buy quality examples at Tokyo Chuo Auction." She felt that the fair looked beautiful and there were some exceptional antiques on show, especially for Western art. Oi Ling also wished the organisers and her fellow exhibitors a successful fair. She thinks SFJAF has a promising future and would like to participate again.

As Robin had to be in Shanghai, unfortunately for the first time in many years he was unable to be present at Asian Art in London, November 1st–10th, 2012. I heard it was an exciting week and the art on show was exceptional: the important art included Chinese porcelain, furniture and ink paintings; ancient arts of India; Central Asian textiles; Tibetan bronzes; and contemporary works on paper. Visitors loved the diversity and liked that dealers from abroad also exhibited. There were outstanding results at art galleries and auctions houses. Sotheby’s Fine Chinese and Works of Art sale on November 7th was a major success, as were the Japanese arts sales at Bonhams and Christie’s South Kensington. As we already have five Sale Room News reports in this Arts of Asia edition, the specialists’ insightful reports on the London auction scene will be published in the following March-April 2013 edition. To whet readers’ appetite I illustrate on the next Editorial page a fine wood netsuke figure of a tiger carved by Naito Toyomasa (1773–1856), early 19th century. It was the top item—and a world record at £103,250 (estimate £35,000-40,000)—at the Bonhams sale of Japanese Art on November 6th in which 582 lots achieved a sale total of £2,085,000.

There is plenty of collecting activity in Europe. Auction houses that have been making efforts to reach out to Asian
Buyers discovered that this is an effective strategy, especially as collectors in Asia are widening their areas of interest. From October 14th to 23rd, Hermann Historica’s auction of the Collection of Klingbeil generated a strong international response. The auction in Munich of the world’s largest private collection of antique arms and armour from the Middle Ages to the Early Modern Ages achieved outstanding results. According to Robert Weis, the Head of Old Arms and Armour Department at Hermann Historica, “the continuing trend among buyers towards high-quality pieces with renowned provenance was manifest once again”.

Record prices for the Asian Art auctions at Koller Zurich on October 30th and 31st were obtained thanks to the formidable demand from Chinese bidders. Around one hundred Chinese bidders were present in the auction room and they were prepared to bid high for traditional artworks from their homeland. A 32 cm gilt figure of an eight-arm Buddhist Pancaraksha-goddess from the 14th/15th century with stone inlays and numerous charming details was sold to a Chinese buyer for CHF3.24 million. This rare Tibetan figure came from a Swiss private collection; the large number of competitors (nine Chinese and one English telephone bidder, as well as some others in the room) pushed the price to nineteen times the upper estimate of CHF180,000.

Fine Art Asia held in October 2012, showcasing over six thousand exquisite works of art from all over the world, underlines Hong Kong’s important role in the global art scene as the hub of the art business in Asia. The sales at the fair were a robust HK$410 million, up 10% from last year. Auctioneers in particular are excited about the future of the Asian art market and believe artworks can fetch better prices in Hong Kong due to its greater access to Asian buyers, including mainlanders. Following their rivals China Guardian Auction Co., Ltd held its first Hong Kong sales in November. With Hong Kong as a platform, Poly wants to expand by reaching out to new international clients—and we wish them much success. The auction house offered more than four hundred lots within the following categories: Chinese Modern and Contemporary Art, Fine Chinese Paintings, Chinese Ceramics and Works of Art, Fine Jewellery and Watches. Beijing Poly’s Executive Director Zhao Xu said his company’s entry into Hong Kong has been two years in the planning.

Poly also presented the “Metamorphosis” work of Wallace Chan—the first jewellery art series to go under its auction hammer. The auction held at the Grand Hyatt Hong Kong Hotel sold eight jewellery art pieces for HK$17,238,500 in half an hour. A large butterfly sculpture titled Forever Dancing by jewellery designer Wallace Chan achieved HK$6,785,000 at the inaugural Poly Auction in Hong Kong.

My dear friends Glenn and Lucille Vessa have decided to
retire after forty-four years of running Honeychurch Antiques at 29 Hollywood Road. I wish them both the very best and want art collectors to know that their beloved shop is in good hands as John and Laurie Fairman have now based themselves in Hong Kong since April 2012. They will take over the day to day management of the shop here, splitting their time between Hong Kong and Seattle. John says, “We have been in the business for thirty-five years in Seattle and have run a very versatile eclectic business that includes the contemporary arts as well as tribal and fine antiques from Asia. Of late we have found that the market has moved back to Hong Kong from the old centres of New York/Paris/London and because of that we have been concentrating our buying in the US from old collections that we have dealt with over the past forty years. Needless to say it is an exciting time!”

Gallery Article, comprising a team of dedicated art professionals at 1 Shin Hing Street (just a short walk from Honeychurch), provides comprehensive art concierge services, focusing on top quality classical, modern and contemporary Western and Chinese artworks. Director Jenny Pat, a former Chinese paintings specialist at Christie’s, teamed up with Lan Phuong Meuleau, the founder and owner of Asian Art de Vivre, to showcase recent works by a talented Dutch oil painter who resides in Paris. The exhibition, “Light Between the Trees: Paintings by Tobias Spierenburg”, shows a vibration of ambiances of the artist’s favourite subject. In most of the paintings the landscape has almost disappeared; fog and various effects of light leave only subtle impressions of locations he has visited. The opening reception was well attended by a diverse crowd of art lovers who enjoyed meeting Tobias. They were also treated to delicious canapés paired with wine provided by Roddy Ropner of Wellspring Wines.

Earlier in my Editorial, Oi Ling mentioned that Tokyo Chuo Auction was a good source for Japanese teapots. The auction house is pleased to announce that for their Spring Sale 2013 they will offer a fine selection of Chinese antiques and works of art, including important imperial objects. A major highlight in the sale is a painting and calligraphy scroll by Emperor Qianlong. The 2 metres long scroll with carved zitan box and cover demonstrates the essence of Emperor Qianlong’s literati taste. This rare work belonged to Shen Nengyi, a connoisseur-collector in the Republic of China era.

Another highlight is a Qianlong period Buddhist shrine to house important artefacts, such as imperial gilt-bronzes. In recent years imperial seals have also been in great demand amongst collectors (see “The Portrayal of a Life in a Splendid Age: Qianlong Emperor’s Imperial Seals” by Guo Fuxiang, Arts of Asia, January-February 2011 issue, pp. 43-54). Illustrated above is a carved tianhuang “double-dragon” seal from the mid-Qing dynasty. The dragon is an obvious symbol of imperial power, yet the exquisite colour of the valuable stone shows a gentle and quiet spirit. To learn more about Tokyo Chuo Auction readers can visit www.chuo-auction.co.jp.

I would also like to mention that the BADA Antiques & Fine Art Fair (March 13th-19th, 2013) opens its doors to collectors from around the world at the Duke of York Square in the heart of Chelsea, one of London’s most fashionable districts. The fair is the only internationally renowned event exclusive to members of the British Antique Dealers’ Association, representing the UK’s leading specialists, and as such has built a reputation for quality. Works by some of the greatest names in the history of art such as Pablo Picasso are displayed. These have been carefully vetted for quality and authenticity by a specialist Vetting Committee whose sole purpose is to maintain the high standards of the British Antiques Dealers’ Association. Furthermore, purchasers can have a certificate verifying that the work of art has been bought at the vetted BADA fair.

For the final photo in my Editorial I have selected a Japanese ivory okimono of a seated lady performing ikebana, signed Shingyoku, late Meiji period, from Japanese art dealer Laura Bordignon who will be exhibiting at the fair. 

Altfield Gallery celebrates its 30th anniversary with an exhibition of Japanese decorative arts from the Meiji and Edo periods

Honeychurch Antiques celebrates forty-four years on Hollywood Road with two new floors of gallery space

Gallery Article’s Director Jenny Pat (left) with Dutch artist Tobias Spierenburg and Lan Phuong Meuleau of Asian Art de Vivre

Tianhuang “double dragon” seal offered at Tokyo Chuo Auction, Spring Sale 2013

Japanese ivory okimono from Laura Bordignon at BADA Antiques & Fine Art Fair

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