WHEN I HEARD that after an unprecedented eight years of renovation the new Islamic galleries at the Metropolitan Museum was reopening, I immediately contacted Dr Sheila Canby, Patti Cadby Birch Curator in Charge of the Islamic Art Department. My son, Executive Editor and Director Robin Markbreiter, met Sheila in New York in March and very quickly this unique September–October 2012 issue—featuring what is clearly the finest collection of Islamic art in the world—came together.

With five beautifully illustrated articles, this special edition explores the Met’s comprehensive and encyclopedic collection of Islamic art including ceramics, textiles, carpets, manuscript pages, metalwork, incense burners and perfume containers. The galleries are absolutely stunning and a must-see for anyone in town. As Sheila states: “If visitor numbers are a guide, the 450,000 people who passed through the portals to the new galleries in the six months since they opened have spoken with their feet. The field that was once arcane or seemingly of little interest to most of the public now has attracted new admirers who see the beauty and sense of importance of Islamic art from Iberia to India. Long may it last."

I would like to thank Dr Canby and her colleagues for their scholarly contributions which present the latest findings on the highest quality artefacts from these regions in the Metropolitan Museum’s collection. The expertly prepared articles will allow *Arts of Asia* readers to appreciate the beauty and significance of the refined works of art from the Arab Lands, Turkey, Iran, Central Asia and Later South Asia.

The lead photo for this Editorial was taken on May 31st, 2012 at the Annual General Meeting of The University of Hong Kong Museum Society. I am seen with Chairman Bonnie Kwan Huo (on the left); François Curiel, President of Christie’s in Asia; and Vice-Chairman Yvonne Choi. François Curiel is a leading figure in the international auction world, whose career started at Christie’s in 1969 (see “François Curiel: President of Christie’s Asia in an Interview with Tuyet Nguyet”, *Arts of Asia*, November–December 2010 issue, pages 10–15). A jewellery specialist of high repute, he is responsible for Christie’s global jewellery auctions. Described as one of the most accomplished auctioneers of our time, he was at the rostrum for Elizabeth Taylor’s unprecedented jewellery sale.

In front of over one hundred Museum Society members, François gave a memorable lecture on the international art market and its trends, with special emphasis on the market in Asia. Ladies in particular were fascinated to learn that important diamonds, especially fancy gemstones, can be rewarding investments as their value and rarity have increased significantly in recent years. For example on May 29th at Christie’s sale of “Magnificent Jewels” Lot 3766, *The Martian Pink*, a brilliant-cut fancy intense pink diamond of 12.04 carats by Harry Winston, went for HK$135 million (estimate HK$85–95 million), or US$15.4 million which is equivalent to US$1.44 million per carat.

Additional Christie’s Hong Kong Spring 2012 season highlights include Lot 2011, *Blue Chrysanthemums in a Glass Vase* by Sanyu (1901–1966), which achieved HK$47.7 million (estimate HK$23–28 million); Lot 2757, *Poems in Running Script Calligraphy* by Dong Qichang (1555–1636), made HK$57.8 million (estimate HK$53–73 million); Lot 4054, a large blue and white “mandarin ducks” charger, Yuan dynasty, sold for HK$29.2 million (estimate HK$12–18 million); and Lot 4953, a Patek Philippe Sky Moon Tourbillon manufactured in 2006, fetched over HK$10 million (estimate HK$7.2–12 million).

François Curiel commented that “Sophistication and solidity were the themes of the five-day week of sales in May at Christie’s Hong Kong, which totalled more than HK$2.7
The International Antiques Fair, organised by Chak’s Investment Limited, was held at the prestigious Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre from May 28th-30th. The eagerly awaited Opening Ceremony took place on the evening of May 27th. Seen above are the seven officiating guests with William Chak (standing far right).

Calligrapher Deng Cheng Long and Mr Eddie Leung, organiser of Asia International Arts & Antiques Fair. Tuyet Nguyen examines a snuff bottle.

The flood of interest by Asian buyers should surprise few who have followed the growth of the region’s economy, especially China where the purchase of art is regarded as a sign of affluence and culture. Two art fairs were held at the end of May 2012: the 7th Asia International Arts & Antiques Fair organised by Eddie Leung; and the International Antiques Fair promoted by William and Priscilla Chak. Mr Leung’s fair took place at the Kowloon Bay Trade & Exhibition Centre, while William and Priscilla’s fair was held at the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre. With *Arts of Asia* stands at both venues I had the opportunity to view many items on display. It is always a great experience to carefully handle the best artworks and ask plenty of questions—knowledgeable dealers are usually more than happy to assist when they meet someone who is enthusiastic and shows genuine interest in their wares.

The exhibits at the International Antiques Fair were of a high calibre. Over fifty dealers from Hong Kong, mainland China, Europe and the United States showcased more than ten thousand pieces. At the Grand Opening Ceremony on May 27th, leading personalities of the Asian art world gathered for the lively event which commenced with a welcome speech by Mr William Chak. The officiating guests were Mr William Lau, Chairman of the Hong Kong Art Craft Merchants Association; Athena Zonars, Christie’s International Director of Asian Art; collector Mr Robert Chang; Mr Wang Gang, TV host and performing artist; Dr Eddy Li, Member of The Chinese People’s Political Consultative Committee; collector Mr P.T. Mak; and Mr Kevin Ching, Chief Executive Officer of Sotheby’s Asia.

Major art collectors and celebrities will be flocking to the 26th Biennale des Antiquaires at the Grand Palais in Paris from September 14th–23rd, 2012. This fixture on the calendar every two years attracts buyers from far and wide for its glamorous atmosphere and finely honed selection of art, antiques and jewellery. The handsome Belle Époque exhibition hall is expected to be even more glamorous in 2012 because the fashion icon Karl Lagerfeld has designed the décor for the fair. Christian Deydier, President of Syndicat National des Antiquaires, the fair’s organiser, said, “People expect to be dazzled when they enter the biennale. Every year it has to be more beautiful. This year, Karl Lagerfeld will provide the ambience. The biennale is all about the art de vivre.”

The number of exhibitors—with expertise ranging from Asian and Western antiques, ancient books and bronze sculptures to Impressionist paintings, Art Deco design and contemporary art—has risen this year to 119, from 87 in 2010. The quality and authenticity of the antiques and artworks at the fair are strictly vetted.

Gisèle Croës, the Brussels-based antiques dealer, has been promoting the appreciation and understanding of high-quality Oriental art for over thirty years. She regularly exhibits at major international fairs and showcases her most spectacular items on these occasions. For the biennale she has drawn my attention to an exceptional work—a vase that was intended for King Louis XV (1710–1774). Made during the reign of Emperor Yongzheng (1723–1735), the 59 cm high table wine fountain belonged to the first service ordered for Louis XV, and was exhibited and published by “Musée de Sévres, la Vie Française Illustrée par la Céramique, juin 1934, no. 365”. It is one the masterpieces visitors will enjoy seeing at the 26th Biennale des Antiquaires.

An art fair that brings prestige to Hong Kong is Fine Art Asia. This year the fair runs from October 4th–7th at the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre with over seventy leading international exhibitors showing art and antiques from the East and West as well as modern and contemporary.
Important discovery by Gisèle Croës, a vase intended for King Louis XV’s table, will be shown at the Biennale des Antiquaires in Paris.

First Lady of the Unites States, Michelle Obama, wears a jadeite diamond lattice ring by Dickson Yewn. His exquisite designs reflect a strong attraction to Chinese arts and culture.

The 3rd Shanghai Fine Jewellery and Art Fair (SFJAF) will take place from November 3rd–11th, 2012 at the Shanghai Exhibition Center.

art. The fair will again be held to coincide with Sotheby’s Hong Kong auctions, which will thereby attract more international dealers. Over the years I have seen an increasing number of visitors from mainland China who are interested, knowledgeable and keen to buy back their heritage. Dealers reported that last year business was strong at this show.

Dickson Yewn, the contemporary Chinese luxury jewellery designer from Hong Kong, is one of the exhibitors returning to Fine Art Asia. Born in 1970, he creates one-of-a-kind and limited edition pieces with sophisticated craftsmanship that reflect national treasures made by imperial Chinese artisans. Earlier this year Michelle Obama, the First Lady of the United States, caused a sensation when she appeared in front of the world wearing Yewn’s jadeite diamond lattice ring along with a black Ralph Lauren gown. She was bejewelled with Yewn’s iconic design while waiting with her husband for the arrival of Queen Elizabeth II and Prince Philip. The ring also caught the eye of many of the guests at a lavish dinner event, which included UK Prime Minister David Cameron, Oscar winner Colin Firth, English football star David Beckham, Hollywood actor Tom Hanks and J.K. Rowling, author of the Harry Potter series.

The Shanghai Fine Jewellery and Art Fair (SFJAF) will take place from November 3rd–11th, 2012 in an elegant setting at the Shanghai Exhibition Center. Created in 2007 by Nicolò Filippo Mori and Maximin Berko, SFJAF will bring together galleries from Europe, the United States and Asia. Maximin said, “In China the interest in the arts is soaring. So galleries like Bernard De Leye, Lorenz Baumer and Pearl Lam would like to participate again at the fair.” I wish Nicolò, Maximin and their new business partner great success for the 3rd SFJAF. As I previously reported in the July–August 2010 issue, “SFJAF was an excellent meeting place and platform for Chinese and foreign art aficionados to communicate with each other and exchange views.”

Just over a year ago when I interviewed Prince Philipp of Liechtenstein, Chairman of the Board of Trustees, LGT Group Foundation, he expressed a desire for the Princely Collections to travel to Asia. Now I am delighted to announce that for the first time in Japan, an impressive selection from the Liechtenstein Collections will be on display from October 2012 to June 2013. The exhibition will feature 140 masterpieces of painting including famous works by Rubens (1577–1640), sculpture, furniture and porcelain.

The Liechtenstein Princely Collection is the world’s second largest private collection after the Royal Collection in England. Paintings alone number 1600 and sculptures, tapestries, art crafts, manuscripts and porcelains in the collection amount to 30,000 objects. This extremely important collection, however, was not available to the public for sixty-six years until the Liechtenstein Museum’s reopening in Vienna in 2004. Here is the schedule for the visiting exhibition in Japan: The National Art Center in Tokyo, October 3rd, 2012–December 23rd, 2012; The Museum of Art in Kochi, January 5th, 2013–March 7th, 2013; and The Kyoto Municipal Museum in Kyoto, March 19th, 2013–June 9th, 2013.

I conclude this Editorial by reminding friends that during the month of September there will be important Asian art exhibitions taking place in New York and they should look through the advertisements in this edition to discover more. For instance Kaikodo, located at 74 East 79th Street, is presenting an innovative show entitled “A to Z”, designed in a linear fashion, alphabetically and dedicated to the diverse interests of the company’s clientele. Carol Conover explained that “each letter stands for a work, Chinese or Japanese, ancient or contemporary, of fragile silk or paper, or of more hardy materials—bronce or ceramic. Normally Kaikodo exhibitions group the Chinese paintings together, then Japanese along with Korean, with the works of art organised in a chronological manner, making it easy to navigate and zero in on one’s specific interest.” This exhibition and sale in the gallery and online at www.kaikodo.com will challenge the viewer to look more comprehensively at works, one by one, with the expectation being one of surprise and delight.

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