EDITORIAL

IT HAS BECOME a tradition, following forty years, that the July–August issues of *Arts of Asia* should feature Japanese works of art. For this Volume 40 Number 4, 40th Anniversary Issue, we introduce our extensive worldwide readers to the arts of Japan—with special importance for collectors, dealers, galleries and auction houses—on netsuke, inro, bokuto wooden swords, accessories and woodblock prints. With the current overwhelming focus on China and India, it has become fashionable to neglect Japan which is still an economic super power with a rich and abundant artistic heritage. Japanese art has been overlooked and I am happy to bring it to attention.

For further information, before becoming deeply involved in the actual contents of the articles, see page 3, and scan the listing, at the same time glancing through the Contributors column on the left of the page. I do believe that with the January–February 1971 magazine I was the first publisher to follow this arrangement, as a credit both for our contributors and for the magazine itself. Read together, they confirm the museum experience and academic qualifications of the authors who write the articles.

I would like to thank here Mr Robert A. Fleischel and Ms Yukari Yoshida, seen above with me, for their valued introductions to Japanese museums and collections. Robert Fleischel worked for twenty years in a French trading company in Tokyo and in 1991 opened Sagemonoya, the first gallery in Japan dealing exclusively in antique netsuke and sagemono. The gallery is now managed by Yukari Yoshida and keeps its unique position in Japan. Since 2005, Robert Fleischel has acted as her supervisor. Yukari Yoshida contributes regularly to Japanese art magazines and to the *International Netsuke Society Journal*. She has written several books, has been on Japanese television and frequently gives lectures on netsuke. Our collaboration for this special project started when we met on October 30th, 2009, at the St James’s Hotel and Club in London, Yukari and Robert have made important and individual “chapters” to this 144-page *Arts of Asia* “book”.


I should like, as a Vietnamese-born publisher living in Hong Kong for so many years, to draw readers’ attention to two important subsidiary articles and their relevant authors. These are, first, “The Nguyen Dynasty Royal Seals Collection in the National Museum of Vietnamese History” authored by *Arts of Asia* specialist Contributing Editor Kerry Nguyen-Long together with Hanoi Curator Nguyen Dinh Chien. And second, “Dr T.T. Tsui’s Contribution to Chinese Art” by Curator Lesley Lau of the Hong Kong Heritage Museum. The renowned philanthropist and Chinese art collector who died on April 2nd this year typified the success stories of many who left China for Hong Kong after the Communist take over on the mainland in 1949.

Finally, following bringing your attention to our Saleroom News and scholarly Book Review sections, I would like to commend author Margaret Duda for her first-time coverage of Chinese folk art pipe ornaments, mainly of bamboo and/or carved wood. These talismans of good luck and fortune slide along the stem of the long tubular traditional Chinese pipes when smoking, which once were commonly seen in the provinces of China, and are now quite rare.

From May 14th to 19th there were two very good reasons for my son Robin and his wife Nancy to join me in visiting Shanghai. We especially wanted to attend the Shanghai Fine Jewellery and Art Fair (see the *Arts of Asia* report on pages 10–11). At the same time we also wanted to visit The World Exposition Shanghai China 2010. The World Expo, in existence since 1851, is one of the year’s most important global events in terms of economic and cultural impact.

Shanghai Expo covering an expansive 5.28 square kilometres opened on May 1st runs until October 31st, 2010, and is expected to draw some seventy million visitors from the general public, as well as the business community. Themed “Better City, Better Life”, Expo 2010 is the first world exposition that focuses on the issues of cities. Governments and people from all over the world, during the six month period, will meet in Shanghai “to discuss cities’ cultural achievements, development practices and advanced concepts, explore brand-new housing, living and working models in the new century and showcase interesting examples of sustainable development and harmonious society”.

Expo 2010, attracting over two hundred countries and international organisations, is staged in an area between Nanpu Bridge and Lupu Bridge along both sides of the Huangpu River in downtown Shanghai. It has five zones, with zones A, B and C in Pudong, and zones D and E in Puxi (see adjoining map). We visited twice and entered through gates 5 and 7 in Pudong. Only vehicles with special permits and dedicated Expo Taxis are permitted to drive up to the entrance—and be sure to wear comfortable shoes as a lot of walking is required. At the most popular pavilions queues for entry were up to three hours long, however for the elderly and the disabled it is worthwhile asking volunteers and officials whether special early admission is possible. When we visited on Saturday May 15th attendance reached a record-setting 330,000.

There is so much to see and do—visitors can easily spend a week at World Expo. It has created great interest and enjoyment for Chinese citizens coming from all over the mainland
Expo 2010 is staged between Lupu Bridge and Nanpu Bridge along both sides of the Huangpu River. It has five zones, with zones A, B and C in Pudong, and zones D and E in Puxi.

ZONE A: START

China Pavilion. Theme: Chinese Wisdom in Urban Development

Tuyet Nguyet and her daughter-in-law Nancy Tanaka Markbreiter at The World Exposition Shanghai China 2010. The China Pavilion in zone A is the biggest, tallest and most expensive building on the Expo site.

Hong Kong Pavilion. Theme: Hong Kong—The Infinite City

Macau Pavilion. Theme: Spirit of Cultures, Essence of Harmony

Democratic People’s Republic of Korea Pavilion. Theme: Paradise of People

India Pavilion. Theme: Cities of Harmony

Iran Pavilion. Theme: Blending of Diverse Cultures in the City


Japan Pavilion. Theme: Wa—Harmony of Hearts, Harmony of Arts
as well as overseas travellers who are treated to live dancing, singing, opera, ballet, music performances, a wide variety of international cuisine and shopping experiences. The Shaolin Monastery Kung Fu (martial arts) demonstrations attract a huge audience, and there are also symposia and forums for people from diverse backgrounds. In our two-day initial visit we were able to cover three of the five zones, but hope to return to the Expo over the coming months when it will certainly become even better. To whet Arts of Asia readers’ appetites we illustrate a selection of photographs by Robin during our Shanghai Expo visit as a visual expression of the pavilions we saw in zones A, B and C on the Pudong side of the Huangpu River. There is only space here to briefly describe a few of the pavilions.

The China Pavilion in zone A is the biggest, tallest and most expensive building on the Expo site. Built from interlaced red beams locked together with traditional Chinese brackets, the inverted ziggurat is visible from miles around. Having spent approximately US$57.3 billion on Expo 2010 Shanghai China (roughly twice the budget of the Beijing Olympics), the Chinese were determined to make an impressive pavilion. Visitors get a forty minute tour that will include a trip in a cable car. Next to the China Pavilion are the Hong Kong and Macau pavilions.

Since Expo 2010 opened, the three-storey Hong Kong Pavilion has been popular, visitors in general having to wait more than an hour to enter. We were privileged to be escorted ahead of the queue. Explored is the theme “Hong Kong—The Infinite City”, with a focus on transport networks, scientific facilities, finance and trade systems. However, on reflection and comparison with other pavilions, I was rather disappointed with the modest appearance of
Hong Kong’s building. In my personal feeling, the 3D video presentation and displays did not adequately demonstrate Hong Kong as “Asia’s World City” as put forward by the former Chief Executive, Mr Tung Chee Hwa, in his 1999 Policy Address. There is still time to make improvements.

On top of the Macau Pavilion is a giant silver rabbit lantern, the kind Macau-born architect Carlos Marreiros of the building remembers playing with as a child. The large structure is a glass case lit by colour-shifting LED lights powered by solar panels, while its head and tail are detachable balloons. It can be recycled when its six months are up. The 19.99 metres tall rabbit marks the year (1999) when the former Portuguese colony was handed back to China.

In zone C the upbeat and fun Dutch Pavilion is a street designed in a figure of eight (a lucky number in China) and elevated into the sky. Each of the twenty-eight houses and various other structures along the curving “Happy Street” is dedicated to a different topic, from energy and water conservation to the way the Dutch have mastered the use of space. The Happy Street symbolises an ideal city, exhibiting the rational planning of modern urban life.

The Little Mermaid bronze sculpture travelled 8721 kilometres from Copenhagen to her temporary residence at the Denmark Pavilion in the Shanghai Expo. Danish sculptor Edward Erikson created the 1.25 metres tall statue in 1909 and since then she has been sitting in Copenhagen harbour, where she is a national treasure and a major tourist attraction. The Denmark Pavilion in zone C is conceived as a double spiral, and visitors can walk or ride a bicycle up the paths and down again. The centre of the pavilion is a “harbour” filled with sea water from Copenhagen. Children are allowed to play in the water and touch the Little Mermaid sculpture.

The Japanese Pavilion in zone A, also known as “Purple Silkworm Island”, is the biggest and most expensive pavilion that Japan has built for a World Expo. The cocoon-shaped pavilion is made from the world’s first super-light “pillow membrane”, built from amorphous solar cells. Special environmental technologies enable the pavilion to be an eco-friendly “Breathing Organism”. The structure inside shows how Japan’s culture developed, particularly in the 7th and 8th centuries, stimulated by contact with Tang dynasty China; how Japan’s culture focuses on living with the country’s abundant nature through the four seasons of the year; and the country’s visions for urban life in 2020. The exhibitions are presented in a multitude of media, including actual devices, images, musical performances and robots.

Adjacent to the Japanese Pavilion is the rather original and environmentally-friendly Vietnam Pavilion, made mainly from reusable bamboo to reflect the cultural essence of “Living in Harmony with Nature”. The wave-shaped exterior walls resemble a river, and bamboo helps to reduce the amount of heat from sunlight. After the Expo, all the bamboo can be reused for welfare and school buildings. Inside the pavilion exhibits demonstrate the country’s commitment to environmental protection and urban development, and special events are held to celebrate the millennium anniversary of the establishment of Hanoi.

I thoroughly enjoyed my time in Shanghai and encourage Arts of Asia subscribers to make a trip there soon. Along the unique Bund one can admire the historic buildings in Puxi, enjoy watching the boats going along Huangpu River and witness the ever-changing activities in Pudong. The Shanghai Museum presents premier Chinese bronzes, sculpture, seals, paintings, jades, ceramics, furniture and coins. It is worth visiting the former French Concession and at Yongfoo Elite guests can enjoy authentic Shanghai cuisine with flawless service in a colonial building surrounded by elegant gardens. Do not miss going to Din Tai Fung for delicately steamed dumplings—they are simply delicious. Until October 31st, 2010, visiting the World Expo is an experience of a lifetime. This is the right time to visit Shanghai.