LEADING MY Editorial is Saying Farewell at Xunyang by Qiu Ying (1494/5–1552) (The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City), which will be on display at “Masterpieces of Chinese Painting 700-1900”, the major exhibition at the Victoria and Albert Museum from October 26th, 2013 to January 19th, 2014. Dr Hongxing Zhang, Senior Curator of Chinese Collections at the V&A, deserves credit for arranging this ambitious survey of one of the world’s greatest artistic traditions. He has gathered together the finest examples of Chinese painting created over a 1200 year period and will present nearly eighty works including some of the earliest surviving Chinese paintings as well as other exceptional works loaned from international collections.

It gives me pleasure that this unique November-December 2013 issue showcases the world’s rarest Chinese paintings. They are truly impressive, especially Nine Dragons by Chen Rong (circa 1189–1268) (Museum of Fine Arts, Boston). A detail of the picture section of this long handscroll was chosen for the dramatic front cover of this edition of our magazine. On behalf of Arts of Asia, I want to warmly thank Dr Zhang for his splendid article on pages 64 to 77. We enjoyed working with him and the professional V&A team, particularly Zoe Franklin, Lucy Hawes and Anni Timms.

“Masterpieces of Chinese Painting 700-1900” is the headline museum show during this year’s Asian Art in London (AAL) from 31st October to 9th November. Dealers and auction houses will hold special late-night openings to welcome visitors to their selling exhibitions and auctions. These events allow everyone from the connoisseur to the general-ist to explore the galleries and auctions, and talk to leading experts in a relaxed and friendly environment, while also providing an excellent opportunity to examine works of art.

Illustrated in the following pages are attractive works of art and paintings to be offered during AAL. I would have loved to introduce more examples in my Editorial, but space in this section is limited. However, I know Arts of Asia readers, including myself, will be in London, and may also like to visit and explore the new interactive website at www.asianartinlondon.com to learn about upcoming events.

The Gala Party is always a popular gathering point for participants, collectors and enthusiasts. This year it takes place at the V&A on Tuesday, 5th November, 6:30 pm to 9 pm. In addition, the prize for the finest and most interesting work of art on display at participating galleries and auction houses will be announced during the Gala Party. Dr James C.S. Lin, Senior Assistant Keeper of Applied Arts at the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge, the prize judge for two years now, says this is great fun!

Recently, the focus of the art world has very much been on Asia. Christie’s successfully completed its first auction in China on 26th September in Shanghai. The art market has soared since I accompanied Arts of Asia Founder Mrs Tuyet Nguyet (my mother) to the first Chinese auctions in Beijing over twenty years ago. Permitting international companies to conduct art auctions in China is another historic moment and a sign of continued progress.

Christie’s organised a number of special events leading up to the Shanghai auction, including exhibitions, seminars, gallery tours and private sales, all of which were well attended. Although the auction achieved a relatively modest total of RMB$154 million (US$25 million), this exceeded initial estimates and was a positive start for Christie’s, which was under considerable industry and media scrutiny. It is also worth
noting that in early December 2013, Sotheby’s will stage the first-ever major auction in Beijing by an international auction company. Both of these events may be the start of a new wave of growth for the Chinese art market.

In Hong Kong, the beginning of October was packed with auctions, art fairs and gallery exhibitions. Even though I was in the middle of printing our magazine, I managed to cover most of the important activities. During this exciting week, it was great to catch up with collectors, curators, dealers and friends visiting from abroad. Their active participation makes the art scene in Hong Kong especially vibrant. The fact that they came en masse shows that the art market here is alive and strong. They were all eager to attend Sotheby’s fortieth anniversary in Asia featuring a stellar line-up of sales with 3571 lots offered (total estimate HK$2.88–3.84 billion/US$369–493 million) at the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre (HKCEC). Leading the way were two superb collections of Chinese art from Japan, “Chinese Art Through The Eye Of Sakamoto Goro” and “Qing Imperial Porcelain—A Kyoto Collection”, that have remained unseen for more than half a century.

Two large Chinese auction houses presented significant collections as well. China Guardian (Hong Kong) held its 2013 Autumn Auction at the Island Shangri-La hotel with seven sessions featuring over six hundred lots. This company’s growth has been impressive to witness. At the Grand Hyatt hotel, Poly Auction (Hong Kong) also extended its space for Chinese paintings, important jewels and watches. I enjoyed their display of Chinese paintings by famous artists such as Xu Beihong (1895–1953) and Zhang Daqian (1899–1983), and was informed that the rarest calligraphic works and paintings were previously hidden in European collections.

Fine Art Asia, organised by Andy Hei and Calvin Hui, returned to the HKCEC with exquisite art from both the East and the West. The fair was completely booked up with eighty-eight exhibitors displaying antiques, paintings, sculpture, furniture, jewellery and contemporary art. The pavilion of European treasures hosted by Masterpiece London featured impressive examples of Western heritage and craftsmanship. A noticeable trend at Fine Art Asia has been the growing number of Western art galleries offering European art. This year, key artworks included Guitar Accroché au Mur by Pablo Picasso (1881–1973), presented by Gladwell & Patterson, London, and Chinese ancient bronzes at Galerie Christian Deydier, Paris. Visitors were also treated to a special exhibition of 20th century Chinese ink paintings by masters such as Zao Wou-Ki (1920–2013).

The expanded Arts of Asia team, including several leading Asian and Islamic art scholars on board as editorial consultants, is thrilled with this November-December 2013 issue. We hope our readers will enjoy the expertly written articles, up-to-date art market reports and in-depth book reviews. I am also pleased to announce that, with new impetus and fresh ideas, we have planned excellent issues for next year. Meanwhile, we wish our international readers and friends a joyous holiday season and a prosperous 2014—Year of the Horse in the Chinese zodiac calendar.