EDITORIAL

HEADING MY EDITORIAL is a great photograph of Robert Brooks, Chairman of Bonhams, and Julian King, Head of Chinese Ceramics and Works of Art in Bonhams Hong Kong, with me at the Arts of Asia offices on February 22nd, 2013. During our pleasant meeting Mr Brooks said he and his wife Evelyn had a splendid stay in Hong Kong and very much look forward to coming back here again soon. He also told me about the exciting activities taking place at Bonhams London as well as the expansion plans for the auction house in Asia and other growth locations. So I wanted to share some of his thoughts with my international readers:

“The art market has never been a more global community, with incredibly fast and easy access to huge amounts of information. We have been pretty successful in Asia since we expanded our auction business into Hong Kong five years ago. Having said that, I am in no doubt that the Asian region will remain for me and my Board at Bonhams the single most exciting opportunity within our worldwide structure. The potential for growth in our business here is immense.

“In fifty years, our future colleagues will still be developing the wide ranging business plan that we are creating now. It’s an awesome challenge for a Western auction house, but Asia is an awesome continent. We’re not just talking about Chinese art, though obviously this is most people’s focus at the moment. We closely monitor all the cultural areas of the region, as indeed you do very successfully at Arts of Asia. My colleagues are optimistic about other Asian cultural markets too; Japan of course, but also Singapore, Vietnam, Thailand, even Burma which is likely to emerge into the cultural mainstream quite soon.”

This perfectly brings us to our Special Burma Issue. The cover with the attractive silver wine cup in the centre looks very European and is a reflection of the Colonial influence on Burmese art. The other objects featured—paintings, lacquerware, animal-shaped weight and gold ring—give readers a sneak preview of the delights inside the Arts of Asia May-June 2013 magazine. We are confident you will enjoy this special edition which has taken one and a half years to arrange, and

I also wish to take this opportunity to warmly thank all the Asian art scholars for their expertly written articles in this truly unique issue.

Burma (Myanmar) is a country in constant motion, and this is perhaps what makes it so beguiling. As it moves towards democracy and the accompanying progresses, there is still quiet charm squirreled away in the corners of the country that modernisation has not touched. The roads of ancient capital Bagan (Pagan) lead to temples where you can lose yourself in a bygone era, and the villages surrounding Inle Lake (Shan State) are set from a simpler time. Yangon (Rangoon) may no longer be the capital, but it is in this bustling city that the country’s state of flux is best witnessed. However, one constant is that visitors from abroad will often receive a warm welcome and a betel-nut stained smile.

In addition to the excellent article “Burmese Silver from the Colonial Period” (pages 69-81) with co-authors Wynyard R.T. Wilkinson and Mary-Louise Wilkinson, Barbara Harding writes in her Correspondence letter (page 14) that it is possible to find Burmese decorative arts at Yangon’s Scott Market (Bogyoke Aung San Market). However, you do need to know
your way around the shops and Barbara gives invaluable advice for those contemplating a trip to Burma. Here in Hong Kong, I can recommend Altfield Gallery to collectors of Burmese utilitarian and religious objects in media such as stone, wood, bronze, lacquer, silk and cotton. These items provide a comprehensive overview of Burma’s diverse artistic production, representing its rich cultural heritage and the skilled workmanship of their artisans. Lacquerware is found in most Burmese households—the durability and affordability of this medium has enabled it to penetrate all levels of society—with vessels produced for both religious and secular purposes. Objects on display are primarily used for food storage and ceremonial temple offerings, such as betel-nut boxes, raised trays, bowls and votive vessels. Sylvia Fraser-Lu’s fascinating article “Visual Narratives in Burmese Lacquer” (pages 82-94) describes the lively pictorial stories and scenes depicted on a variety of fine decorative works.

TEFAF Maastricht opened with a Private View on Thursday 14th March and it was as impressive as ever. Guests from all over Europe and beyond attended, despite the icy conditions and disrupted transport. The European Fine Art Fair is renowned for displaying a magnificent array of works by top craftsmen and artists. They are presented by the world’s leading antiques dealers who are committed to excellence, expertise and elegance. Early sales were strong and masterpieces were bought by both private collectors and museum buyers with many other items being reserved for consideration. For example, Ben Janssens Oriental Art, London, reported a very good start to the fair selling a significant number of items to both new and established collectors including the centrepiece of his stand, an important Chinese bronze vessel, fanghu, from the Warring States period to early Western Han dynasty, 4th-3rd century BC.

Dr Clare McAndrew, author of The TEFAF Art Market Report 2013—The Global Art Market with focus on China and Brazil, presented the report at the “TEFAF Art Symposium: Rising Stars of the Art World” on Friday 15th March. According to the report, the Chinese art market began to decelerate for the first time in three years with sales falling by 24% to Euro 10.6 billion, so the United States resumed its traditional place as the world’s biggest market with 33% share. The United Kingdom remained in third position with 23% market share. Amid slowing growth and continuing uncertainty in the global economy, the worldwide market in art and antiques contracted by 7% from Euro 46.4 billion to Euro 43 billion in 2012.

A few days later on 19th March the fair announced that it has entered into exclusive discussions with Sotheby’s to explore the possibilities of developing a high-end art fair for China in 2014, via Sotheby’s Joint Venture in Beijing with Ge-Hua, a state-owned company. Ben Janssens, Chairman of the fair’s Executive Committee, had the following to say about “TEFAF Beijing” and this ground-breaking collaboration: “It has always been TEFAF Maastricht’s aim to be responsive to global trends in the art market. We feel now is the time to further develop our presence in China, one of the most important art markets. TEFAF is committed to contribute to the further growth of the market for European art in China by facilitating a high end art market platform for Chinese collectors and international art dealers.”

When the fair closed on Sunday 24th March, more than 70,000 visitors came from all over the world including some of the most active international private and institutional collectors from around the globe. The list of museums that sent delegates to the fair ranged from small regional museums to major international institutions and included the Asian Civilisations Museum, Singapore; The Metropolitan Museum, New York; Museum of Modern Art, New York; and The Louvre, Paris. Wim Pijbes, Director of the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, commented, “Even the most indulged museum director will see things at TEFAF that are so unique that surprising purchases can be made”.

I was also rather touched when I heard that The European Fine Art Foundation, which runs TEFAF Maastricht, is providing financial assistance to help villagers in Myanmar rebuild their monastery and recover precious religious relics following disastrous floods which almost totally washed away their community. Tropical Storm Two on the Myanmar-Bangladesh border on October 19th, 2011 caused major flash floods affecting more than 35,000 people in the region, of whom 150 were killed, and destroying some 2500 homes. Bravo to the fair and its directors for using its considerable resources and connections to give invaluable financial support to those in difficult circumstances.

Kai-Yin Lo, the international jewellery designer and art and cultural advisor, told me that she and her friends from Hong Kong had a wonderful time at TEFAF. Prior to her arrival in Maastricht, she had the honour of giving the inaugural “Cross-Culture” lecture at Central Saint Martins College of Arts and Design, London on 6th March. As a designer Kai-Yin is recognised to be “a pioneer in elevating semi-precious stones to become a mainstay in jewellery design, and a forerunner in interpreting culture and heritage into original and highly
wearable art that reflects China and Asia’s past and present”.

Professor Jeremy Till, Pro Vice-Chancellor Central Saint Martins College of Arts and Design, international jewellery designer Kai-Yin Lo and British architect Thomas Heatherick (right)

Bargain hunter’s US$3 purchase turned into a massive windfall when this Ding bowl sold for US$2,225,000 at Sotheby’s New York on 19th March

Professor Jane Rapley OBE in conversation with Kai-Yin Lo at the inaugural “Cross-Culture” lecture at Central Saint Martins College of Arts and Design, London on 6th March

Galleries Inc. and Dr Robert R. Bigler who exhibited for the first time and is pleased. Lark Mason, a renowned expert in Chinese art and antiques, and the President and Founder of iGavel Auctions, had the following insights: “Over forty dealers and galleries participated this year and five sponsor auction houses, resulting in a combined focus on Asian art that arguably exceeds that of anywhere else in the world. The program’s cultural events have proven popular with the thousands of visitors to New York City, and the updated and improved Asia Week website has been of enormous benefit to out of town guests.”

The most exciting story during Asia Week New York was the sale of a small pottery bowl, finely crafted with an ivory glaze and 5 inches in diameter. A lucky bargain hunter picked up the bowl down the road for a few dollars in 2007 and then displayed it at home. More recently, after becoming curious about its value, the bowl was brought in for expert appraisal. “This piece arrived in a simple looking box and when the top was opened, my first impression was that I was looking at something very, very beautiful...something very special that will be exciting for potential collectors”, said Henry Howard-Sneyd, Sotheby’s Vice-Chairman of Asian Art in North America. It turned out to be a thousand year old Ding bowl from the Song dynasty—the only other similar bowl from the period known to exist has been on display at the British Museum for more than sixty years.

At Sotheby’s on Tuesday 19th March, four bidders in the room and on the telephone battled over the rare find which ultimately went to renowned London art dealer Giuseppe Eskenazi for US$2,225,000 including the buyer’s premium (estimate US$200,000–300,000). Harold Yeo has written for *Arts of Asia* a comprehensive Saleroom News report featuring the rare Ding bowl and other important lots sold at Sotheby’s New York Fine Chinese Ceramics and Works of Art sales on March 19th and 20th, 2013 (pages 146-148).

Carlo Cristi, a leading dealer in Himalayan and Southeast Asian art, is a regular exhibitor at major Asian art shows including Asian Art in London and Asia Week New York. He would like *Arts of Asia* subscribers to know about a new event taking place in Brussels from June 5th to 9th, 2013. He said, “Asian Art in Brussels (AAB), which replaces the Brussels Oriental Art Fair, is the new group of international dealers who in close collaboration with the Brussels Ancient Art Fair (BAAF) and Brussels Non European Art Fair (BRUNEAF) will rejuvenate the event making Brussels a key destination for art enthusiasts. The show will be vetted by a panel of experts to ensure the highest quality throughout.” Of particular interest for collectors and connoisseurs will be the special Asian
Galerie Lamy’s cloisonné enamel deep dish with dragons and galloping horses, early Kangxi period, diameter 48 cm

Gilt-bronze sculpture of a seated Guanyin, 16th century, at Pranger Oriental Art

Exhibition of “Xing Wares from Tang to Five Dynasties” at K.Y. Fine Art

Galerie Lamy (32 rue Ernest Allard, 1000, Brussels) is one of the important galleries taking part at AAB. Georges and Hugues Jean Lamy (father and son) specialise in porcelain and collectibles from the Middle East to Far East with an emphasis on Chinese works of art from the Ming and Qing dynasties, such as the colourful early Kangxi period cloisonné enamel deep dish illustrated above. Members of the Chambre Royale des Antiquaires de Belgique and of the Syndicat National des Antiquaires (France), they look forward to welcoming international collectors to Brussels in June. For more information regarding the AAB lecture programme, full list of dealers and other activities, please visit www.asianartinbrussels.com.

Edward Pranger, a Dutch dealer in antique Chinese and Japanese ceramics and works of art, came to see me on 25th March to explain his Asia Week Hong Kong concept which is being organised with Candice Lee and Yifawn Lee. He said, “During the last week of May in Hong Kong there are important art and antiques fairs as well as many auctions, and we want all these events to collaborate together. The objective is to encourage participating galleries to hold special exhibitions to promote the arts to Hong Kong residents as well as to visitors to the city. The event is not just catered for those who are already art lovers or collectors but for those who are interested in developing their knowledge.” His exhibition on Guanyin, the bodhisattva associated with compassion as venerated by East Asian Buddhists, will be held at Pranger Oriental Art (215 Hollywood Road).

K.Y. Fine Art (142 Hollywood Road) will have an exhibition of “Xing Wares from Tang to Five Dynasties” for Asia Week Hong Kong, 22nd-29th May. Mr K.Y. Ng will display around twenty pieces of Xing ware in his shop and feels that the examples of thin-bodied, high-fired white porcelain wares, as well as wares with coloured glazes, will help “widen the understanding of this little-studied but important genre, as well as illuminate their timeless beauty”.

Hanlin Gallery (56 Hollywood Road) will be holding an exhibition entitled, “Three Modern Japanese Ceramic Masters: Inoue Manji, Kawase Shinobu and Tokuda Yasokichi III”. According to gallery owner Carlos Prata, “The show presents a fascinating view of three modern ceramic masters’ approach to three classic porcelain types”. Manji (born 1929) was designated a “Living National Treasure” in 1995 for his exquisite “hakuji” white porcelain ware. Shinobu (born 1950) is perhaps Japan’s most outstanding celadon artist working within the traditions of the Song dynasty. Yasokichi III (1933-2009) was designated a “Living National Treasure” in 1997 for his invention and development of the “saiyu” technique of suffusing and contrasting coloured glazes in Kutani porcelain.

There will also be a lecture and book launch for Dragon & Horse: Saddle Rugs and Other Horse Tack from China and Beyond, designed by Rosanne Chan of CA Design. This will be
The Hong Kong Art Craft Merchants Association is embarking on activities to promote the arts and antique trade on several fronts. Firstly, work in bringing the Association website (www.artcraft.org.hk) up-to-date is being done. Apart from providing the latest information about the membership, there will be articles on the different aspects of the great Chinese heritage.

I am delighted that my son Robin was invited by the Hong Kong Art Craft Merchants Association to attend their 2013 Spring Dinner as we support the aims of the Association, which are to raise the standards of local dealers in Chinese arts and antiques. Henry Chong provided the following comments about their recent activities: “With the new Chairman Mr William Lau taking office, the Hong Kong Art Craft Merchants Association is embarking on activities to promote the arts and antique trade on several fronts. Firstly, work in bringing the Association website (www.artcraft.org.hk) up-to-date is being done. Apart from providing the latest information about the membership, there will be articles on interesting subjects of Chinese arts and crafts. With fakes in abundance, the Authentication Service is in heavy demand by users in Hong Kong, China and overseas. Secondly, a new edition of the ever popular buying guide Something Old, Something New is being prepared. The guide has helped many buyers and visitors to Hong Kong source the finest works of art and antiques from reliable dealers. Auction houses also advertise their selling dates in that publication. Thirdly, connection is made with the Hong Kong Tourism Board for promotion of the Hollywood Road and Upper Lascar Row area as the place for Chinese works of art and antiques. Further down the line, talks on history and art are being planned. It is hoped that there will be one talk per season by historians, scholars, heads of museums and veteran collectors.”

Association members and established art dealers William and Priscilla Chak have been extremely busy preparing for their International Antiques Fair which takes place at Hall 5G of the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre, May 25th–27th, 2013. They have gathered leading antique dealers for Chinese porcelain, ceramics, works of art, furniture, calligraphy and paintings from all over the globe to showcase their collections at the 2013 edition of the fair. Open to the public with free admission, during the fair a series of antiques-related activities will be arranged, including workshops, on-site antiques appraisal services, book launches and tea demonstrations by a famous Kyoto tea master. The 275 years old watchmaking brand Jaquet Droz will also be staging a special exhibition of its distinctive automata at the fair. William said, “The exciting exhibits and rare collectibles will surely stun the eyes and win the hearts of collectors, connoisseurs, art enthusiasts and individuals who are looking for investment opportunities”.

I wish to congratulate my friends at the University of Hong Kong Museum Society for the 25th anniversary of the founding of the Society. It was celebrated in grand style with a Gala Dinner held on March 23rd at Loke Yew Hall, The University of Hong Kong, Pokfulam, Hong Kong. The Society was started to support the Hong Kong University’s Museum and Art Gallery in its activities as well as help to fund some purchases. With over six hundred dedicated members, the Society has organised and supported an astonishing number and variety of activities over the last twenty-five years. On the stage, Chairman Bonnie Kwan Huo leading the champagne toast gave a special thanks to her Executive and Fundraising Committees for their hard work in making the Gala a sparkling success—over HK$3.3 million was generously raised at the dinner which is a new milestone for the Society.

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