WE HAVE BEEN approached by the subscribers of *Arts of Asia* to have more issues devoted to the contemporary visual arts, which have grown in importance and popularity during the past five years. As a result I am most delighted to present to our worldwide supporters this first colourful and unique Spring and early Summer magazine, with the conviction readers will enjoy both the viewing and the knowledge they will gain. For my Editorial I have purposely chosen for first picture the oil on canvas titled *Dawn* by Jiang Guo Fang (born 1951) and painted when he was fifty. Jiang’s works were first shown in a 1994 solo exhibition at Schoeni Art Gallery in Hong Kong.

It is not too late for me to mention the exhibition “Art Moderne” presented by Hongkong Land and Opera Gallery in Hong Kong. The works were located at the Landmark, Exchange Square and Opera Gallery at 2-8 Wellington Street. The exhibition “closed” at the end of March, but as an important record the solid and well-prepared catalogue survives. In their Preface, Shirley Ben Bashat, Managing Director of the Opera Gallery in Hong Kong, and Gilles Dyan, Chairman of the international company, say “This year we have decided to focus mainly on Modern Art and showcase the great diversity of this complex yet popular phenomenon in art history...We feel privileged to bring shows such as this to Hong Kong and at this time wish to extend our deepest appreciation and acknowledgement to the great tribute of our main sponsor, Hongkong Land.”

Though now closed to view at Hongkong Land’s major exhibition sites in Central, the outstanding displays of works by well and lesser-known modern artists, can still be reviewed through Opera Gallery’s Hong Kong and worldwide offices. These are based in Venice, Paris, New York, London, Miami, Singapore and Seoul.

We look forward to further cooperations and important displays in Hong Kong, and note that the first exhibition title “Moderne Art”, has been adapted from a 1925 to 1940 decorative style which here applies to eleven sculptures by famous established names in the art world. In periods they date from before the title period with Amedeo Modigliani (1884–1920), through the title period to Niki de Saint Phalle (1930–2002), and after the title period to living highly popular Paris-based Colombian-born artist Fernando Botero (born 1932).

The catalogue cover, an artwork in itself, is a combination of Damien Hirst’s (born 1965) dot painting, a plain colour panel of Yves Klein’s (1928–1962) deep blue, and an arrangement of lettering reminiscent of Robert Indiana’s (born 1928) alphabet sculpture.

It is always enlightening to come across the writings of contemporary artists. The travelled Tibetan artist Gade (born 1971 in Lhasa) is a founding member of the Gedun Choephel Artists’ Guild. His works have won various prizes in Chinese exhibitions; he has also exhibited in countries such as Japan and Malaysia. In 2001–2002 he became “Artist in Residence” in New York; in 2003 he was “Artist in Residence” at the Taigh Chearsabhagh Museum and Art Centre in Scotland. After studying Chinese painting and art history in Beijing, he returned to using traditional Tibetan painting techniques but with a modern twist. He does not wish to de-
pict Tibet as a mythical land that only exists in text books, but wants to paint his Tibet, the country he grew up in—a country in transition, shaped by present realities and connected to the outside world. Gade’s paint brush is a thread that connects past and present; his works depict a culture that speaks of antiquity as well as modernity.

“Modern art in Tibet” Gade says “never seems to relate to the modern art movement in the outside world, seldom even participating in any contemporary art program in mainland China. So few people know the modern art of Tibet. It is like a strange creature, itself grown and developing without preparation, but it has just happened as a mingling of the red and blue neon lights of the nightclubs and the butter lamps and the Potala palace with the plastic evergreen coconut trees... but it is good from another point of view, because artists can closely examine themselves and hold their own interest in an age of information explosion.” An exhibition “Gade: Mushroom Cloud” will be held at Plum Blossoms Gallery in Hong Kong, May 23rd to June 7th, 2008 (see page 66).

Incidentally, Feng-Chun Ma, the Amsterdam and Beijing art specialist, has mentioned to me that contemporary Chinese artist Yue Minjun’s (born 1962) first self-portrait in the 1990s was originally sold to the Galerie Serieuze Zaken in Amsterdam. Yue, at the time, in a report that Feng-Chun has translated for us, already said “The reality is more and more slipping away and more and more newspapers, magazines, television, all the news and reports everywhere, at home, in the office, at school, seem to be the absolute reality. I am in pursuit of a new reality, an absolute reality, which only belongs to myself. I hope that my laughing figure will be seen everywhere... The world would be much nicer if we all would laugh with all one’s power.”

Feng-Chun has interestingly provided a rare early photograph of Yue taken in his workplace. She announces that her exhibition of contemporary Chinese art will be held in September in cooperation with Dutch private bank Staalbankiers and a private museum in Amsterdam. The exhibition will show works by seven artists ranging from top artist Yue Minjun to some well-known and (still) unknown artists.

Pictured standing to the side of The Flutist by renowned Chinese contemporary artist Chen Yi Fei (1946–2005) are Mr Tsui Tin Tun, Secretary of Hong Kong and Shanghai Artists Association; Mr Leung Tin Fu, Managing Director of Paper Communications Exhibition Services Ltd; and Mr Chen Yi Ming, the artist’s brother and a famous painter in his own right. This portrait of a glamorous American lady, valued at US$2.7 million (approximately HK$21 million) can be seen at the third Asia International Arts and Antiques Fair which will be held at AsiaWorld Expo in Hong Kong, May 23rd–26th, 2008. The organisers announced that this year the venue will be expanded to 8000 square metres, accommodating more than 120 exhibitors from around the world and has the support of the Greater China Cultural Global Association.

As usual, this issue of Arts of Asia reports the most recent sales in New York (see pages 134–141), while our coverage of Asia Week in New York extends to seven full pages following my Editorial. This special edition, as well as the contemporary features already mentioned, contains the first of a new series we have established on 21st Century Artists. We will welcome suggestions for contributions from distinguished art critics. For the July–August 2008 magazine we have already prepared the second of the series, a thoughtful article by the internationally recognised contemporary Chinese art critic Mr Feng Boyi from Beijing.

It goes without saying that Arts of Asia, as in this issue, will continue the policy established since thirty-nine years ago to cover Asian art in its widest cultural aspects and promote understanding and friendship. For this reason I have extracted a few sentences from kind letters received from the magazine’s readers in the past few weeks:

“Once again, we are in your debt for the splendid job you do in making Arts of Asia such a treasure. We look forward to each edition with great anticipation.” —Leon and Ellen Mintz, USA.

“Foremost in my mind remains the wish that you continue to publish your beautiful magazine; to receive and read it is indeed informative, stimulating and rewarding. I would not like to miss it, nor see the arrival interrupted.” —Alexander A. Holst, The Netherlands.

“Thank you! Your magazines are wonderful, very interesting. I am happy to read all the articles and reviews.” —Geneviève Knote, France.

We warmly appreciate these positive letters of encouragement from our readers around the world, which gives confidence that we are doing the right things.