EDITORIAL

ARTS OF ASIA as a family-run magazine is able to be flexible when it is necessary; something that is more unlikely in corporate publishing houses. This September–October 2009 issue is a prime example. Back in April 2008 Kerry Nguyen-Long, Arts of Asia contributing editor, informed us about the exhibition “Arts of Ancient Viet Nam: From River Plain to Open Sea”. It was scheduled to take place in spring 2009 at the Asia Society in New York before travelling to The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston. After getting in touch with Dr Nancy Tingley, Author/Curator of the exhibition and its hardback catalogue, we agreed to publish four Vietnamese articles in our March–April 2009 edition to accompany this major event. However, in October 2008 we were informed that the show had been postponed to the fall of 2009. I am now delighted to announce that the exhibition opens at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston from September 13th, 2009 to January 3rd, 2010, and continues from February 2nd to May 2nd, 2010 at Asia Society and Museum.

Dr Tingley, former Wattis Curator of Southeast Asian Art at the Asian Art Museum, San Francisco, has worked since 1988 on this project of borrowing works of art from major Vietnamese museums for this ground-breaking exhibition in the United States (1–5). Nancy Tingley is also the initial essayist of this timely Vietnamese number, in which are chronicled by Vietnamese and dedicated associated scholars the country’s most recent archaeological discoveries and backgrounds. These are represented in the issue by the article by a German-Vietnam archaeological team, showing the excavations in progress, and by the cover with its excavated gold “beads and bangles”. Seen as well are beads of several other kinds: cornelian, agate, rock crystal and nephrite in the burials of Lai Nghi, Central Vietnam (photograph by Andreas Reinecke).

1 Pangolin
Sa Huynh culture, 3rd century BC to 2nd century AD
Long Giao, Long Khanh district, Dong Nai province
Bronze, height 7.5 cm, width 9.5 cm, length 37.3 cm
Dong Nai Museum

2 Buddha
Circa 6th century
Binh Hoa village, Long An province
Wood, height 133 cm, width 38 cm
Museum of Vietnamese History in Ho Chi Minh City

3 Vishnu
Fu Nan period, 7th century
Bien Hao, Dong Nai province
Sandstone, height 167.4 cm, width 56.3 cm
Dong Nai Museum

4 Garuda with Naga
Champa period, late 12th-13th century
Thap Mam, Binh Dinh province
Stone, height 100 cm, width 60 cm
National Museum of Vietnamese History

5 Female Figure
Cu Lao Cham shipwreck, late 15th century
Stoneware, height 39.5 cm
National Museum of Vietnamese History
Included is a liberally illustrated article by Nguyen Dinh Chien and Pham Quoc Quan on the brown patterned ceramic wares of Vietnam, many examples having been found in recent dated sites around Hanoi and provincial tombs. Characteristically thick clay bodied wares decoratively created by incising, carving and painting brown, on an ivory glazed background, their three periods date from the Ly (11th–13th century), through the Tran (13th–14th century), ending with the Tran—Early Le dynasty (14th–15th century). From a freer Dong Son type motif of human figures, birds and fish, warriors hunting and fighting, the ware develops to themes reflective of Buddhism and Taoism, gradually declining to give way to blue and white ceramics.

Kerry Nguyen-Long, a frequently published scholar of Vietnamese ceramics, here is not writing on ceramics, except for references to the Cham Island shipwreck, but the town of Hoi An as a place of trade and exchange, and to other trade ports. Kerry's images show the influences in Hoi An, primarily during the 16th–18th century period.

Furthermore, this unique number features a fifth Vietnamese subject article, “Le Pho: Post-Impressionist Master Artist”, by Nguyen Thi Lan Huong and her husband George Belcher. I am confident readers will enjoy and appreciate this special edition focusing on Vietnam’s long history, wonderful culture and diverse arts—from rare ancient works to paintings by a renowned western-trained artist. I want to thank all the contributors for their vastly informative and well-researched articles. For anyone interested in Vietnamese art, culture and civilisation I recommend visiting the exhibition in Houston or New York, or better still discover Vietnam in person.

I wish to congratulate Paramount Printing Company Limited on winning the Gold of the 2009 China Print Awards (6, 7). They entered the November–December 2008 issue without our knowledge, and it was a pleasant surprise that they received the highest accolade from top printers in China, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Macau. Over 1000 competition entries were received. I consider this an acknowledgement of our own high standards of magazine production and design, established in our practice of close to forty years.

2009 PRINTING AWARDS

Paramount Printing Co. Ltd, our long-time printers in Hong Kong, submitted the November-December 2008 issue (seen above) for the China Print Awards. Over 1000 publications entered the competition, organised every two years.

The Gold award was received for Magazine (Sheet-fed printing) category. Besides this top award Paramount received commendations for three other publications.

We wish to congratulate Paramount on their awards and we are pleased to have won this unexpected recognition of our efforts.

Organising Printing Associations
Printing and Printing Equipment Industries Association of China
The Hong Kong Printers Association
Taiwan Printing & Machinery, Material Industry Association
Macao Printing Association
The Brussels Oriental Art Fair was founded and organised by Georgia Chrischilles in 2005 and I always enjoy visiting the participating galleries. I was unable to attend its fifth year as I had made earlier commitments to go to Taiyuan in Shanxi, China (see my article in this issue on pages 139–142). There were twenty-five participating galleries at the Brussels Oriental Art Fair held from June 3rd to 7th, 2009.

Georgia Chrischilles (8) said, “The fair made a very powerful statement for quality, and visitors agreed that the elegant displays, the objects and the enthusiasm of the exhibitors were striking. The mood around the fair was very pleasant, and clients did not miss out on ‘must-have’ acquisitions. Mingei Arts Gallery (9) with a poetic display of textiles from Korea and Japan in a beautiful space had a pronounced success. Tony Anninos (10) has participated since the first fair here. This year the only dealer from the US, he had very good attendance and made various sales.

“Mr Alexis Renard with his objects from the Orient and India sold very well, counting on his patrons and new clients. Raimann & Raimann had an elegant choice of high quality sculptures. Ethnologica, a new participant from Italy, had numerous sales. He brought along a life-size seated white marble portrait of a Maharajah, beautiful Mughal weapons and objects of ivory from India. Mr Christophe Hioco (11) with his accent on Gupta sculpture was successful.

“Marcel Nies (12) had a wonderful display on two floors of a beautiful gallery. He met new clients—remarkable after just being back from the Maastrict fair—and was successful with his objects. Helena Markus also found new clients, and has presented an elegant display of her screens. Giséle Croës (13) had one of the most successful cocktail receptions where sales were made. Her gallery was exceptionally attended too, although it is a distance from the Sablon.”

From Brussels we go to New York City. London dealer Rossi & Rossi and New York’s Carlton Rochell are pleased to present an important exhibition of twenty-five works from Tibet, Nepal and India. This will be staged at Carlton Rochell Asian Art in the Fuller Building, 41 East 57th Street, New York, from September 11th–25th, 2009. From a European private collection, these sculptures, paintings and ritual objects were created by artists to inspire worshippers of the Buddhist and Hindu faiths. Prices will range from US$45,000 to US$750,000 and the exhibition will be accompanied by a fully illustrated catalogue. Highlights include a 9th century Kashmir image of Vasudeva in brass with silver inlay, height 29 cm (14).

Art of the Past’s September 2009 exhibition in their New York gallery at 1242 Madison Avenue will focus on a group of recent acquisitions. The selection includes fine antiquities from South, Central and Southeast Asia, from the third millennium BC to the present day. Seen (15) is an opulent Kangra painting of the Mughda Nayika, dating to circa 1820. A catalogue will accompany the exhibition.

I also draw readers’ attentions to the auction of one hundred Asian sculptures from the Vérité Collection to be held on Sunday, October 18th, 2009 at Hôtel Drouot in Paris, France. The works were acquired since the 1920s by Pierre and Suzanne Vérité, and then expanded by Claude and
Janine Vérité since the 1950s. The wood, stone and bronze sculptures from China, Indian, Pakistan and Southeast Asia date between the 2nd and 19th centuries. Shown is a stucco head of a bodhisattva (16), 3rd to 4th century, from Afghanistan/Pakistan, Kandahar region. On behalf of Enchères Rive Gauche, Antoine Barrère of Jacques Barrère Gallery is the expert for the Vérité Collection auction.

In addition to the Saleroom News reports appearing in this edition (see pages 127–133), I have been asked to mention that the June 11th Asian Arts Sale at Ritchies Auctioneers in Toronto achieved CAD804,705, beating their previous Canadian record by almost CAD350,000. The star lots were four carved rhinoceros horn cups (two shown, 17) from a Toronto collection. Purchased in Southeast Asia in the 1960s and brought to Canada soon after, these cups were hidden from the public for over forty years. Consequently they were highly anticipated by Chinese buyers. The Qianlong period cup with archaic motifs including a finely carved dragon handle achieved CAD77,250 (estimate CAD20,000–30,000), and a late Ming dynasty cup featuring monkeys staring at the moon on one side and deer on the other sold for CAD65,750 (estimate CAD15,000–20,000).

Beijing Council International Auction’s spring sales held on June 25th and 26th in Beijing broke nine auction records, seven for Chinese paintings. Among the highlights was Zhang Daqian’s Scholars Gathering (18) which made RMB13,664,000, and was part of a special session to celebrate 110 years since the birth of the master painter Zhang Daqian (1899–1983). The sale of an “Important Overseas Private Collection of Fan Leaves Paintings” was 100% sold. The total for Council’s spring auction was RMB332 million, reflecting a promising market in China for buying and selling modern and classical Chinese paintings, as well as antiques.

China Guardian’s 2009 spring auctions in Beijing of May 29th and 30th, featuring Chinese painting, porcelain, oil paintings, sculptures, portraits, rare books, manuscripts, coins, banknotes and bronze mirrors, generated RMB541 million (US$79.2 million). In the first half of the year, China Guardian’s total sale turnover has exceeded RMB840 million (US$123 million). At the recent 18th China Guardian Quarterly Auction held at the Beijing International Hotel on June 28th, 2009 total sales reached RMB140 million. One of the star attractions was the painting, Lamp and Mouse (19), by Qi Baishi (1863–1957) selling for RMB4,480,000.

As I finalise my Editorial, Martyn Gregory Gallery has written just in time for me to announce that they have secured a slot for their October 17th–24th, 2009 exhibition in Hong Kong at the Rotunda of Exchange Square. This is where they exhibited in 2006 and 2007. This year Martyn Gregory will be bringing two exhibitions, each with its own catalogue—one devoted to George Chinnery and his followers, and the second to paintings of the China coast by Chinese “export” artists and other Western visitors. As a reminder, the article “The China Coast Collection of Tuyet Nguyet and Stephen Markbreiter” by Patrick Conner appeared in our March–April 1996 issue and is long out of print. We have retained our interest in the China Trade subject, and very much enjoy seeing Martyn Gregory Gallery exhibitions in Hong Kong.