EDITORIAL

WITH THE FIRST issue of 2009, the January–February, Arts of Asia builds on its successful coverage of Asian art and collections in famous American museums. The subject is Asian art in the Walters Art Museum, Baltimore, and the collectors William Walters (1819–1894) and his son Henry Walters (1848–1931).

This special edition came about after I made a dedicated visit to the Walters Art Museum in the afternoon of Thursday March 27th, 2008 and was welcomed by Dr Gary Vikan (left), the museum’s Director since 1994, and Dr Robert Mintz, Assistant Curator of Asian Art.1 During his tenure, Dr Vikan secured three major collections: the John and Berthe Ford Collection of the Arts of India, Nepal and Tibet; the Austen-Stokes Foundation Collection of the Arts of the Ancient Americas (10-year loan); and the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation Collection of South-East Asian Art.

Earlier that morning I had coffee at the beautiful home of Baltimore residents John and Berthe Ford,2 who are strong supporters and promoters of the museum. We share a passion for Indian and Himalayan art as well as Chinese snuff bottles. Many of my readers know John Gilmore Ford as the former President of the International Chinese Snuff Bottle Society (founded 1968), and his wife Berthe H. Ford is the editor of its journal. Mr Edward Choate O’Dell (1901–1982), the society’s founder, made me an honorary member. I am proud of my efforts all these years in helping to encourage and educate collectors—from January 1971 to January 2009 Arts of Asia has published sixty-four articles and reviews on snuff bottles and snuff saucers. The relevant issues, including those now out of print, are recorded on our website www.artsofasiannet.com.

The gorgeous cover featuring a Chinese Jiajing dynasty (1522–1566) porcelain wine jar with *wucai* fish design, underglaze blue and overglaze enamels, was purchased by Henry Walters. It is a fitting and colourful memorial of the Asian art collections at the Walters Art Museum, with a continuing and ever expanding future. Two publications associated with The Walters Art Gallery in earlier times can be referred to for second half of 19th century and 20th century records and history, these being: *Asian Art in The Walters Art Gallery–A Selection*, by Hiram W. Woodward, Jr, 1991, published by the Trustees of The Walters Art Gallery; and *William and Henry Walters, the Reticent Collectors*, by William R. Johnston, 1999, published by The Johns Hopkins University Press. It may be found as well, to a lesser extent, on the museum’s website at www.thewalters.org.

In this Arts of Asia January–February 2009 edition the titles of the main essays for the Walters Art Museum section alone feature ninety-six images. I wish to take this opportunity to thank the highly qualified and expert contributors selected by the Walters Art Museum. Preparing this special edition has been a team effort. I particularly acknowledge Dr Mintz’s help in coordinating the museum’s articles. Each one was thoughtfully prepared by my staff and then sent to its author for final review and approval.

It is also appropriate to mention there are four more very interesting features in the issue. These are Colin D. Sheaf’s “Reflections on Transitional Blue and White”; Tang Hoi-chiu’s “The Horizon of New Ink Art: A Hong Kong Perspective”; Robin Markbreiter’s “Red Guards Sculptures by Jiang Shuo”; and Fong Peng Khuan’s “Traditional Arts & Ethnology Centre Luang Prabang”. Together with the two book reviews and topical saleroom news report, I am confident the January–February 2009 edition, with its well-researched reference material, will delight Arts of Asia readers.

From 4th to 7th October the Hong Kong International Arts and Antiques Fair (HKIAAF) was held at the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre. The organisers said, “over seventy art galleries from around the world presented museum-quality artworks, from ancient rare Himalayan bronzes, Chinese ceramics and works of art, to the finest Ming and Qing dynasty furniture, antique textiles and jades”. The fair also had a contemporary art section displaying “cutting-edge paintings, sculptures, installations, photography and mixed media works, celebrating the kaleidoscopic styles and creativity of artists from all over Asia, with a particular emphasis on emerging young artists”.

Admission to the fair was free and there were also lectures on art topics such as “Chinese Ceramics of the Song through Qing dynasties in the Avery Brundage Collection of San Francisco” by Dr Michael Knight, Senior Curator of Chinese Art, Asian Art Museum of San Francisco; “Asian Art Museum of San Francisco: Building Partnerships in Asia”
by Mr Jay Xu, Director, Asian Art Museum of San Francisco; and “Contemporary Sculpture” by Dr Iain Robertson, Head of Art Business School, Sotheby's Institute of Art, London.

At the ribbon cutting opening ceremony were (from the left) Mrs Susanna Hei, Director, HKIAAF; Mr Li Huayi, renowned artist; Ms Patsy Yeung, Director, HKIAAF; Dr Dennis T.L. Sun, BBS, JP, Campaign Committee Co-chairman, The Community Chest of Hong Kong; Mrs Cissy Pao Watari, BBS, Chairman, Board of Governors, Hong Kong Art Centre; Mrs Alice King, Chairman, The Ink Society; and Mr Andy Hei, Founder and Director, HKIAAF.3 The fair’s preview attracted large crowds and local personalities such as Selina Tsang (right),4 the wife of Hong Kong’s Chief Executive, photographed with Kai-Yin Lo, the famous Hong Kong jewellery designer and author of Classical and Vernacular Chinese Furniture in the Living Environment. Kai-Yin said, “Selina Chang is a great supporter of my jewellery and wears it often”. The selection of Asian antiques and works of art was of a high level with serious collectors the target. The most expensive piece was Rossi and Rossi Ltd’s 13th century gilt-bronze of Padmapani5 from Nepal at US$6 million. The Italian dealers first sold the stunning sculpture ten years ago at their London gallery.

Martyn Gregory, the leading specialist in China Trade paintings and pictures related to the Far East in the period 1700–1950, brought drawings and paintings by George Chinnery that were well-received by loyal customers. The works are from a collection which contained views from various stages of the artist’s career: London, where he studied at the Royal Academy School; India, where he spent the years 1802 to 1825; and the south China coast, where Chinnery lived from 1825 until his death in 1852. My favourite painting was an oil on canvas circa 1870 by a Chinese artist detailing the godowns and (on the hill just above) the residences of Jardine Matheson built at East Point on Hong Kong island.6

It was a pleasure to see Carlton Rochell and his gallery manager Kathleen Kalista again in Hong Kong. One of the highlights that they brought from New York was a 16th century gilt-copper alloy Uma-Mahesvara7 from Nepal, height 15.9 cm. The asking price was US$163,000. Carlton kindly gave me his general impressions: “I am quite pleased with the fair and think the fact that the timing coincides with Sotheby’s auction is very good, as people who came to see the display at Sotheby’s auction would come up to see us. There was a good flow of people. Of course if the organisers can have more international participation for next year’s fair it will be much better. I am fully committed to Hong Kong as I have always been very fond of the place. There is great opportunity for Hong Kong to be the gateway for the international Asian art centre. It is a good place to do business as the dealers can go in and out without restrictions. I am plan-
ning to do the fair next year.”

Kaikodo is known to museum professionals around the world as an important source for fine and rare Asian paintings and antiques. Owners Howard and Mary Ann Rogers have been Asian art collectors since the 1970s, while gallery director Carol Conover, a respected specialist in Chinese ceramics, bronzes and works of art, joined the Rogers after nearly 20 years at Sotheby’s. “The goal of Kaikodo is to provide museum curators and knowledgeable collectors with unique and historically significant objects that will enhance established holdings and to offer beginning collectors whatever guidance they might desire as well as the opportunity to see, enjoy and acquire fine works of Asian art.” Their ink and colour on silk hanging scroll by Chu Tuan (active 1492–1518) is representative of the level of quality that the gallery offers. The price for this 22.5 × 22.5 cm Chinese painting was HK$1.1 million.

Mr C.C. Lin from Taiwan with galleries in Taipei and Beijing offers Chinese antiques and Tibetan art. His elegant booth of fine gilt-bronzes from China, Tibet and Mongolia was looked upon as a success by collectors and dealers. Mr Lin, who also sells Chinese stone and wood sculptures, and Tibetan thangkas, said he is happy to share his knowledge and enjoys communicating with antique collectors. He was photographed next to a much admired 13th century, seated bronze Tibetan Buddhist lama, height 28.5 cm. 9

Martin Fung has over thirty-five years of experience as an antique dealer and is senior member of the Hong Kong Art Craft Merchants Association, Ltd which recently celebrated its 40th anniversary. Martin’s booth at the fair featured furniture, Buddhist art and scholar’s items in bamboo, wood, ivory, lacquer, bronze, cloisonné and porcelain. There was a wide variety of collector items for his customers such as an exquisite 18th century blanc de Chine kneeling figure of Guanyin, the Goddess of Mercy.10

Christopher Bruckner was a participant of the Beijing International Chinese Antiques Fair in 2007 (see Arts of Asia March–April 2008, pp. 153–159). He hoped that exhibiting at HKIAAF would also help him build connections with private collectors and museums in Hong Kong and China. Asian Art Gallery, the company Christopher established in 1996, are specialist dealers in art from East and South Asia, primarily Chinese imperial art and Buddhist art from the Himalayan region. At his booth visitors encountered important painting,11 furniture, sculpture, textiles, cloisonné, lacquer and porcelain.

It was indeed a pleasure to meet Mr Enzo Danon12 who has a deep passion for imperial Chinese carpets from the Qing dynasty. Danon, founded in 1934 by Giuseppe Danon, is widely recognised as one of the leading galleries for antique carpets in the world, known for the extraordinary quality and beauty of its pieces. Joining their father in the 1980s, owners Enzo and Roberto Danon expanded the company’s collections to include notable carpets from China, India, East Turkestan and Tibet. Danon has galleries in New York, Paris and Rome, and their display at the fair in Hong Kong
was truly outstanding resulting in major purchases by local collectors on opening night.

This was Yueshan Yuan Art’s first participation at an art fair. Owners Raymond L.K. Sun and Hirakawa Kumiko, Chinese paintings specialists formerly at Christie’s, were happy with sales. Visitors were quite surprised by their reasonable pricing for works by Wen Zhengming (1470–1559) to modern masters like Qi Baishi (1863–1957). I wish them both the very best in their classical Chinese painting and art consultancy business.

Mehmet Hassan has been dealing in the arts of China and the Himalayan regions for the past twenty years. His expertise includes the fields of Himalayan art, Buddhist sculpture, Chinese and Central Asian textiles, and ancient gold and silver. Exhibitor at major art fairs in New York, Hong Kong, Brussels and Beijing, he felt buyers were more focused on Chinese antiques and works of art, but he still sold a Tibetan painting to a mainland Chinese artist.

Mr. Fuji Fumihiro (right), the owner of Kankodo, likes to have a stylish display at his booth. He also welcomes collectors to his galleries in Tokyo, Beijing and Shanghai specialising in fine Chinese ceramics and works of art in jade, rhinoceros horn, cinnabar lacquer, bronze and cloisonné. His pieces can be viewed on his website www.kankodo.com, however the information is mostly in Japanese.

A wide selection of Himalayan and Central Asian antiquities was presented at Ghangkhar Ah-Nhey Asian Art, including Tibetan and Nepalese bronzes, paintings and textiles.

The company is based in Kathmandu, Nepal, and exhibits in New York as well. This time I illustrate a 15th century Tibetan mandala of Buddha Vairochana, 26 × 22 inches.

Participating at the fair was Michael Goedhuis, a pioneer in the field of modern and contemporary Chinese art. He represents many promising artists as well as the more established masters from China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Europe and the United States. In addition to Goedhuis Contemporary galleries in London and New York, he opened an office in Beijing to identify emerging talents in China and to advise his expanding clientele on the mainland. In the past few years he assembled and curated the Estella Collection of Chinese contemporary art which was published and exhibited by the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art in Denmark and subsequently by the Israel Museum in Jerusalem. The collection was sold at Sotheby’s Hong Kong on April 9th, 2008 for HK$139,352,000.

Dynasty Collection has been offering fine Asian works of art since 1983. Johnny T. Tseng (left) and his younger brother Eros were kept busy attending clients and dealers interested in rare jades, scholar items, a Qianlong imperial white and spinach jade five-piece altar garniture set, and a pair of ivory-inlaid zitan table screens.

Another dealer doing well in Chinese art was Maria Kiang offering objects for the scholar’s desk comprising four categories: scholar’s implements, playthings, incense implements and viewing stones. Illustrated is a Qing dynasty Taihu limestone scholar’s rock, height 75 cm (inclusive of stand).
Taihu rocks have been prized by Chinese scholars since the Song dynasty.

Unfortunately the lacklustre contemporary art section did not live up to visiting buyers’ high expectations. Many felt the works were not of great substance or sufficient interest, and prices at some booths were around 20% higher than at galleries. Perhaps exhibitors wanted to allow room for bargaining as well as to cover some of the high costs for participation. For contemporary art, compared with antiquities, more buy at the high end for investment, therefore during times of financial crisis naturally some people will hold back their resources.

In the antiquities section there was a constant flow of people, except on the last day. Dealers like C.C. Lin, Jade & Arts, Dynasty Collection, and Maria Kiang Chinese Art kept busy and made many sales, however their profit was smaller than expected. Some dealers even regretted selling at discount prices their rare pieces as they are very hard to find. HKIAAF organisers may be forced to reduce the rent for booths if they want to attract exhibitors for the next fair, which is scheduled to return to the Convention and Exhibition Centre from 3rd to 6th October 2009. By then I truly hope that the economic uncertainty will be over and Hong Kong continues to be the most important international centre for arts and antiques in Asia.

Seen in our photograph is Mr Henry C.S. Chong, Chairman of the Hong Kong Art Craft Merchants Association, Ltd. Henry was making his welcoming speech at a dinner reception celebrating the association’s 40th anniversary on 21st September. On the far right of the picture is Mr Raymond Yung, a director of the association, formerly General Manager of Chinese Arts and Crafts. The beautiful lady is Pang Ching, a programme hostess at Radio Television Hong Kong (RTHK). Henry said she agreed to MC for the event at very short notice and he is most thankful to her.

One of the strengths of the association is its Authentication Committee which helps antique dealers to promote sales and to win the confidence of their customers. Over the past four decades, the committee has authenticated and issued its Certificate of Antiquity for over a million pieces of antiques.

I was delighted to be asked to give a short speech and congratulated the Hong Kong Art Crafts Merchants Association, Ltd on this special occasion. Due to my long relationship with the association many of its members have become good friends. Standing behind me in the photograph are Master of Ceremonies Ho Po Kwai (left); Ms Lisa Chung, Executive Committee member; Mr William Chak, one of the Vice-Chairmen; and Robin Markbreiter.

I was pleased to hear from Mr Ernst Wagner, a partner at Hermann Historica oHG in Munich, that the company’s 56th Auction on October 29th was bustling with activity and hardly affected by the international banking crisis. Hermann Historica oHG is one of the leading auction houses for antiquities, antique arms and armour from the Orient and the Occident, firearms, hunting collectibles, orders and decorations as well as objects of military history. From its spacious central location the company annually conducts at least two auction sales offering some 10,000 collectors’ items with a total turnover of more than €15 million.

Its beginnings date back almost fifty years to the auctions of Count Erich Klenau of Klenova, Baron of Janowitz, who around 1960 started to also offer “Orders and Decorations” as well as “Objects of Military History” in his well-established coin auctions. In the early 1970s Wolfgang Hermann, the present co-owner, began to extend the range of objects offered in the sales of “Antique Arms and Armour”. In
1982 Wolfgang Hermann and Ernst Ludwig Wagner took over the company, named it Hermann Historica oHG and on March 6th of that year conducted their first auction. In the years that followed, Peter Wagner, Franz Hermann and Thomas Rief also became partners.

Notable results include €150,000 in October 2000 for Hitler’s desk lamp from his office at the Berlin Reichskanzlei; €520,000 in April 2007 for a female fetish figure of the African Fang people of Gabon; and €44,000 during its recent sale on October 29th, 2008 for a 19th century Ottoman kilij. Important objects come from the former estates of royal houses, especially those of Germany and Austria.

I would like to inform my readers that in 2009 the traditional venue for the Arts of Pacific Asia Show in New York has been changed from the 69th Regiment Armory. This is in response to a military scheduling requirement that would have prevented the show from taking place during New York Spring Asia Week. Instead it will open with a preview (6-10pm) on Friday, March 13th and run through Wednesday March 18th at 7 W New York. This venue is the Merchandise Mart’s 29,000 square foot exhibition hall at 5th Avenue and 34th Street. Show organizers Bill Caskey and Elizabeth Lees are sure the new location will please exhibitors and visitors: “7 W New York is an outstanding facility with excellent natural light, marble floors, climate control designed for events, and an exhibition hall that permits us to stage a truly beautiful show. The area is attractive and safe day and night, offers fine restaurants and convenient public transport. The entrance is directly across the street from the Empire State Building.”

The organizers gave serious consideration to staging the show on the dates made available at the 69th Regiment Armory, but after consulting with exhibitors determined that show dates within the Asia Week calendar were more important than the venue. The 18th presentation of the New York Arts of Pacific Asia Show will feature seventy-eight exhibitors, about half of which are from the top tier of US specialists in Asian antiques and fine art, with the other half traveling from Europe and the Far East to participate.

The exhibition “Visions of the Celestial Empire: China’s image in Western Cartography” was held at the University Museum and Art Gallery, The University of Hong Kong, from 24th September to 9th November 2008. It was curated and organised by the Martino Martini Centre of the University of Trento, and included over one hundred examples of maps of Asia and China reproduced from hand drawn and printed maps, representing the Italian, Portuguese, Dutch, French, German and British cartographic schools, that attempted to define the world outside Europe. The majority of the original maps and atlases were sourced from the collection of the World Cultural Relics Protection Foundation, donated by Dr Paul Kan.

I am seen with Tina Pang Yee-wan, Curator of Art at the University Museum and Art Gallery, in front of a copy of a 1661 portrait of Father Martino Martini S.J. (Society of Jesus), the original held at Buonconsiglio Castle in Trento, Italy. Unfortunately I became aware of this exhibition far too late so I did not have a chance to introduce the show to my readers. However, I am happy to announce that the maps exhibition is being installed (with the original maps) in the Castello del Buonconsiglio in Trento in December. The exhibition that was mounted with the panel reproductions and some originals at the University Museum and Art Gallery, The University of Hong Kong, is currently in the planning to go to the Maritime Museum in Macau next year but the details are not yet confirmed. I encourage those who can make it to see the various maps dating as early as the 17th century.

From January 29th until March 22nd, 2009 an exhibition and sale titled “Stars of China—Past and Present” will be held at the museum for modern art, Museum Jan van der Toogt, in Amstelveen (near Amsterdam). Feng-Chun Ma, expert and consultant of Chinese and Japanese art, is the organiser and curator. During the past two years she has met regularly in Beijing with contemporary artists who stimulated her to arrange an exhibition of contemporary Chinese art. Her Chinese roots, background, and knowledge of traditional art and culture have been indispensable qualities in understanding and interpreting contemporary Chinese art.

“Stars of China—Past and Present” aims at emphasising how the past and present in modern Chinese art are interwoven. Chinese history and culture form the fundamental theme. A specialty of this exhibition is the combination of more than one hundred contemporary works, with a number of unique antique sculptures made from terracotta, stone, wood or bronze, from 8th century BC until the 15th century AD. Feng-chun says, “They symbolise the traditional antiquity of China and demonstrate how many contemporary artists are inspired and influenced by the rich cultural, religious and political life of Ancient China. About forty artists are represented in the exhibition. A number of artists make references in their works to the tumultuous recent past during the Cultural Revolution (1966–1969). Chairman Mao Zedong is a subject that returns often. The exhibition also offers a range of many sided, surprising and original works in which Chinese contemporary artists express their vision about present and past, China and the West, the religious and secular China, fantasy and reality.”

Main sponsor of the exhibition is Dutch private bank Staalbankiers, who will hold an exclusive opening for its im-
portant clients on Thursday, January 29th, 2009. The official opening by the museum will take place on February 1st. Both openings will be performed by Mr Jochem Haakma, former Dutch Consul General in Hong Kong (1997–2002) and Shanghai (2002–2007).

During my trip to Shanghai in early October 2008 I was invited by Mr Patrick Berko, his wife Viviane, their daughter Irina, son Maximin and his business partner Nicolò Mori to see the installation of the Berko’s new gallery called Baihe-gau hualan. Located in the French Concession, our photograph was taken at its charming garden. Specialising in 19th century European paintings, the gallery (by appointment only) will be managed by Irina, who is very excited about this project and willing to take time to explain the merits of the works on display.

I have vivid memories of my October 2006 visit to the Museum of East Asian Art in Cologne for the exhibition “Classical Chinese Carpets, 1400–1750”. The museum’s current exhibition until April 26th, 2009, “Fire & Earth: Early Chinese Ceramics”, features a selection of 214 objects covering a period of some five thousand years from the Neolithic to the Yuan dynasty. These early Chinese ceramics represent one of the major areas of collecting of the Cologne Museum, which in 2009 will celebrate its centenary.

As I conclude the writing of my Editorial on November 18th for this January–February 2009 special edition I want to warmly thank all my contributors, subscribers and advertising clients for their wonderful support to me and *Arts of Asia*. My staff and I are fully committed to working hard to produce very unique and beautiful issues in 2009 as we know through your many encouraging letters and emails how much you appreciate and enjoy the magazine. I hope that the Year of the Ox beginning on January 26th, 2009 will bring all of us peace, good health and happiness.

**TUYET NGUYET** Publisher & Editor

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Phan Van Don, born in Hanoi in 1917, was a graduate of the Indochina Fine Arts College, 13th intake class (1939–1944). He specialised in carved traditional Vietnamese painting and has worked in the Fine Arts Museum of Vietnam as well as in museums in Germany, Russia and Hungary. From 1957 to 1989 he lectured at the Fine Arts College of Vietnam.