EDITORIAL

IT WAS A HAPPY, but rushed occasion for me to visit the second Brussels Oriental Art Fair in June 2006, held Friday the 9th to Thursday the 15th, in the Sablon historical district. With a busy schedule in Hong Kong, I arrived in Brussels on June 8th, just on time for the fair’s preview. My stay was to end on June 13th, but by the hour I left for London on the afternoon of that day, I had been able to visit most of the fair’s participants in their own borrowed galleries. The first fair (2005) had eighty exhibitors. The second fair (2006) with Georgia Chriseilles again the organiser, had thirty-one. So you can see I had to work very hard to cover the fair consistently.

Amongst those who were now exhibiting for the first time in Brussels were Erik Thomsen with his charming wife Cornelia.1 The pair are also relocating Erik Thompson Asian Art (www.erikthomsen.com) from its Bensheim, Germany location where they have been very active since the past decade. Their spacious townhouse gallery, where they are moving to, 224 East 83rd Street, New York, NY 10028, USA, Tel: 212-300-3244, opens during New York’s Asia Week, with an exhibition from September 20th to November 20th of “Japanese Screens and Gold Lacquer”.

Japanese art, is most surely in Erik Thomsen’s solid make-up. A Danish-American, he was raised in Japan and became American when aged fourteen. Himself a student of Asian art history and German literature at Colorado College and Heidelberg University, both his brother and sisters are academics in the US. In 1983 apprenticed to the Japanese art dealer, the Tanaka Onkodo Gallery in Aoyama, Tokyo, he is fluent in Japanese. His wife, Cornelia, formerly a painter at the Meissen Porcelain Company, is now in a Masters program at the Academy of Design in Offenbach/Frankfurt. They have three children, two young daughters and a one-year-old son.

Readers who would like to know more about the first (2005) fair, will find a full report in my Editorial of the September–October 2005 Arts of Asia. The latest (2006) fair differed mainly in that there were more dealers selling Japanese art such as ukiyo-e prints, Japanese screens and Japanese textiles; as well as Japanese ningyo dolls of several varieties, including an ike-ningyo, or living doll, of a jinrickshaw driver, which was also illustrated in the fair’s neat (but small in format) seventy-two pages catalogue. Showing these dolls was Alan Pate,2 owner of the gallery Akanezumiya (Fine Japanese Art, P.O. Box 370, St. Ignatius, MT 59865, USA, Tel: 406-743-6717, Fax: 406-743-6718, www.akanezumiya.com) who was also exhibiting in the Brussels Sablon district for the first time.

There is room here for me to repeat one of the observations of visitors to the fair. That visitors to the local art galleries missed out from visiting the exhibitors on the uppermost floors. And for the elderly, even though they may have been aware of the upper level exhibitors, few could face mounting the steep steps. But I was told, that generally, exhibitors on the ground and first floors were doing good business.

As a longtime resident myself, I was delighted to see that Michael Woerner of Hong Kong was amongst those who was doing especially well. Offered in the fair’s catalogue was his unusual bronze apsara (divine nymph) with green patina, Khmer, Angkor Wat style, 12th century. He is seen here with his Vietnamese wife Kim Hoa holding a bronze Koh Ker Ganesh.3

On Sunday, June 11th, I had the pleasure to host, at the Brussels Hilton Hotel, a dinner party for the exhibitors at the fair.4 In my short speech at the preliminary cocktails, I urged my friends to be united in promoting the fair in their own capacities. Because my primary aim is that the fair should continue in the same way as it was started.

Continuing in the Japanese vein, I am happy to mention the current activities in New York of our longtime supporter Flying Cranes Antiques Ltd, at The Manhattan Art and Antiques Center (Galleries 55, 56 and 58, 1050 Second Avenue, New York, NY 10022, USA, Tel: 212-223-4600, Fax: 212-223-4601, www.FlyingCranesAntiques.com).

The Flying Cranes sale of 100 period masterworks, also in celebration of New York Asia Week, includes rare pieces from major collections as well as items once gifted to members of the Royal Family of Japan. It will run from September 18th through October 31st. Amongst the beautiful examples of Japanese arts are a pair of exquisite cloisonné enamel vases with gilt interiors and shakudo rims, with decorations of flowering poppies executed in soft pinks, blues, greens and lavender, height 13 inches. Attributed to Namikawa Sosuke, it has the original owner’s box marked “Gift from the Impe-
The gentlemen (upper row left to right): Rolf Chrischilles, Carlo Cristi, Marcel Nies, Renzo Freschi, Howard Wei, Sam Lim, Jonathan Tung (Lower row left to right): Michael Woerner, Tony Anninos, Michael Chu, Alan Pate, Carlos Cruanas, Janbaz Khan. Mehmet Hassan is not seen

The ladies (upper row left to right): Paola D’Altari of Wei Asian Arts, Kim Hoa Woerner, Clare Chu of The Asian Art Studio, Tuyet Nguyet, Sara Kuehn of Ancient and Islamic Works of Art, Francisca Tung of Lotus Gallery, Virginia Tan of Asiatic Fine Arts, Daniella Bellini of Renzo Freschi Oriental Art, Pauline van den Berg of Van Hier tot Tokio

(Lower row left to right): Laurence Souksi of Espace 4, Gabriella Tallon of Studio Arga, Georgia Chrischilles, the Brussels Oriental Art Fair organiser, Suzy Lebasi of Soo Tze Oriental Antiques, Shouleh Fouroutan of Maison Sadrace, Nuan Hassan of Mehmet Hassan Asian Art

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rial Family to Sagara Nakako Family”. Also a bronze strongman, parcel gilt model of Benkei, holding the full vessel of miso soup over his head, on a gold-lacquered wood stand, gold plaque, Miya-o sei, height 33 inches, Meiji period. And a meticulously executed silver okimono of a water dragon, height 4.5 inches, also Meiji period. Three representatives of Japanese masters at their best.

Also in New York, E & J Frankel, located at 1040 Madison Avenue at 79th Street, and open Monday to Saturday, 11 am – 5:30 pm, Tel: 212-879-5733, is exhibiting scholar’s objects of stone and wood, and other materials where “nature is the artist”. Ranging from Song to Qing dynasty, the Frankels title their objects “Sticks and Stones”. Pictured are three items grouped for the camera, associated with calligraphy (poetry and prose) and painting, and the “scholar’s desk”. A lingbi stone brushrest on a carved hung mu hardwood 19th century stand, length 8 inches; a well-preserved, deeply carved classic Ming cinnabar lacquer bi (brush), 9 inches; and an 18th century inkstone with carved hardwood base.

The influence of the West on the popularity of Chinese paintings is well known. Alisan Fine Arts, 315 Prince’s Building, 10 Chater Road, Central, Hong Kong, Tel: 852-2526-1091, is showing until October 5th recent work of the Hangzhou, China-born (1960) artist Luo Qi. Alisan Fine Arts say of Luo’s recent work, of some twenty-five ink on paper and oil on canvas they have been showing, “To the Chinese eye, his paintings appear Western, but to the Western eye, they appear unmistakably Chinese”. They are developments since Luo’s successful first major 1998 exhibition, at Columbia University, in New York, “Brushed Voices: Calligraphy in China”, and since in many major international cities. His purposes “transforming Chinese calligraphy into a contemporary idiom”, as illustrated here.

Expected in Hong Kong to attend Christie’s next auctions on November 28th, 2006, are the world’s most important collectors and dealers in Asian art, especially of top jades and Imperial ceramics. For on that date Christie’s will be offering two notable collections. First the personal jade collection of Alan and Simone Hartman which, assembled over more than fifty years, promises to be fantastic. While it is said to cover the whole spectrum of the Chinese jade subject, from the Neolithic, through Song, Ming and high Qing, chosen for their example is a white jade libation cup, Qianlong mark, inscribed and dated 1777, height 17.7 cm. (Presale estimate, HK$10–15 million/GBP700,000–1,050,000.)

Robert Chang is the second high-powered specialist dealer of his own private collection Christie’s will offer on that date. As the Hartmans, amongst our earliest supporters (Si-mone for many years authored for our regular Saleroom News reports), Robert is surely “one of the most influential figures in the world of art”. And without doubt, “over the past 40 years he has amassed an unrivalled collection of Imperial Chinese ceramics”, some of which we may find have appeared in our pages before.

The exhibitions at the impressive Baoqu Tang modern art gallery in Kowloon, L156–159 at the Hong Kong Intercontinental Hotel, Tel: 852-2723-8366, which overlooks the central harbour, continued since my last Editorial with an unusual Anatomical Signs exhibition, essentially modern interpretations of the human body. Amongst the China, Hong Kong, Serbia and Italy artists, the work of two, living thousands of miles apart, attracted my attention. Italian Valerio Carruba, whose patrician head, in his oil painting, tops the shoulders of a super-realistic body that is opened to reveal the startling internal contents. Of this, Cheryl Wong, Baoqu Tang’s former Manager/Curator, explains, “Valerio is one of Milan’s contemporary conceptual painters”.

I am seen with Cheryl (who leaves for New York City to study for a Masters degree) together with the adapted realistic portrait sculpture of the second artist, Zhi Min (born 1960) who is now based in Beijing. Potter-sculptor-painter, Zhi Min more often combines his part-traditionally enamelled, large sculptured porcelains with body-part forms, which are open to multiple interpretations.

Hong Kong was surely honoured to be the culmination of the World of the Etruscans exhibition which was held at the Hong Kong Museum of Art, in the adjoining Cultural Centre Kowloon complex from June 9th to September 9th. The exhibition was organised by the Superintendence of the Archeological Heritage of Tuscany, Florence, the Tuscan Regional Department for Culture and the Centro Promozioni e Servizi, Arezzo, in cooperation with the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Consulate General of Italy in Hong Kong. It was presented in Hong Kong as part of the “Year of Italy in China 2006”.

Seen “toasting” on the stand at the opening, following speeches and the ribbon cutting, are from the left: Ms Gabriella Meneghelli, Consul General of Italy in Hong Kong; Professor Mariella Zoppo, Tuscan Regional Minister for Culture; Ms Anissa Wong Scan-ye, JP, Director of Leisure and Cultural Services; and Dr Giuseppina Carlotta Gianferroni, Director of the National Archeological Museum of Florence.

The Chinese tour of the exhibition covered Shanghai, Beijing and Guangzhou, before closing with Hong Kong, where we found most impressive the range of alabaster and terracotta sarcophagi (coffins), both large and small, for adult
or child, adorned with Greek influenced sculpture and dating from towards the end of the Etruscan culture. The exhibition dramatically covered the whole period—from 900 BC, where the first pit tombs were found near Bologna, to the 3rd and 2nd centuries BC, towards the culture’s end. The Greek influenced urns and coffins in the exhibition came from archaeology museums in Sienna as well as Florence.

I would not feel my September–October 2006 Editorial complete without giving at least an indication of the circumstances of our publishing the issue’s main topic, the major cover article by Sara Kuchn: “Towards the Dragon and the Mythical Bird: Tracing Possible Antecedents for Some Elements of Khitan Iconography.” We met together, Sara and I on October 15th, 2005 at the “Classical Chinese Carpets Symposium”, in the Museum of Asian Art in Cologne, Germany, where Sara first presented the basis of her impressive article in a lecture. I am truly happy, that in slightly less than a year, with Sara’s dedication and scholarship, we have been able to present her work in its completed form.

The twenty-two page article is extremely timely, as there is a strong “cross-over” with the Asia Society, New York, Park Avenue exhibition entitled “Gilded Splendor: Treasures of China’s Liao Empire (907–1125)”. With more than two hundred recently excavated objects from Inner Mongolia, revealed are the complex cultural and religious legacy, as well as the geopolitical impact of the Khitan and their reign over China during the Liao dynasty. I publish for its academic interest the Syrian or Egyptian ewer with boss decoration, AD 1018 or earlier, height 17 cm, from the tomb of Princess of Chen and Xiao Shaoju at Qinglongshan Town, Naiman Banner (courtesy of the Research Institute of Cultural relics and Archaeology of Inner Mongolia). From our own experience, we know that similar Islamic boss glass objects also reached the Philippines at Butuan, via the trading longboats that were excavated there [see page 158].

In addition, and most appropriately, the important gallery Kaikodo, whose new address is 74 East 79th Street (between Park & Madison), New York, NY 10021, Tel: 212-585-0121, Fax: 212-585-0124, www.kaikodo.com, is also holding from September 16th to October 2006 their exhibition and sale entitled “Northern Lights: The Art of the Liao”. The Kaikodo exhibition will be of interest to scholars and collectors alike, and ranges from an esoteric wood pillow to finely crafted gold hairpins. Some of the beautiful ceramic shapes and exquisite metalwork that distinguishes the Liao culture will be on view in the gallery by appointment and on the website.

My hope is that you will enjoy this issue as much as I have in collecting and preparing the important articles in the most informative way. I believe I can forecast you will, as suggested by the large numbers of art dealers and auction houses who have supported the edition with their unique advertising—many of them amongst the most famous names in the international Asian arts and antiques markets, as well as watches and jewellery.

Tuyet Nguyen
Publisher & Editor