EDITORIAL

HIGHLY RECOMMENDED for our historically-minded readers is the book, Venice and the Islamic World 828–1797, originally published in French in 2006 by Éditions Gallimard, France. The 2007 English edition is jointly published by Éditions Gallimard, France, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York and Yale University Press, New Haven and London. The New York Metropolitan Museum of Art exhibition (March 27th to July 8th, 2007), which I had the pleasure of attending and very much enjoyed with my son Robin Markbreiter, was made possible by The Hagop Kevorkian Fund. Additional support was provided by The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, the Oceanic Heritage Foundation, and the National Endowment for the Arts.

In the catalogue’s first of three Forewords, Philippe de Montebello, Director of The Metropolitan Museum of Art, points out that Stefano Carboni, Curator and Administrator of the Department of Islamic Art at the Metropolitan Museum, has been ideally suited to bringing this project to fruition.

“Born near the Rialto Bridge in the heart of Venice, he has studied Islamic art in his native city and abroad and has been a member of the Museum staff for many years. The exhibition and catalogue represent for him a synthesis of nearly 20 years of scholarship. Dr Carboni assembled a team of international specialists to write the essays and entries for the catalogue. As a result, this project presents the most up-to-date ideas and the newest evidence regarding Venice’s role in the cultural interchange of the Mediterranean.

“The exhibition is particularly welcome, coming, as it does, when the Islamic galleries at the Metropolitan Museum are closed for redevelopment and only a small selection of the permanent collection remains on view.”

I was very pleased to see our Arts of Asia March–April 2007 special Islamic issue prominently on display at the Metropolitan Museum’s bookshelves.

Readers will find annotated photographs accompany my Editorial, providing detailed as far as possible comprehensive records of the galleries and art fairs that we visited during our twelve days of extensive coverage of Asia Week in New York and more. Many gallery owners were both photographed and consulted on current trends in the Asian art market and some of their most perceptive comments are published here. I am sure those who were unable to attend Asia Week in New York will value these comments which are a helpful guide in assessing the international Asian art market as a whole.
Asia Week in New York: Robyn Turner Gallery and Orientations Gallery held a private exhibition at Helmsley Carlton House. Robyn Turner seen offering snuff bottles and jade. Susan Tosk of Orientations Gallery offered exquisite Japanese late Edo, Meiji and Taisho periods pieces. Susan was photographed with Barbara Ford, Curator of Japanese Art at The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Jean and Clifford Schaefer of Flying Cranes Antiques Ltd in their gallery at The Manhattan Art & Antiques Center presented one hundred Japanese bamboo ikebana baskets dating from 1810 to mid-20th century and a few contemporary examples from the last twenty years. Michael Teller in his New York Fuller Building gallery in front of an impressive pair of 53 inches high standing Lokapalas with lustrous glaze. Erik Thomsen and his wife Cornelia, a painter, are happily settled in their New York town house gallery. Over a breakfast meeting at Hotel Plaza Athénée, Georgia Chrischilles from Belgium told Tuyet Nguyet that she is confident that her third international Brussels Oriental Art Fair, June 6th to 10th, will be an unparalleled meeting point in Europe for amateurs, collectors, experts and curators of Asian art. Michael Hughes’ exhibition from diverse Asian cultures held at The Ingrao Gallery looked wonderful. It contained ninety-nine pieces of selected art which included sculpture, figural paintings and textiles. He was delighted to make sales to museums from America and Korea.
After a long and tiring direct flight from Hong Kong we arrived in New York City in the afternoon of Sunday March 18th, just in time to attend the joint exhibition opening of Orientations Gallery and Robyn Turner Gallery held at Helmsley Carlton House. Susan Tosk (Orientations Gallery) and Robyn Turner reported in their own words, “We are having a very successful and relaxing show. This venue has allowed us to spend quality time with our collectors and thus encouraging them to make a decision to add the work of art to the collection before leaving our suite.” Next year they plan to have another private exhibition and perhaps a larger space.

The next morning we took a taxi to Flying Cranes Antiques Ltd (1050 Second Avenue) where we saw one hundred Japanese bamboo ikebana baskets dating from 1810 to mid-20th century and a few contemporary examples from the last twenty years. Jean and Clifford Schaefer explained, “The best way to look at baskets is from the base to the rim. Look for great weaving, unusual form, pleasing proportions and healthy, well-prepared bamboo without breaks or missing segments. Handles should be strong and in harmony with the rest of the basket as they frame the ikebana arrangement. Plaiting and knots should be tight and secure. The Japanese are so careful in their workmanship and the craftsmen put in a lot of detail. The success of the basket starts with the selection of the bamboo. In all the years we have sold baskets there have never been two alike. The changing light during the day and in the evenings plays a form and material. They seem to be living sculptures.”

In the afternoon we visited the Fuller Building on 57th Street where TK Asian Antiquities were showing ancient Chinese bronze and pottery ritual vessels and sculpture. Warmly received by Mr Michael Teller, who has been a dealer, researcher and consultant in antique and ancient Asian art for several decades, we were given a personal tour of his exhibition of Tang dynasty pottery horses. He explained the emotion being conveyed by each horse. Most attractive was the large 33 inches high pair of standing Lopa-palas with lustrous glaze. Mr Teller said with reason; “They are about as perfect as you can get.”

Our next meeting was with Erik Thomsen Asian Art in their new town house gallery at 224 East 83rd Street, between 3rd and 2nd avenues, and only ten minutes by foot from the Metropolitan Museum. For more than twenty years Erik Thomsen has been a dealer in Japanese art. Born of Danish parents and brought up in Japan, he is fluent in Japanese and was the first foreigner to apprentice to an art dealer there (the Tanaka Onkodō Gallery in Aoyama, Tokyo). Today he specialises in Japanese paintings and screens, signed ikebana bamboo baskets, and early Japanese tea ceramics of the Muromachi, Momoyama and Edo periods.

Since 1994 Erik Thomsen works together with his wife, Cornelia, who was previously a painter at the Meissen Porcelain Company in Germany. Their children, Julia Marie, Anna Margarethe and Georg Harry, are ten, eight and only one year old. They regularly exhibit at well-known art fairs in New York, Palm Beach, Chicago, Los Angeles, San Francisco, London, Paris, Basel and Munich.

Erik explained why they relocated to New York in September 2006. “I love Germany and we had a wonderful quality of life there, but it was not satisfying for me intellectually. There are almost no collectors of classical Japanese art there. Every time we came to New York we thought it was fantastic. Since 1998 we were curious about living here. There is so much energy in New York and life is so much faster. We meet colleagues and collectors, and go to museums. It was very difficult to make this move with the family. If we did not have children we would have come here long ago. We were warmly welcomed by other dealers and they even gave us flowers and came to the gallery which is part of our three-storey town house. We were also invited to join the Japanese Art Dealers Association of New York (JADA). It is a not-for-profit group whose members include leading New York galleries and private dealers. JADA promotes high standards of scholarship and connoisseurship in the many fields of Japanese art, as well as ethical practices in dealer-client transactions.”

JADA’s members specialise in various fields, including screens, paintings, prints, sculpture, ceramics, lacquer and textiles. Each of its members has vast experience as a dealer, auction house specialist, curator, collector or some combination of the above.

Membership in JADA is selective. Members must handle primarily pre-Meiji period works, have expertise in at least one field of Japanese art, and have a focus on relationships with museums, institutions and serious collectors. They must also have deep understanding of Japanese art, a reputation for integrity and honesty, and a commitment to fostering and encouraging an appreciation of Japanese art. Applications for membership are reviewed at JADA’s annual meetings. The directors are Sebastian Izzard, Leighton Longhi, Mika Seki, Erik Thomsen and Koichi Yanagi.

Early Tuesday morning on March 20th we had a breakfast meeting with Georgia Chрисchilles to discuss her third international Brussels Oriental Art Fair (BOAF). An unparalleled meeting point in Europe for amateurs, collectors, experts and curators of Asian art, this fair will be held in Brussels between June 6th and 10th, 2007.

Georgia explained: “This hospitable city, with its wealth of artistic treasures, ideally located within easy travelling distance from other great European centres, has a long tradition of openness to arts from all over the world.

“In keeping with this spirit and the desire to offer variety to its visitors, while guaranteeing authenticity and the highest possible quality, thirty-two exhibitors have been selected according to the most exacting standards of excellence. These representatives are recognised and acclaimed in their respective countries and throughout the world.

“A great advantage of our fair is it is held jointly with the Brussels Ancient Art Fair and the Brussels Non European Art Fair. The objective is to promote exchanges and meetings between the most enlightened players, including amateurs of art, from all the different specialties: exhibitors and scholars, dealers and collectors, experts and museum curators. The interest demonstrated by thousands of visitors in the past guarantees yet again the event will be a great success.”

Amongst new events that will enhance the fair this year is the exhibition of Vietnamese arts at Christophe Hioco Gallery from Paris. A new participant at BOAF, Mr Hioco will bring his large collection of Hindu Cham (10th and 14th century) sculptures and Dong Son (1st millennium BC) bronzes. A detailed catalogue will be available at the fair.

Around 11 am we visited Michael Hughes’ exhibition of sculptures and figure paintings from diverse Asian cultures held at The Ingrao Gallery (17 East 64th Street). The exhibition looked wonderful and we were very pleased to hear that museums from America and Korea were also enthusiastic. The exhibition contained ninety-nine pieces of art which included sculpture, figurative paintings and textiles from various Asian nations. While comprising mostly Japanese and Chinese works of art, many other Southeast Asian countries
Christopher Knapton of Knapton Rasti Asian Art Ltd was pleased to hold his first private exhibition in the United States of America. He was invited, along with good friend and fellow Asian dealer Malcolm Fairley, to exhibit at Alexander Gallery at 74th and Madison in New York. Malcolm Fairley Ltd specialises in Japanese works of art from the Meiji period, including metalwork, enamels, lacquer, ceramics, netsuke and inro. Malcolm Fairley of London has been a major influence in developing the market for the best 19th century Meiji art. Roger Keverne and his supportive wife Miranda were at the opening of the New York Arts of Pacific Asia Show. At Sotheby’s New York auction Roger Keverne, bidding on behalf of Compton Verney, bought Lot 507, an archaic bronze “owl” wine vessel and cover (Fangja), Shang dynasty for US$8,104,000. Textile collector Glenn Roberts, Tuyet Nguyet and Hong Kong dealer Addy Lam were busy viewing and meeting friends at the Arts of Pacific Asia Show opening party. Grace Paramaspyri of Jazmin Asian Arts from Singapore was elegantly dressed in a traditional Indian sari. Three generations were present at the booth of Kapoor Galleries, specialists in Indian and Himalayan arts. Arts of Pacific Asia Show founders and organisers Elizabeth Lees and Bill Caskey with their daughter Netanya Caskey between them. This year the show had eighty-seven participants. Edith and Joel Frankel celebrated forty years in business in the Asian art field by publishing Four Decades, a retrospective view of their last fifty gallery exhibitions. Philippe Delalande, Head of the Asian Art Department at Christie’s Paris, brought for viewing in New York important Chinese cloisonné enamel works from the Juan Jose Amezaga Collection, Part I. Conor Mahony, President of The Chinese Porcelain Company in New York, exhibited at The International Asian Art Fair where he has served on the vetting committee. He also lectures frequently on both Chinese export porcelain and early wares.
were represented.

Knapton Rasti Asian Art Ltd were pleased to hold their first private exhibition in the United States of America. They were invited, along with good friend and fellow Asian dealer Malcolm Fairley, to exhibit at Alexander Gallery at 942 Madison Avenue in New York. Alex Acevedo and his colleagues generously gave an impressive space in which to display works of art.

According to Christopher Knapton, “When we were offered the opportunity to display our wares in a gallery like this it was not a difficult decision to make. However I still feel that New York needs a good fair for Chinese art. A lot of top dealers would like a fair for Chinese antique art re-invented at the 67th Street Armory or somewhere else in New York. Two hundred people came for our opening night reception and we have been selling every day.”

Knapton Rasti Asian Art Ltd offered around sixty Chinese jades from the Zhou period (circa 1100–256 BC) to the late Qing dynasty (early 20th century). Aside from this group, they brought a broad selection of porcelain and works of art, including a magnificent late Ming white marble panel carved with a dragon. Christopher hopes that this exhibition will be the first of many in New York.

Malcolm Fairley Ltd specialises in Japanese works of art from the Meiji period, including metalwork, enameled, lacquer, ceramics, netsuke and inro. Malcolm Fairley of London has been a major influence in the developing market for the best 19th century Meiji art.

The main event on Wednesday March 21st was the 6 pm to 9 pm preview cocktail reception and opening of the New York Arts of Pacific Asia Show at Gramercy Park Armory, Lexington Avenue. For their 16th show in New York, organisers Elizabeth Lees and Bill Caskey signed eighty-seven participants. They said, “Last year we significantly raised the quality level of the show and we went to Brussels to sign up dealers as well. We will continue to raise the quality and have larger stands. This process allows us to have more important exhibitors, such as Renzo Freschi from Italy, Kapoor Galleries in New York and Dr Robert R. Bigler from Switzerland. By cutting out smaller or lesser quality dealers we have space to include better dealers. Over the last thirteen years we have seen exhibitors grow and change their mix of offering.

“In recent years we have tried to develop more exhibitions for Indian, Islamic and Tibetan art. Next year we want to have nice displays of objects and improve the quality of the exhibitors, and we are confident we can achieve this goal. This year we have more exhibitors at the show and the use of felt rather than wallpaper for the booths looks much better. This fair also has added dimension of museum curators, major collectors and dealers coming to it on opening night to buy. Entrance only costs US$90 for the preview opening. We don’t need to make a special benefit here.”

Although exhausted we still managed to keep our promise to attend E & J Frankel Ltd’s exhibition “Four Decades, Fortieth Anniversary Retrospective”. Edith and Joel Frankel reported they had a very successful exhibition and sale attended by around two hundred people. They were delighted to welcome old friends and clients in their gallery and chat with them. Some returned over the following days and bought pieces as a memento of E & J Frankel’s 40th anniversary in the Asian art business.

On Thursday March 22nd we interviewed Philippe Delande at Christie’s New York (20 Rockefeller Plaza). He brought from Christie’s Paris important Chinese cloisonné enamel works of art from the Juan Jose Amezaga Collection, Part I. Philippe was born near Paris in France, and studied management at university in the capital. His wife works for French television in advertising and they have two daughters (seventeen and eleven). It was by chance, he says, that he became interested in Chinese art.

“I used to sail with someone who wanted to open a gallery of Chinese art. That was in 1979 and I helped there for nineteen years. I would manage the gallery, arrange pieces for art fairs displays and prepare catalogues. In the beginning I was particularly drawn to Japanese and then Chinese works of art, specialising in early sculpture, archaeology and works of art such as lacquer, jade and gilt bronze. Christie’s asked me to build an Asian art department in Paris in January 1998. As Christie’s couldn’t sell in France at that time, I used to work closely with our London, New York and Hong Kong offices. We held our first sale of Japanese lacquer in December 2001. It was part of a French furniture sale. In 2002 we had one sale on Asian art and from 2003 onwards we had two sales each year.”

Philippe has been in the business for so long and knows the collectors well and where the good pieces are. With the backing of a big company like Christie’s he is able to receive consignments. Christie’s also has a long database of clients and little by little Philippe is building up his own client base in Paris. At present he has a wide range of clients from Hong Kong, Taipei, USA and Europe.

There are three people in the Asian art department at Christie’s Paris (Philippe Delande, specialist Mathilde Courtault and administrator Tiphaine Nicouls). Each sale includes four hundred to five hundred pieces so it requires teamwork to put it all together. “I cannot do it alone”, says Phillippe, “and it is hard to get pieces, but it helps that we are the largest and best known auction house in France.”

The Chinese cloisonné enamel works of art come from a collection in Spain that was built up in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Some pieces have prestigious provenances such as the Kitson Collection. The collector instructed dealers to help him find impressive pieces and overall there is a very good unique selection. There are ninety examples in the collection so Philippe decided to sell them in two parts. He felt it would be too much to sell them all at one time, but he has tried to make both sales balanced in terms of quality.

“I am proud”, he says, “to be able to present it and I am sure people will be surprised how good it is.” The value for the sale of Important Chinese Cloisonné Enamel Works of Art from the Juan Amezaga Collection, Part 1, is Euro 2.8–4 million and the auction takes place in Paris on June 13th, 2007.

S. Marchant and Son is one of the earliest supporters of The International Asian Art Fair so it was interesting to speak with Stuart Marchant for his opinion. He felt it a pity there were fewer Chinese and Asian art dealers in the fair. “Speelman and John Eskenazi have left. Such great dealers bring good people to the fair. This is an extremely expensive fair but it is also a very beautiful fair. Now it is not just an Asian fair, as it has American Indian and contemporary art. We managed to make quite a lot of sales so I am happy.”

Sandra Whitman, specialising in antique Chinese rugs, has exhibited at the fair for many years. She also did well. “We had very good sales at the beginning to our good friends. We sold three Kangxi pieces and one 18th century collector’s piece.”

Tai Gallery from Santa Fe, New Mexico said it has never been so busy on opening night and they sold mainly to previ-
ous clients. They also sold to two new people from the West Coast and New York and noticed there were a lot of younger collectors, mostly from America.

Jean Schaefer of Flying Cranes Antiques Ltd said, “It was incredibly good. We are so happy. It is twice as good as last year. Opening night was unbelievable. It has been wonderful. This fair is right in our backyard. We sold to all over the world. People who came here then went to our gallery to buy. On the opening night there were thousands of people. It is not how many people that came. It is important to have buyers.”

At the fair we also had coffee with Himalayan art expert Ian Alsop who commented that the art market is strong and active with new players and new money. “From the point of view of auction houses it is great as they are getting higher prices, however it is difficult for dealers to find good pieces. The Haughton fair has changed so rapidly. There is upheaval in the market with the dearth of quality goods. There is a lot less quality goods and a lot more money. The main influx of money comes from India and China.”

Amsterdam dealer Dries Blitz has known the Haughtons since 1982 when he participated at the Ceramics Fair in London, “I joined their first International Fair at the Armory in New York in October 1989”, he said, “and I have been a continuing supporter. Every year we make a profit at this fair and meet new clients. I like operating in North America and can sell to American collectors and museums like the Metropolitan Museum. I always have something for people to buy. This fair’s formula works. Since last year I noticed more contemporary Chinese and Japanese art at the fair. I liked the Japanese art better.

“There was a shift with younger people coming. The opening night was crowded with young people and they are the next generation of buyers. Maastricht also was fantastic and I sold good pieces to many Europeans. In New York we sell more to Americans. I will be going back to New York to be at the fair. We made a profit and met new clients. I even sold a Liao Chinese mask to a new client. What I want to have is a high level of quality pieces that will still look good after many years, if not even better.”

Among the exhibitors to the fair who are individually pictured are Shaun Kelly of Zee Stone Gallery in Hong Kong, and Olyvia Kwok of Olyvia Oriental Ltd from London. Seen in a group picture are Howard and Mary Ann Rogers of Kaikodo who said, “We sold both to private clients and to museums. Our purpose for exhibiting at the fair was to make a profit and meet new clients. Having moved from our large building in New York, we are spending more time in Hawaii and we would probably come back to the Haughton fair again. We travel a lot to Japan to buy.”

We finally had a chance to sit down with Anna and Brian Haughton, the organisers of The International Asian Art Fair. We wanted to know how they felt the fair went and the changes this year. They said, “If somebody is good enough internationally, of quality to fit in and we have the space, then we will include them. It is very interesting to have exhibitors from India, Kathmandu and Hong Kong because they offer different material. Collectors are buying contemporary art and then also buying old stone sculpture. People are more eclectic as the world has opened up a lot. As long as it is top quality as an artwork it will work well together. We took several years to do it—to bring in tribal art. If we did not open up and expand how would we stay ahead of the game?

“Whatever we have done, whether people like it or not, we have never been afraid to set new trends. We are trendsetters. The dealers in Chinese are finding it more and more difficult. The mainland Chinese are buying so much they cannot find the pieces. It was time for Chinese art to evolve. It has been ten years since the handover of Hong Kong. We all knew that contemporary art was going to come but it happened so quickly. Younger Chinese people coming to the fair are buying. We are all looking for the same thing and that is to further the art market.”

There were many important exhibitions in galleries located on 57th Street, John Eskenazi is one of the most internationally respected dealers in Indian, Gandharan, Himalayan and Southeast Asian works of art. He held his exhibition at MD Flacks Ltd and thought, “This Asia Week was disjointed and not cohesively promoted. There are around ten thousand objects being sold over two weeks. So it is hard for collectors to absorb all the material on offer. It is very exhausting.”

Daniel Eskenazi of Eskenazi Ltd felt, “You cannot cover everything in the art market. The pieces in our exhibition all have a very good history. It has been a very good show for us with thirteen pieces sold out of twenty.

“I have been working full time since 1993. I watched my father and have learnt from him. Two things I like best about the art market is buying something I like and selling something to someone I like. I most value honesty. From that people can base their judgment and price has to relate to the quality. In the short-term the Western collectors are still dominant. In the long-term it will be the Chinese.”

“The Sotheby’s Albright-Knox Art Gallery sale fuelled the market and caused a great excitement. Sotheby’s took the lead in New York this season. I spent seven hours at Sotheby’s and it was still impossible to see everything. The very good pieces did stand out. My favourite was the Chola period seated Shiva. This year was unusual because Sotheby’s had so much on offer such as rhinoseros horns, jades and so on. Sotheby’s has a good space for display and they did a good job.”

John Berwald and his gallery director Cynthia Volk noted that many of the Chinese dealers previously exhibiting at The International Asian Art Fair were now exhibiting at galleries on 57th Street helping to make 57th Street the hub of Asian art in New York.

“People interested in Chinese art who come to our gallery find it more relaxing and we are enjoying being in our own space. Numerous knowledgeable collectors and museum curators visited us and business has been very good. This week is made up of different components with fairs, auctions and numerous dealer exhibitions both by permanent New York dealers and many dealers who have left the fairs to take their own space on 57th Street helping to make it the focal point of Asia Week. This was our third exhibition in our New York gallery and we feel we are now much more established here. The Sotheby’s auctions did extremely well although they will not always be able to find collections of the calibre of Albright-Knox, however Joe-Hynn Yang did an exceptional job. The strong prices at the sale along with the fabulous pieces on offer at the dealer exhibitions helped make this a successful week and I think all the dealers were making good sales. Our building (5 East 57th Street) has permanent Asian dealers as of course does the Fuller Building which along with the other galleries here will keep 57th Street at the centre of the Asian art market and I think more dealers will be coming to exhibit here.

“Our buyers, as I believe with most dealers, have been predominantly American and I must say that our American clients are very keen to improve their understanding of Asian art and enjoy joining societies and buying books. However
Shaun Kelly of Zee Stone Gallery in Hong Kong exhibited for the first time at the Haughton fair. He represents a wide range of contemporary artists from mainland China working in both Chinese ink and colour on paper and oil on canvas. Robert Hall with his wife Lindsey and their daughters Gemma and Genevieve. Robert Hall’s interest in snuff bottles started over thirty years ago and he is one of the leading dealers in the field. Ghangkhar Ah-nhey Asian Art from Kathmandu in Nepal, specialising in Himalayan, Chinese, Indian and Islamic art, had a successful debut and was well received at the fair. Olyvia Oriental Ltd, based in St. James’s, London. Olyvia Kwok exhibited at the fair for the second time showing contemporary Chinese paintings and sculpture. Jiyoung Koo of KooNewYork had a tasteful display of Korean antiques, including ceramics, paintings, sculpture, furniture, metalwork, textiles and photography. Tuyet Nguyen with Dessa Goddard of Bonhams & Butterfields auctioneers were admiring the pieces at Olyvia Oriental Ltd. Stuart Marchant poses next to his imperial porcelain blue and white Yongzheng mark and period “dragon” dish, formerly in the collection of Evelyn Annenberg Hall. Kemin Hu points out how to judge Chinese scholars’ rocks. She became an authority on scholars’ stones through her long career as a dealer and collector of them. Kaikodo, respected dealers in New York, participated at the fair for the first time. Seen in the photograph are gallery manager Carol Conover, owners Howard and Mary Ann Rogers and their daughter Amber. Lisa Banks and Sandra Whitman from San Francisco offered important Chinese and Tibetan rugs. Fair organisers Brian and Anna Haughton with their daughter Emma Jane Haughton and son Giles Haughton who also work in the family business.
37–45 Gallery exhibitions on 57th Street and related events: 37 Daniel Eskenazi welcomes Tuyet Nguyet to his successful exhibition of “Song Chinese ceramics, 10th to 13th century (part 3)”. 38 Cynthia Volk and John Berwald in his gallery showing “Recent Acquisitions 2007”. 39 China 2000 Fine Art exhibition catalogue “Shao Yixuan and The Beijing Salon, Volume III”. 40 J.J. Lally & Co. sold twenty-two of the twenty-six pieces published in their exhibition catalogue. 41 Ms Lily Li of Dragon Treasures Antiques Ltd held her exhibition at Cohen Amador Gallery in the Fuller Building. 42 Leading Indian and Southeast Asia art dealer Carlton Rochell had his best show to date. 43 Gisèle Croës from Belgium presented “Gold and Silver Treasures of Ancient China” at Nohra Haime Gallery in the Fuller Building. 44 Isadore (“Izzy”) and Mary Ann Chait held their inaugural New York auction on March 25th featuring Chinese Works of Art and Natural History. 45 Los Angeles movie producer Michael Phillips invited Tuyet Nguyet to the New York premiere of his new film The Last Mimsy. They are seen with stars Joely Richardson and Rhiannon Leigh Wryn holding a Mimsy doll.
we also had buyers from Europe and the mainland Chinese market continues to grow in strength and understanding. With this ongoing strength in the Chinese market and, after such a successful week, one can only be optimistic. I believe I am in the right market at the right time, with the right gallery and right city. There has been a great buzz and great sales this Asia week. It has been our most successful week since we moved here. Last year there was more talk about contemporary art but this year Tang dynasty and Buddhist art has been greatly appreciated so perhaps there will be a cross fertilisation between the old and the new.

“...no substitute for connoisseurship and you have to train your eyes. One has to study the pieces and you need to go to a good dealer you can trust for advice, this is how the great collections have been formed. You cannot pay too much for a good piece; you can only pay too soon.

“If I want to buy a good genuine piece of English furniture I go to a good dealer. This has always been the case for serious collectors in all fields. Amongst the best dealers in New York for Chinese Art are J.J. Lally, The Chinese Porcelain Company and Berwald Oriental Art. For Chinese furniture there is M&D Flacks and for Indian art Carlton Rochell. You need to love this business because it requires tremendous energy to keep finding good pieces.”

David Priestley exhibiting at China 2000 Fine Art (5 East 57th Street) said that for dealer and collector the downtown fair was fun. “There is a big difference between what is impressive to look at and what is buyable. At the downtown fair there is a chance to find things. From a dealer’s point of view the Haughton fair is more of a viewing fair. The number of visitors seems good. We feel the focus of interest has moved to 57th Street and it will get better especially if the exhibitors can organise themselves much as Asian Art in London. All dealers prefer to have their own gallery space if they can. The number of visitors for Asia Week has been much the same as previous years. This season there has been a huge amount of pieces on offer, with auctions at both Sothebys and Christie’s, and the dealers. And the market has absorbed the pieces.

“In New York there have been many Americans buying. We noticed in Maastricht that Americans came and they had started travelling again. Now the disappointing part for London dealers is the price of sterling is so high. We have seen here quite a lot of Chinese people at the gallery. We have sold enough to be happy and will come again next year in the gallery if Leon Wender will have me.”

It was a pity that Leon and Karen Wender, the owners of China 2000 Fine Art, were not in their gallery when we visited. However we received an email from Leon as follows:

“I was so sorry to have missed you yesterday when you came to the gallery. This year Asia Week was such a tremendous success that I wanted to relay a few of my thoughts to you. We have concentrated a rather small but mighty critical mass of top Chinese art dealers at 5 East 57th Street. There were so many visitors and they were truly buyers, not just lookers.

“David Priestley, Karen and I got together to produce two fascinating exhibitions that have been uniformly reviewed with much praise. We were the only gallery in New York City to have displayed the wonders to be discovered in traditional Chinese scroll painting, several of which focused on the genius of Qi Baishi. There was also much to see and ponder at John Berwald’s gallery and China Gallery.

“57th Street now had the largest number of Chinese art exhibits during this time and there was no admission charge! Museum people, private collectors and novices to the field had the opportunity to take their time privately viewing all the fabulous works that were on display. That was truly a refreshing experience for all of us.

“The buzz was in the air and it was fun to be a part of it. We all look forward to building on the success of this March. There very well could be a mini Asia Week in September of this year. March 2008 should be the best year ever! We appreciate all that you and your staff do to help at Arts of Asia.”

In the Fuller Building (41 East 57th Street) we visited the J. J. Lally & Co. exhibition of “Chinese Ceramics A.D. 400–1400: Selections from an American Collection”, where an impressive twenty-two of twenty-six pieces were already sold. I particularly liked the 12th century Gizhou painted pottery truncated Meiping and a mid-14th century Longquan celadon dish with a moulded xinhua (a single-horned mythical beast with bovine body) gazing at a crescent moon.

Ms Lily Li, the owner of Dragon Treasures Antiques Ltd, moved from Guangzhou to Hong Kong in 1983/1984 and started her antiques business in 1986. She had a fascinating exhibition at Cohen Amador Gallery in the Fuller Building. When we arrived we noticed that she had sold six very important and rare Chinese items with two more on reserve.

Carlton Rochell in the Fuller Building was pleased. “This is our best show to date without doubt. We have sixty-five pieces and the quality level is unusually high. We are fortunate to have so many with excellent provenance. Some come from the Zimmerman Family Collection in the USA, who are also generous about loaning their collection for museum exhibitions. A number of the sculptures come from European collections with provenance from Spink in the 1960s.

“...relationships matter. I have been in this business for twenty-three years. We have been very fortunate to tie in with the classical Indian world record sales. It is a field that has started to become internationally renowned. Even Chinese collectors are buying Buddhist art besides gilt bronzes. I look forward to coming to Hong Kong soon and presenting more works at the Asia International Arts & Antiques Fair (AIAA). I think the prices of Indian, Tibetan and Southeast Asian art are quite appealing compared to Chinese art. I want to become more of an international dealer.

“This week classical Indian statues got tremendous interest. We want to focus on high-end works of art and looking after my collectors. Collectors are willing to pay more. In 2006 we sold seven objects over US$1 million. During my time at Sotheby’s Indian Art Department we only sold one piece over US$1 million. The market is alive, well and strong. There are a number of new collectors that have entered the market. These American and European collectors have a lot of courage. I did not get a chance to go to the downtown fair but heard there was a lot of activity.

“I am exhibiting at the AIAA Fair in Hong Kong in order to expand our relationships to people in Asia. It is difficult to do that unless I am there. I want to reintroduce myself as a dealer of top quality. I used to of course be in charge of Sotheby’s in Hong Kong and travelled there. I will be on the vetting committee in Hong Kong again this year. We are now deciding what to bring to Hong Kong.”

Gisèle Croës from Belgium presented “Gold and Silver Treasures of Ancient China” at Nohra Haime Gallery in the Fuller Building. Her exhibition included around twenty pieces from late Shang to Liao dynasties. Since 1980 Gisèle has sold outstanding bronze vessels to American museums and enthusiastic connoisseurs, however it is now becoming much harder to acquire beautifully cast pieces, especially with sound provenance.

It was most interesting for me to attend I.M. Chait’s inau-
46–48 Asia International Arts & Antiques Fair 2007 press conference: 46 From the left: Paul Choi, Paper Communication Exhibition Services; Harold Yeo, Bonhams; William Chak, AIAA Consultant; Tuyet Nguyet, Arts of Asia; Priscilla Chak, AIAA Consultant; Joseph Tong, Sun Hung Kai Financial; model Amanda Strang; George Leong, Fordwick Ltd; Rebecca Neufeld, Sun Hung Kai Financial; Curtis Evarts, Liang Yi Collection Consultant; and Eddie Leung, Info Communication Holdings Ltd 47 New three volume catalogue by Curtis Evarts of the Liang Yi Collection of zitan and huanghuali furniture. 48 Highlights of the first Bonhams Asian auctions include a 14th century Yuan dynasty blue and white globular jar, estimate HK$10–15 million.

gural New York auction at 267 Fifth Avenue on March 25th featuring imperial porcelains from the Ming and Qing dynasties, carved jades, Chinese pottery, stoneware, as well as Japanese Satsuma and cloisonné. The day of sales was simulcast live from New York to L.M. Chait’s Beverly Hills location. The second session consisted of natural history where the star lot was an extremely rare 32 inches Tyrannosaurid skull, Late Cretaceous or approximately 67 million years old, which achieved a record US$276,000 (estimate US$140,000–180,000).

I have known Michael Phillips for over fifteen years. He is an Academy Awards winner and movie producer of hits such as The Sting, Taxi Driver and Close Encounters of the Third Kind. Besides that he has a world-class collection of Southeast Asian stone sculptures and frequently attends New York auctions for Southeast Asian art. He specially invited my New York based son Michael, his wife Shari, their two daughters Haley and Olivia, as well as Robin and I, to the New York premiere at the American Museum of Natural History of his eagerly awaited family science-fiction film called The Last Mimzy. I thought it was a very original script and since I found it tremendously enjoyable I wish the movie success. At the cocktail reception attended by over two hundred people, Michael Phillips introduced me to his talented cast. I was truly captivated by six years old Rhiannon Leigh Wyrn’s skilful and mature performance in her major role.

On May 2nd, 2007 I attended the press conference for the Asia International Arts & Antiques Fair (AIAA) at the Hong Kong JW Marriott Hotel. This was where fair organisers Paper Communication Exhibition Services and Fordwick Ltd announced the details of their major event to be held from May 25th to 28th, 2007 at the AsiaWorld-Expo, Hong Kong. The fair will feature over one hundred exhibitors from Europe, USA, Japan, Australia, Singapore, Thailand, Korea, Taiwan, China and Hong Kong.

Mr Paul Choi, Project Director of Paper Communication Exhibition Services said during the press conference: “Following the success of the AIAA 2006, the size of the fair this year has doubled to 10,000 square metres. In 2007 we will continue to enhance the scale and quality of the fair, including more elegant and stylish booth designs.” The event is sponsored by Sun Hung Kai Financial as part of their ongoing support of the arts. Mr Joseph Tong, Executive Director and CEO, Wealth Management, Capital Markets & Brokerage of Sun Hung Kai Financial stressed: “Sun Hung Kai Financial always cares about the development of the arts in Hong Kong, thus we’re really glad to sponsor the AIAA 2007. We will continue to support the development of culture in the community in the future.”

The fair will offer a rich display of art and antiques. Special events include an exhibition of Ming and Qing hardwood furniture from the Liang Yi Collection, and an exhibition and sale in the Contemporary Arts Pavilion of oil paintings by famous Chinese artists such as Chen Yi Fei and Chen Yi Ming. The fair is also supported with exhibits from the collections of the Poly Art Museum and Shaxi Art Museum. Another highlight on May 26th is Bonhams’ first Hong Kong auctions comprising Asian Contemporary Art, Fine Chinese Ceramics and Works of Art, and The Green Willow Hall Collection of Jade Carvings.

I have received many letters of congratulations from my subscribers who truly find our unique magazine most enjoyable and rewarding as Arts of Asia enriches their lives. In this issue we provide over 110 pages of editorial content with beautifully illustrated and in depth articles written by expert contributors.

The splendid range of prestigious advertisements is an additional bonus. Since Arts of Asia received permission to distribute in mainland China, it is now quite common for us to meet mainland Chinese collectors and dealers at so many auctions, exhibitions and other cultural events around the world. I also feel our readers will find my ten page editorial a productive resource and an important statement of the Asian art market today.