EDITORIAL

ON FEBRUARY 13TH, 2007 Arts of Asia was invited to the official opening of “Ancient Chinese Civilization—Treasures of the Xia, Shang and Zhou Dynasties from Henan Province” held at the Hong Kong Museum of History (see Arts of Asia photographs above). The special exhibition running until May 14th, 2007, features over one hundred pieces and sets of precious cultural relics of the Xia, Shang and Zhou dynasties excavated from the Henan province in the Central Plains. This exhibition reveals various aspects, such as rites and music, warfare, clothing, food, housing and transportation during these three dynasties.

Exhibits include large numbers of bronze ritual wares and weapons of fine workmanship. With a broad range of shape and structure, numerous varieties, beautiful decorative patterns and elaborate casting technology, these bronze wares are symbols of ancient Chinese civilisation and also important world cultural heritage.

I have been congratulated by a number of our readers and supporters on the originality and individuality of the covers of our last six issues. I feel sure that the cover of our Volume 37 Number 3 (this May–June 2007 number) will be found by our international readers to be just as original as the six journals that preceded it. Featured are ten pictures (nine artefacts) belonging to Dr Chan Kieu, a resident of America, who for the past twenty-five years has been a passionate collector/researcher of ancient Vietnamese art and the country’s long history. I had been advised individually by Mrs Emma C. Bunker and Mr Jeff Novick from the USA, and Mr Tira Vanichtheeranont from Bangkok, Thailand, that Dr Kieu has been the greatest collector of Vietnamese Dong Son bronzes of the past twenty years. So I was most thankful to find that a selection of photographs of his very best pieces were highly suitable for publication to head this special Dong Son Vietnamese/Southeast Asian edition.

Moreover I was delighted to find when I pulled out our Arts of Asia subscriptions records that Dr Kieu has already been a faithful subscriber of Arts of Asia since the past ten years. For the convenience of other collectors of this important subject, on the opposite page the nine examples from the extensive and select Dong Son bronze collection of Dr Chan Kieu are repeated above their caption list.

Born and brought-up in Vietnam until I left for Chicago in 1955 for my American university education, I am proud to be able to introduce to our worldwide readers and supporters in this May–June 2007 issue memorable features related closely to the country of my birth. I can say, without hesitation, that this special edition is the most up-to-date, comprehensive and readable record of the important Southeast Asian subject, the bronzes of Dong Son. My recent consultations with the main Vietnamese museum curators and major collectors, some of whose works are credited, have resulted in the cover being illustrated with the finest and rarest examples, of such standards rarely seen elsewhere.

The third international Brussels Oriental Art Fair (BOAF), a non-profit organisation, will be held in Brussels between Wednesday, June 6th and Sunday, June 10th, 2007. 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.

According to founder and organiser Georgia Chrischilles, “A great advantage of this fair is the fact that 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 from all the different specialities in question including exhibitors and scholars, dealers and collectors, experts and museum curators, and in general all amateurs of art.”

At the time of writing this Editorial there are twenty-eight well-known international dealers, mainly from Europe (eight from Belgium, four from France, two from Germany, four from Italy, one from Switzerland), but also from Turkey, Japan, Hong Kong, Australia and USA. There will also be an exhibition of photographs by Ahmet Ertug (Istanbul, Turkey) featuring works from the Guimet National Museum of Asian Arts in Paris (“Spiritual Walk: The Sacred Art of the Guimet Museum”). The opening of the fair will take place at 5 pm to 10 pm on Wednesday, June 6th, 2007. An illustrated catalogue with detailed map will be available for visitors. Georgia is convinced that the level of interest shown by the
Nine examples from the extensive and select Dong Son bronze collection of Dr Chan Kieu, who has been living in California since 1975.

1. Bronze drum, Dong Son period 400–100 BC, tympanum diameter 36 cm, height 38 cm, an important specimen. The design on the tympanum with a pump human figure. Shoulder with man on boat leading an ox to sacrifice.

2. Incense burner, Han Viet period, 100 BC–200 AD, height 18 cm, width 23 cm, in shape of a dragon with globular body on tripod, long neck supports head with eyes and horns.

3. Halberd, late Dong Son period, 200 BC–100 AD, length 46 cm, with concentric circle designs on handle and body. It is believed Southeast Asians were the first to use halberds.

4. Dove tail adze, 500–100 BC, height 14 cm, width 12 cm, a beautiful Dong Son ceremonial weapon. The hollow handle with a typical pair of Giao Long, crocodile/dragon-like mythical animals. Aquatic birds on the blade.

5. Pedi form adze, height 10 cm, width 8 cm. A small but typical ceremonial Dong Son weapon, a row of feathermen on boat, deer and dog on reverse.

6. Dagger, length 25 cm, late Dong Son period, 200 BC–100 AD, the hollow handle with basket weaving design, the sharp blade displays geometric design.

7. Bronze container with cover, Dong Son period, 400–100 BC, height 28 cm, diameter 18 cm, mirror-like green patina. Cover with central twelve rays star and concentric circles.

8. Bronze container with cover, Han Viet period, 100 BC–200 AD, height 40 cm, diameter 28 cm. The cylindrical body and the three feet in the shape of a bear is typical of Chinese vessels. Cover with centre ring and four leaves, a band with walking peacock at the periphery. The design on the body with deer and peacock, and the boat with stylised feathermen is typically Dong Son.

9. Bronze container with cover, Dong Son period, 400–100 BC, height 30 cm, diameter 18 cm. Decorated with Dong Son warriors fully armed and dressed, lining up for battle, fish and stingrays beneath.
visitors over the first two years will guarantee that her 2007 fair will be successful.

On March 9th, Sotheby’s announced that Henry Howard-Sneyd, Deputy Chairman of Europe and Asia and Managing Director in Asia for the last seven years, will be relocated by the company to its New York headquarters effective July 2007. Henry’s new title is Executive Vice President of North American business and he will take on a senior management role.

Henry first visited Hong Kong in 1989 from London and continued to visit on a regular basis until his appointment to his current role in July 2000 since when he has guided the company through a period of strong growth. The performance of Sotheby’s Asia (including sales in Hong Kong, Singapore and Australia) has grown in sales volume more than three times since 2000 to reach a record turnover in 2006 of US$2.288 million.

Not only has he spearheaded Hong Kong’s growth into one of the three leading auction centres in the world for Sotheby’s, but he has also been the driving force behind the introduction of Chinese Contemporary art sales both in Hong Kong and in New York where combined totals reached over US$700 million in 2006, only three years after their inception.

“It has been my great privilege to lead Sotheby’s through an extraordinary period of growth and dynamism in Asia,” commented Henry. “During this time we have seen the emergence of new collectors from the PRC as a significant force in the art market that, coupled with the enormous attraction for Chinese art globally, has allowed us to focus on expansion even as we strove to deliver collections of ever better quality for our clients. I am pleased and proud to have been able to support art and good causes in Hong Kong and around the region during my time in Asia as both charity auctioneer and advisor.”

Henry Howard-Sneyd will be succeeded in the lead role by Chief Executive Officer, Kevin Ching. Mr Ching joined the company in April 2006 and has since been responsible for developing the strategic expansion plans for the company in the region. He has already opened a new office in Beijing. Sotheby’s have a tradition of expertise and international client services. Mr Ching will be responsible for the daily operation of the Asian offices while bringing in his valuable experience in developing luxury retail across the region, as well as his knowledge in operating business in China to Sotheby’s Asia. He says, “The market in Hong Kong, Mainland China and, indeed, the entire region are at present stronger than ever. The coming years are undoubtedly going to be exciting and challenging and I am thrilled to have the opportunity to lead and be part of the best international auction house in Asia.”

It is a great pleasure that my work on behalf of Vietnamese culture since even before the start of the magazine in 1970 has been recognised by the Government of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam. It was a surprise, and honour when at the dinner organised by the Consul General of Vietnam for Hong Kong and Macau, Ho Xuan Son and his charming wife, Phuong Mai, on February 9th to welcome the Tet (Vietnamese New Year), I was presented a commendation (Bang Khen) in recognition of “Madame Hoang Tuyet Nguyet’s many major contributions to the research, introduction and popularisation of the culture and arts of Vietnam to the world”. This has been signed in Hanoi by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Vietnam, Pham Gia Khiem, and dated December 29th, 2006.

Even in the six issues of 1971, I published four Vietnamese articles—one in the first number and three in the fifth which was largely devoted to Vietnam. Although the prestigious
The management team of Beijing Council International Auction Company Limited. Clockwise from top left: Mr Dong Guo Qiang, President; Mr Zhao Qiang, Vice President; Mr Zheng, Vice President; and Mr You Yong, Oil Paintings and Sculptures Manager.

In 2007, the management team was granted the commendation at the end of 2006, it is a happy coincidence that I was informed of this only at the time I was already working on this current May–June 2007 magazine with its authoritative Dong Son studies.

There is potentially huge growth for Chinese art in the mainland, with already very encouraging participation from buyers at auctions such as Beijing Council International Auction Company Limited. For example in 2006, Council made RMB460 million in sales, ranking it as the fourth largest auctioneer in China. The company was also selected as the “most influential auction house in 2006” by twenty-one media in their joint event, Art China.

After the success of Council’s Special Ancient Buddha Statues Sales held last year, it will conduct another auction featuring important Ming and Qing Imperial Tibetan Buddhist statues in early June 2007. In late May part of the important pieces will be exhibited in Hong Kong at their stand in the Asia International Arts and Antiques (AIAA) Fair 2007.

Mr Dong Guo Qiang, President of Council stated, “Although the history of art auctions in China is not too long, there are millions of art lovers and collectors in China. The number is still increasing along with China’s economic growth. The future for art auctions is very bright. The market needs more professional auctioneers with integrity and professionalism to fulfill collectors’ demand. Therefore, we employed a lot of experts who have worked at international auction houses to be our consultants. Their experience gives great help to our operation. At the same time, we are eager to look for the opportunity of international cooperation with other auctioneers. We aim at building up Council as a brand art auctioneer with the most influential power and the most advanced management in China.”

Mr Dong is confident in his admirable professional team. Every member of management is a prominent expert. Mr Dong Guo Qiang, appointed as the art appraiser of National Cultural Bureau, is a famous calligraphy and painting collector in China with good network and reputation in the market. Professor Zhao Qiang, Vice President of Council, is an expert of Buddhist statues. He has deep understanding in Buddhist culture and Tibetan antiques. He has also held different kinds of Buddhist activities and published his own academic papers. Vice President Zheng from Hong Kong is a ceramics appraiser and collector for over twenty years. Thanks to his efforts, Council’s ceramics department has developed a leading reputation in China. Mr You Yong, graduate from China National Art College, was formerly the Chief Editor of China’s authoritative art magazine called *Art World*. With innovative ideas towards Chinese contemporary art, the sales he has hosted of oil painting and sculpture have successfully gained a large audience from the art community.

Council plans to hold its 2007 Spring Art Auction in Beijing from June 2nd–4th. There are in total four parts including Chinese paintings, ceramics, Buddhist statues and oil paintings. The Buddhist statues auction is expected to draw the most attention from collectors. Offered are over twenty imperial Buddhist bronzes made in the Xuande and Yongle periods of the Ming dynasty, and Qianlong period of the Qing dynasty. It forecasts to be the most significant Buddhist bronze auction in China so far. Mr Dong and his colleagues welcome our readers to Beijing to attend Council’s Spring Art Auction in June.

I wish to inform my international readers that I have received the latest floor plan for the Asia International Arts and Antiques (AIAA) Fair 2007 in Hong Kong. Over two-thirds of the stands have already been booked. Mr Eddie Leung, the major organiser of the fair, has informed me that the opening ceremony will be on May 24th, 2007 between 6:30 pm and 9:30 pm at AsiaWorld-Expo, adjacent to Hong Kong International Airport. It will be officiated by Mr Stephen Ip, GBS, JP, Secretary for Economic Development and Labour of the Hong Kong SAR; Mrs Rita Fan Hsu Lai-tai, President of the Legislative Council of Hong Kong; Mr Wong Min Quan, Chairman of China Everbright Bank; Mr Chuang Shaw Swee, Chairman of Chuang’s Group; Mr Wang Gang, a famous actor in China; and Mr Eddie Leung, Chairman of Info Communication Ltd.

Mr Leung has also assured me that, through greater promotion in China, the AIAA Fair 2007 is forecast to welcome many more visitors than last year and he projects that this second fair will be more exciting. The floor area for 2007 is also much larger with two exhibition halls covering 12,000 square metres (129,167 square feet). There will be over one hundred dealers and auction houses participating and it will be a memorable event.

The great success of our magazine is due to our total commitment, dedication, hard work, and vision. From our inception in 1970, we have always strived to make the arts of Asia better known, wider understood, and loved. We want our readers to become discerning collectors, so they can participate and buy with confidence whether at art galleries or auction houses. By presenting their best and treasured pieces in *Arts of Asia*, good reactions are ensured by our long list of knowledgeable subscribers. The magazine is today even more internationally respected due to the high calibre of its contributing authors, stimulating and lively articles, as well very importantly the integrity of the advertisers.