EDITORIAL

IN 1978, with my husband for *Arts of Asia*, I visited China for the third time. We had already heard of the surprising discovery, only a few years earlier, of a buried army of pottery warriors and horses, and on our second visit to Xi’an did not hesitate to take the chance to visit the once capital at Xianyang, some 28 km to the northeast, where an enormous roof of lattice steel construction was already under way to protect the excavations. With my Editorial of the September-October 1978 number were shown the temporary display of warriors,¹ a bowman,² and horses³ that had been set up in a side hut, illustrated with other photographs of that historic early visit. I forecast that on completion in 1979 the roofed excavations would house one of the most unusual of the world’s museums.

Definitely that prophecy is here amply fulfilled by the cover-lead article of our September-October 2007 magazine, “The First Emperor—China’s Terracotta Army At The British Museum, September 13th, 2007—April 6th, 2008”. The article for *Arts of Asia* has been conceived by Jane Portal, who has worked for the British Museum since 1987 where she is responsible for the Chinese and Korean collections. The exhibition focuses on Qin Shihuangdi and his achievements and vision. King Zheng of Qin was born in 259 BC and became King of the state of Qin in 246 BC when he was only thirteen. By the time he was thirty-eight he had unified the Warring States and taken the name Qin Shihuangdi or Great August First Emperor of Qin.

For the exhibition two British Museum photographers (John Williams and Saul Peckham) were sent to Xi’an to reproduce very high-quality images, twenty-five of which are illustrated with our cover and Jane Portal’s article.

Twenty-five years ago with our September–October 1982 issue we helped to celebrate the 25th anniversary of Malaysia’s independence which fell on August 31st, 1982. In this, our current September–October 2007 issue I am delighted as continuing Publisher and Editor of our magazine to be able to help to celebrate Malaysia’s 50th anniversary and enlarged successes. According to Datuk Seri Tengku Adnan Tengku Mansor, Minister of Tourism, Malaysia,⁴ who encourages your visits celebrating fifty years of nationhood:⁵ “Malaysia is not just another nation that you find in many parts of the world. It is a melting pot of race, religion and culture. This tropical land offers almost every kind of holiday destination that a tourist is looking forward to finding. From gleaming white sandy beaches to the lush tropical rainforests, Malaysia will satisfy almost all aspects of what a tourist wants. But above all these, it’s the warm Malaysian hospitality you will remember when you leave our shores.

“Every traveller is apprehensive when abroad and we know that is only natural. Here, the authorities have left no stone unturned to ensure the visitors enjoy a high sense of security when they are in our country. Rest assured that our security forces would not compromise on your safety, which we hold paramount.

“The fact that the Visit Malaysia Year (VMY) 2007 coincides with our 50th year of independence is no accident, nor coincidence. It was by design as we want to give our tourists the most of everything and that’s what they will get.

“With all the activities, events and festivals planned, VMY 2007 is not entirely about having the tallest building or the best and most impressive airport or even about possessing the most enchanting beaches. What you will see, feel and enjoy is the vibrant Malaysian soul, which is rare and something that will amaze you. You will notice that this place is truly Asia where all the races and communities co-exist harmoniously. It is no exaggeration to say that our unity in diversity is something that will stimulate and appeal to you.

“We want you to carry back fond memories with you. If you encounter any problem in the course of your stay, we will accept your criticisms with an open heart with a view to ensuring they will not recur. We will be the first to apologise for any shortcoming.

“Most importantly, we want you to come back, not once but as many times as possible. Welcome to Malaysia and have a pleasant stay.”

In this September–October 2007 edition, *Arts of Asia* readers will be able to enjoy articles on Malaysian aspects
written by distinguished authors, including René Brus, Fong Peng Khuan, Lucien de Guise and Heidi Munan. I wish to warmly thank all of our contributors for preparing their expert articles. Notably Fong Peng Khuan records for our readers with map and text fourteen historical wreck sites in Malaysia, with eight pages of text and illustrations of shipwrecks and their recovered cargoes.

I am also glad to announce that Julian Harding, the recognised authority on the Cook Islands (Polynesia), has written on “Collecting Tribal Art”. Julian first wrote for the magazine on the “Traditional Art of Hawaii” some seventeen years ago for our November-December 1990 issue. His latest article will especially help the beginner in tribal art—how to distinguish the real from the fake. As a guide he distils more than thirty-five years of his practical experience.

On May 25th–28th the second Asia International Arts & Antiques Fair 2007 organised by Paper Communication Exhibition Services and Fordwic Ltd was held at AsiaWorld-Expo (Hong Kong), close to the international airport. At the preview on May 24th, which was by invitation and admission fee HK$1000 each ticket, a HK$100,000 donation was raised for Pok Oi Hospital.

Seen on the stage at the formal 6:30 pm preview opening ceremony, from the left are: Mr George Leung, Managing Director of Fordwic Ltd; Mr Lam Kin Hong, Matthew, Chairman of the Pok Oi Hospital; Mr Wu Shao Hua, Representative of Shanghai Collector Association; Mr Chuang Shaw Swee, Chairman of Chuang’s Group; Mrs Tuyet Nguyet, Publisher & Editor of Arts of Asia; Hon Abraham Shek Lai-him, JP; Mr Wang Zhiguo, The Vice Chairman of the All-China Federation of Industry and Commerce, member of Central Committee of the CCP; Mr Stephen Ip, Secretary for Economic Development and Labour, HKSAR; Mrs Rita Fan Hsu Lai Tai, President of Legislative Council, HKSAR; Mr Long Yu Xiang, The Secretary of the Chinese Cultural Communication Centre of the State Council; Mr Guo Qiang, Vice-President of Poly Art Museum & Managing Director of Poly Art Cultural Company; Mr Joseph Tong Tang, Executive Director and CEO, Wealth Management, Capital Markets & Brokerage of Sun Hung Kai Financial; Mr Colin Sheaf, Chairman of Bonhams Asia; Mr Chang Wei-Hwa, Ex-Chairman of Taiwan Antique Dealers Association; and Mr Eddie Leung, Chairman of Info Communication Holdings Ltd.

Speeches in order were delivered by Mr Stephen Ip, Mr Joseph Tong, and myself. In my speech, I told the public that when a label had a red chop from the organisers, it means that the object has been approved by the experts in the vetting committee. You can then buy with confidence. The fair at my strongest request should have been fully vetted, but regrettably this was not the case. According to the organisers, who have informed me, this was because the fair was too big to have made total vetting possible in the two days that had been scheduled. As a result the vetting committee’s functions were limited.

The fair featured over 150 booths with exhibitors from Europe, America, Japan, Australia, Singapore, Thailand, Korea, Taiwan, China and Hong Kong, and the organisers confirmed there were 7456 visitors.

A best booth design contest was held and voted by the exhibitors, with results in order—Champion: Chak’s Company Limited; Runner-up: Oriental and Antiques; Second runner-up: Treasure Court.

This year we are using on the following page mainly photographs provided by the organisers of some of the events and exhibitors: Sun Hung Kai Financial; Poly Art Mu-
scum; Maria Kiang Chinese Art; Martin Fung Antiques and Works of Art (Martin Fung, Cheng Chung Shan and Adrian Fung); My Gallery (Maggie Wong, Jacky Leung and two colleagues); Arts of Asia (booth visitor Paul Choi of Paper Communication Exhibition Services, Tuyet Nguyet and Robin Markbreiter); Council auction company; Liangyi Collection of Chinese furniture; Zuerichsee Auctionen (Disha Giao); Asian Art Studio (Clare and Michael Chu); and Carlton Rochell Asian Art (Carlton Rochell).

On the afternoon of June 28th, at the end of the fair, I had a personal interview with Mr Eddie Leung of Paper Communication Exhibition Services who asked me to convey his apologies and deep regrets to the good exhibitors at the fair for not being able to prevent from being present some Chinese participating dealers selling new things. He promised that in the future he will enforce an earlier, more restricted selection of participants. In his own words: “I will see to it that there will be no dealer selling new material at our next fair, and you can publish that.”

Received from Beijing, China Guardian International Auction Co. Ltd posted their business results for the first half of 2007 on July 2nd, showing that from January through the end of June, their 2007 earnings have topped RMB800 million. This includes the 9th and 10th Quarterly Auctions as well as the Spring Auction and reaffirms China Guardian’s position at the top of the earnings list for all mainland auction houses.

Bidding has been enthusiastic, historic records have been set, and each sale surpassed its expected results. This was particularly evident in the Spring Auction of Coins, Stamps and Mirrors, which was auctioned independently for the first time, with brilliant results.

The March auctioning of the 9th China Guardian Quarterly Auction reached RMB92.3 million, and the May sales a remarkable RMB606 million in income. These were then followed by the 10th China Guardian Quarterly Auction, which grossed RMB92.72 million. In the first half of this year record prices have been repeatedly achieved, such as for Chen Yifei’s Ode to the Yellow River, which sold for RMB40.32 million, establishing a mainland record for Chinese oil paintings. The 143.5 cm by 297 cm work depicts (in our detail) a Red Army soldier standing on the mountain top overlooking the Yellow River. The Red Army was the name of the People’s Liberation Army of China before 1946. Chen Yifei (1946-2005) personally considered this work beautiful, heroic and romantic. It was produced in 1972 when the artist was twenty-five and is representative of his early style.

Comparing prices achieved in China for oil paintings and ceramics it is noticeable that at 2007 Beijing Hanhai Spring Antiquities auction held on June 25th, the cover featured (Lot 2577) a pear-shaped vase, with gilt painting over a dark blue ground decorated neck and foot, and six-panel body section decorated with famille-rose seasonal flowers, Qianlong period, height 65 cm. The vase was reportedly taken from the 1860 part razing of the Summer Palace and said to have been bought at the auction by Guanfu Classic Art Museum for RMB24 million.

To coincide with the ten years that have passed since the reunification of Hong Kong with China, the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (HKSAR) and major museums arranged with mainland China a series of important exhibitions. Included were: “Splendour and Mystery of Ancient Shu—Cultural Relics from Sanxingdui and Jinsha” (Hong Kong Heritage Museum, Shatin); “The Pride of China: Masterpieces of Chinese Paintings and Calligraphy of the Jin,
Tang, Song and Yuan Dynasties from the Palace Museum” (Hong Kong Museum of Art, Tsim Sha Tsui); and “Major Archaeological Discoveries of China in Recent Years” (Hong Kong Museum of History, Tsim Sha Tsui East). Free admission to these three anniversary celebration exhibitions was offered ahead in limited numbers with a maximum of four tickets per application. The “Pride of China” paintings and calligraphy masterpieces, which was shown in two phases until August 11th, has drawn big crowds, and especially for the display in a table level case of Zhang Zeduan’s _Along the River During the Qingming Festival_ of the Northern Song dynasty (detail).^26^ Jointly presented by the Leisure and Cultural Services Department and the Beijing Palace Museum, the Hong Kong public, as we ourselves, warmly applaud such positive cooperation in art and cultural fields.

On the eve of the 10th anniversary of Hong Kong’s reunification with China, Sotheby’s auctioned in the packed ballroom of The Ritz-Carlton Hong Kong an Important Private Collection of Reunification Art which totalled HK$50,140,000 (US$6,415,914), almost doubling its high estimate (HK$27 million or US$3.5 million).

The top five lots were purchased by Dr Stanley Ho, the Asian business tycoon and Macau casino magnate, including two unusually large oil paintings, namely Ma Baozhong’s _19 December 1984_.^27^ Margaret Thatcher signing the Sino-British Joint Declaration in Beijing on December 19th, 1984 (Lot 29, HK$17,120,000 or US$2,190,675) and _Celebration of the Century_ by Lu Zhang, Chen Guoli, Zhang Zhiqiang and Lu Hao depicting the Handover Ceremony on July 1st, 1997, at the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre (Lot 22, HK$13,760,000 or US$1,760,730). “The friendly handshake of Jiang Zemin and Prince Charles is the focal point of this painting.”^28^ Dr Ho will donate all his purchases to the People’s Republic of China, while Sotheby’s Hong Kong will donate part of its net auction proceeds to The Chinese Red Cross Foundation. Sotheby’s reasoning, according to Kevin Ching, Chief Executive Officer of Sotheby’s Asia, because the Chinese Red Cross is working very hard to improve the lives of the poor farmers in China. Kevin should be happy as HK$2 million was put aside by the seller Mr Wang Yao Hui for donation in addition to Sotheby’s contribution of over HK$2 million.

I want our readers to know that during the first half of 2007 I also visited art fairs in Brussels, June 6th to 10th, attended both Christie’s and Sotheby’s auctions in Paris, as well as two informative exhibitions “L’Âge d’Or de l’Inde Classique: L’Empire des Guptas” at Galeries Nationaux du Grand Palais, “Le Masque de la Chine” at Musée Jacquesmart-André, and the Tribal Art displays at Musée du Quai Branly.

The third Brussels Oriental Art Fair gathered thirty-two specialised dealers from all over the world. Organiser Georgia Chrischilles said, “Our fair has been widely appreciated by international collectors and art dealers from Asia, the United States of America and Europe. The presence of a significant number of collectors and museum curators is a reflection of the noteworthy quality of the objects exposed in the charming galleries around the Place du Grand Sablon.

“At the conclusion of the fair a large majority of dealers were very satisfied with the number of sales at a variety of financial levels. This specialists’ fair has gained a prominent place in the art world—the knowledgeable public seeks out expert advice and is able to compare related objects on the spot at Brussels Oriental Art Fair.

“The two parallel fairs Brussels Non European Art Fair and Brussels Ancient Art Fair, with their expert participants, have been selling to renowned collectors for years; the fairs’ organisers reported that a certain amount of cross-over in disciplines was noted for 2007—reputed patrons of Ancient art bought Asian art objects, for example.

“Our preparations for next year’s meeting, that will take place from June 11th until June 15th, 2008, have already started. In 2008 we wish again for the generous patronage and interest of our audience. Nearly one hundred galleries with three affiliations participate in our opening dates and ensure the visitors a most interesting experience.”

E&J Frankel Ltd [1040 Madison Avenue at 79th Street, New York City, USA] presents from September 20th through October 28th “The Mr and Mrs Walter V. Hall Collection of Korean Art” featuring bronzes, ceramics and paintings. The collection—a rare find—was formed by the American diplomat, and his wife, during his assignments in Korea from 1958–1967, and ranges from grey pottery and bronzes of the Silla (668–935) to the elegant bluish green celadons of the Koryo (935–1392) and honest and robust blue and white pieces of the Choson dynasty (1392–1910). Many of the preferred utensils for chanoyu (tea ceremony) in Japan are of Korean origin or made by Koreans in Japan. Illustrated is a celadon bowl with transparent crackled glaze, and lotus leaves incised on the exterior, Korea, Koryo dynasty, diameter 15.8 cm.^[29]^ 

“Chinese Objects in Literati Taste, Furniture & Other Asian Works” is the title of an auction presented by Freeman’s (1808 Chestnut Street, Philadelphia, PA, USA) on December 3rd, 2007. The pre-auction exhibition from November 26th to December 2nd features the private collection formed by William Lipton during a lifetime of connoisseurship. Included amongst the Ming and Qing items are _huanghuali, hongmu_ and rootwood furniture; rare and important scholars’ items, ivory carved figures, jade, porcelain and bronze works of art. Notable are a Chinese _huanghuali_ flush-slid corner side table,^[30]_ 17th/18th century, height 34.5 inches, length 48 inches, estimate US$60,000–80,000; an ivory figure of a seated man,^[31]_ estimate US$8000–10,000; and a Ming ivory “wheel” seal,^[32]_ dated 1415, estimate
US$15,000–20,000.

Over the past fifteen years Dennis George Crow, a leading specialist in historic photographs of China, has exhibited at various venues in Hong Kong from the China Club and the Museum Annex to private galleries in Central and Soho. In September 2007 he opens his own gallery in Hong Kong on the 10th floor at 63 Wyndham Street in the heart of the art district.33

This new exhibition location will permanently display historic photography and related items, but Dennis also plans four major photograph exhibitions in the next year. “There will always be a good selection of unique, rare and an
usual range of Chinese historic photography, China Trade images and other related works of art on view to satisfy the discerning collector”, says Dennis.

His opening exhibition will be held from September 25th to October 6th, 2007. It will feature historic photographs of Hong Kong, Canton and Macao including large panoramic views and works by Miller, Thomson, Floyd and Afong. The second exhibition is planned for November 20th to December 3rd, 2007 and will feature a study of portraits of “The Chinese” from 1860 to 1900 acquired from various private collections from Europe and the United States.

Zee Stone Gallery (G/F, Yu Yuet Lai Building, 43–55 Wyndham Street, Central, Hong Kong) presents from September 13th to 30th “The Scent of Green Papaya”, the first exhibition in Hong Kong of paintings by Tran Van Mang, born 1949, graduate of Hue Fine Art College, Central Vietnam. He depicts everyday village life in Vietnam in a free, Expressionist style, using rich colour, strong line and lively, spontaneous brushwork.34 These are timeless scenes—of the market, annual festivals, simple conversations between men and women against the backdrop of sun and sea.

From 1975 to 1985, Tran and his family endured a difficult time because of the political situation in Vietnam. Unable to work as an artist, he was forced to earn his living selling cakes or balloons in the street. From the mid-1980s he began to paint again, taking part in annual fine art exhibitions in Hue. Today his vibrant works express his deep love for his homeland.

I recently had a pleasant long-distance telephone conversation with Maximin Berko (maximin@sfjaf.com), Vice President of The Shanghai Fine Jewellery and Art Fair (SFJAF). He informed me that he is very proud to present “the first full-scale international fine art fair to be held in China” at the Shanghai Exhibition Center (1000 Central Yanan Road, 00040 Shanghai) from October 12th to 21st, 2007. The organisers will host the preview on October 12th from 3 pm to 10 pm and they hope to have a charity gala dinner on October 17th.

Maximin is very happy that the fair will take place at the Shanghai Exhibition Center which is one of the cultural landmarks in the heart of the city. It was built by the Russians in 1955 as a sign of friendship with China and is now strategically located amid the luxury shopping district and finest hotels where Shanghai’s rich converge.

Already thirty jewellers, Western art and Asian art dealers have agreed to participate. The venue will hold a maximum number of forty select exhibitors. Melka Rive Miao, the well-known interior designer, has been invited to provide the best decoration and to bring former glory to this symbolic building.

Organisers Maximin Berko and Nicolò Mori (nicolo@ sfjaf.com), President of SFJAF, are both young men, fluent Mandarin speakers and know Shanghai well. Maximin developed his skills in the international art market through Berko Gallery and his participation at numerous fairs around the world. His family has galleries selling Western art in Knokke, Brussels, Antwerp, Paris, New York and Tokyo. He also studied art history and archaeology at Paris IV Sorbonne and received his Masters degree in art history and archaeology, specialising in Chinese arts of the Han. He has worked for Sotheby’s in New York and since 2006 has been based in Shanghai preparing for SFJAF and researching for his PhD.

Nicolò Mori is an international businessman specialising in management and international finance. He started his career in Scandinavia and has worked with China for many years. Both he and Maximin are enthusiastic, dedicated and will put all of their energy to creating a world-class art fair in Shanghai and are confident it will be successful. They want this fair to be a milestone for many years for China, which they consider their home. They are seen in a photograph taken at Yongfoo Elite in Shanghai (the old British Embassy, converted to a private club). This venue will most likely also be the location of the event for the Committee of Honor night to take place during the fair.35

Inset in the night view of the Shanghai Exhibition Center is a white diamond bracelet with flower motif and Columbian emerald centre weighing 30.86 carats.

It is reported that of the five hundred richest Chinese each are now worth an average of US$275 million and many of them live or have residences in Shanghai. So the organisers expect many important buyers attending their fair. SFJAF will be guarded by a 24 hour security company, assisted by the Shanghai Exhibition Center security, as well as by the local police bureau.

The major jewellers exhibiting are David Morris (London), Alberto Sabbadini (Milan), Leyesen (Brussels), Lorenz Baumer (Paris) and Chatila (London). The major fine art
galleries exhibiting include Salomon Lilian Old Master Paintings (Amsterdam), Pierre M. Dumontell, B. B. Steinitz and Galerie Schmit (Paris), Galerie Tamaiagia (Tokyo), Ravenscourt Gallery (Moscow) and Anderson Gallery (Los Angeles). Representing Chinese and other Asian art are Gisèle Croës and Georgia Chirsillas who are dealers from Brussels.

Maximin Berko said he decided to have the fair in Shanghai because the city “has the most contact with the West, and it is a worldwide economic centre. We wanted to start before the Olympic Games in 2008, and also before the Shanghai World Expo in 2010. The timing is perfect because art is booming in China. There are two types of exhibitions, one is commercial, run for profit. The other type is run by exhibitors — galleries — which is our type. I am a gallery myself, so of course I understand how they think and what the expectations are.”

Chieftown Auction Group, a newly established China-based auction house, has most recently held its first sale of Chinese paintings, calligraphy, fans and contemporary seal carvings in Beijing in March this year and achieved a most respectable RMB92 million.

Mr Yang Xiu, chairman and founder of Chieftown Auction Group, has since opened a Hong Kong office (50/F, Office Tower, Convention Plaza, 1 Harbour Road, Wan- chai). The company announced its first Hong Kong auction of Chinese paintings, ceramics, works of art and Buddhist art will take place in November 2007 at the Grand Hyatt Hotel. Mr Yang, age 46, graduated from the University of Nanking majoring in Chinese history. He is a historian, cultural relics vetting expert, calligrapher and antique collector specialising in Chinese painting, calligraphy, ancient bronzes and jade. A professor at Nanking University and Xian Art College supervising PhD students, he had the idea since 2003 to set up an auction house.

Other major shareholders in the company are Hong Kong Parkview Group Ltd and Hong Kong International Development Group, as well as Sunning Group and Jiangsu Zhongshan Group. Chieftown Auction Group now has over sixty employees and a strong vetting committee comprising several famous experts from China and Hong Kong.

Today Hong Kong is a very desirable city for auction houses to locate, whether coming from the West or the East. I hope that with the new emergence all the auction houses, including Sotheby’s and Christie’s, will continue to strive hard to develop and improve their auctions for the full benefit of their local and international clients.