

ASIAN ART

at the Metropolitan Museum



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THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART, NEW YORK





DIRECTOR'S NOTE

The story of how the Metropolitan Museum grew into a leading center for the study and appreciation of Asian art is a fascinating one. Far from inevitable, this evolution was very much linked to the collecting passions of the Museum's many benefactors. The Met's earliest acquisitions of Asian art, beginning in 1879, included porcelains, lacquer, jade, and other precious materials that were catalogued as part of the Department of Decorative Arts. It was not until 1915 that a separate Department of Far Eastern Art was created, and only in 1983 was its name changed to the Department of Asian Art, acknowledging the geographic vastness, cultural diversity, and historical longevity of the artistic traditions encompassed within this purview. Since that time, the Museum has rededicated itself to strengthening the department, whose collections now rank among the Museum's largest.

Under the leadership of Maxwell K. (Mike) Hearn, Douglas Dillon Chairman since 2011, the Department of Asian Art now employs a full complement of professional staff, including nine curators and four master conservators of East Asian painting. It also serves two distinct constituencies: Westerners and Asians. For many Americans and other Western visitors, the Met's Asian collections represent a window onto traditions and values that may at first appear alien or incomprehensible. Visiting the galleries or participating in educational programs offers this audience an essential opportunity

to experience and learn about Asian cultures. For Asian visitors—whose national museums almost exclusively tell the story of their own country's heritage—the Met's galleries place those stories within the larger narrative of Asian and world culture. And as the fastest-growing demographic among the Museum's six million annual guests, audiences from Asia often come to the Asian galleries to see themselves as others see them. For both Asian and Western audiences alike, then, it is vitally important that the Metropolitan Museum tell the story of Asia accurately, comprehensively, and with works of outstanding quality—as it does for the Americas, Europe, and indeed the rest of the world.

The celebration of the centennial of the Department of Asian Art provides an appropriate moment to review its history as a first step in planning for its future. It is also a time to recognize the support of the numerous collectors, patrons, and curators—many acknowledged in the pages of this *Bulletin*—whose collective generosity has helped to create this part of the Museum. As the Met continues to play a leading role in engaging its visitors with the history and cultures of the world, the galleries of Asian art will remain a place for contemplation, learning, and discovery.

THOMAS P. CAMPBELL

Director, The Metropolitan Museum of Art



A CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION

SINCE ITS ESTABLISHMENT IN 1870, the Metropolitan Museum has based its approach to collecting on the ambitions of its founders to present an encyclopedic survey of world art. But to a unique degree, the Museum's collection of Asian art also reflects the melting pot that is New York and the individual passions and knowledge of the many private collectors who have invigorated this city and this institution. It is largely thanks to these enlightened patrons that today the Museum is able to exhibit one of the world's most comprehensive collections of the paintings, sculptures, textiles, and decorative arts of Asia. In 2015, as the Metropolitan celebrates the one hundredth anniversary of the founding of the Department of Asian Art, it bears reflecting upon how this collection was formed and why such acquisitions are but one chapter in the larger narrative of how museums in the West have sought to collect and interpret the arts of the East.

One way to tell the history of the Metropolitan is through the Museum's physical growth over the past 145 years. By 1880, for example, just ten years after its founding, the Met had already moved to its permanent location in Central Park and, like the rest of America in the late nineteenth century, was envisioning an expansive future. On a copy of Calvert Vaux's plan for the original building is a note added at bottom right by the Museum's first director, Luigi Palma di Cesnola, stating that this ambitious scheme would be completed in 1990. Astonishingly, Cesnola's farsighted prediction was correct: by 1990 the Met finally occupied the footprint he had envisioned 110 years earlier.

Yet an equally compelling and perhaps more surprising story is how the Metropolitan's holdings grew to fill these grand spaces. This is especially true of the Museum's collection of Asian art, whose

fortunes waxed and waned over the intervening decades in response to a changing cast of personalities and shifting institutional priorities. Although a contemporary visitor might take for granted the remarkable range and depth of the Met's Asian collection as it exists today, such an outcome was neither predetermined, as one might assume, nor at all predictable.

The Metropolitan's first important acquisitions of Asian art were made in 1879, when Samuel P. Avery (fig. 1), an art dealer and founding trustee, sold the Museum more than 1,300 ceramics, most of them Chinese. Three decades later the Avery ceramics were still the pride of the Museum, displayed prominently on the second floor of the recently completed Fifth Avenue entrance, known as the Great Hall, which included a pair of grand flanking galleries (fig. 2). Such large-scale acquisitions were



1. Samuel P. Avery (1822–1904)



2. Avery Collection of Chinese porcelains installed in Richard Morris Hunt's new wing, 1907

typical of the last two decades of the nineteenth century, which saw an immense influx of Asian decorative arts into the Museum's collection, a trend no doubt inspired in part by the 1876 Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia, the first official world's fair in the United States. Attended by almost ten million visitors—nearly twenty percent of the U.S. population at the time—this landmark exhibition offered an array of crafts and applied arts from Japan and China that greatly influenced the leading designers of the day, including Louis Comfort Tiffany (1848–1933), as well as their Gilded Age clientele.

Just two years after the purchase of the Avery porcelains, a bequest from trustee Stephen Whitney Phoenix brought some 325 Japanese works of art to the Museum, including fine lacquers (fig. 3). Then, in 1893, the Museum

was the beneficiary of two unexpected gifts of ceramics. The first, a group of more than two hundred pieces, came as a donation from Samuel Colman (1832–1920), a landscape painter and interior designer who had collaborated with Tiffany on a number of projects, among them the opulent New York home of Museum benefactors Henry O. and



3. Portable picnic set. Japan, Edo period (1615–1868), 18th century. Lacquered wood with gold, silver *hiramaki-e*, and gold and silver foil application on *nashiji* lacquer ground, H. 8 ⁵/₈ in. (21.9 cm). Bequest of Stephen Whitney Phoenix, 1881 (81.1.137a–p)

4. Charles Stewart Smith (1832–1909)

5. *Dish with peaches*. Japan, Edo period (1615–1868), ca. 1690–1720. Porcelain with underglaze blue and overglaze polychrome enamels (Hizen ware, Nabeshima type), Diam. 8 in. (20.3 cm). Gift of Charles Stewart Smith, 1893 (93.3.240)

6. Edward C. Moore (1827–1891)



Louisine Havemeyer at 1 East Sixty-Sixth Street. Shortly thereafter, Charles Stewart Smith (fig. 4), another early trustee, had more than four hundred porcelains shipped directly to the Museum from Japan, where he was honeymooning with his third wife. Smith, who was in the dry goods business, had purchased them from Captain Francis (Frank) Brinkley, a foreign adviser to the Meiji government and a knowledgeable collector who had published several books on Japanese art. Smith's gift—a virtual survey of Japanese porcelain—is particularly notable for its fine examples of Nabeshima ware, the basis of what is now the most complete collection of ceramics from that kiln site outside Japan (fig. 5).

Keeping with a directive of its founders that the Museum be a resource for American craftsmen, in 1891 Edward C. Moore (fig. 6), the longtime chief designer at Tiffany and Company, bequeathed to the Metropolitan nearly 2,100 diverse objects that had been a reference library of sorts for his own designs and for those of the firm. These included 704 works of Japanese art, from textiles, ceramics, and metalwork to lacquer, *inro* (portable medicine cases), netsuke, and baskets (fig. 7). Moore's pragmatic





7. Gourd-shaped wall basket. Japan, Meiji period (1868–1912), 19th century. Bamboo (*madake*) with rattan accents, H. (with handle) 20 1/2 in. (52.1 cm), W. 8 1/2 in. (21.6 cm). Edward C. Moore Collection, Bequest of Edward C. Moore, 1891 (91.1.2078)

8. Cup in the shape of a magnolia blossom. China, Ming dynasty (1368–1644), early 17th century. Rhinoceros horn, H. 4 in. (10.2 cm); wood base, H. 1 3/4 in. (4.4 cm). Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, 1908 (08.212.5)

collecting habits and his eye for technical virtuosity would have found great favor with J. Pierpont Morgan, a trustee since 1888 and the Museum's president from 1904 until his death, in 1913. It was Morgan who presided over the expansion of the Museum onto Fifth Avenue, first with Richard Morris Hunt's grand entrance hall, completed in 1902, and then with the extension of the building along four blocks of Fifth Avenue by architects McKim, Mead and White. Morgan was the personification of America's new wealth, which gave the country the means to dominate the art market in the early twentieth century. Yet he was also a discerning buyer with a special love for fine craftsmanship in every culture he encountered, from a Chinese rhinoceros-horn cup, one of a dozen he donated in 1908 (fig. 8), to the sumptuous Coromandel lacquer screen prominently displayed on the balcony of the Museum's new Great Hall (fig. 9).

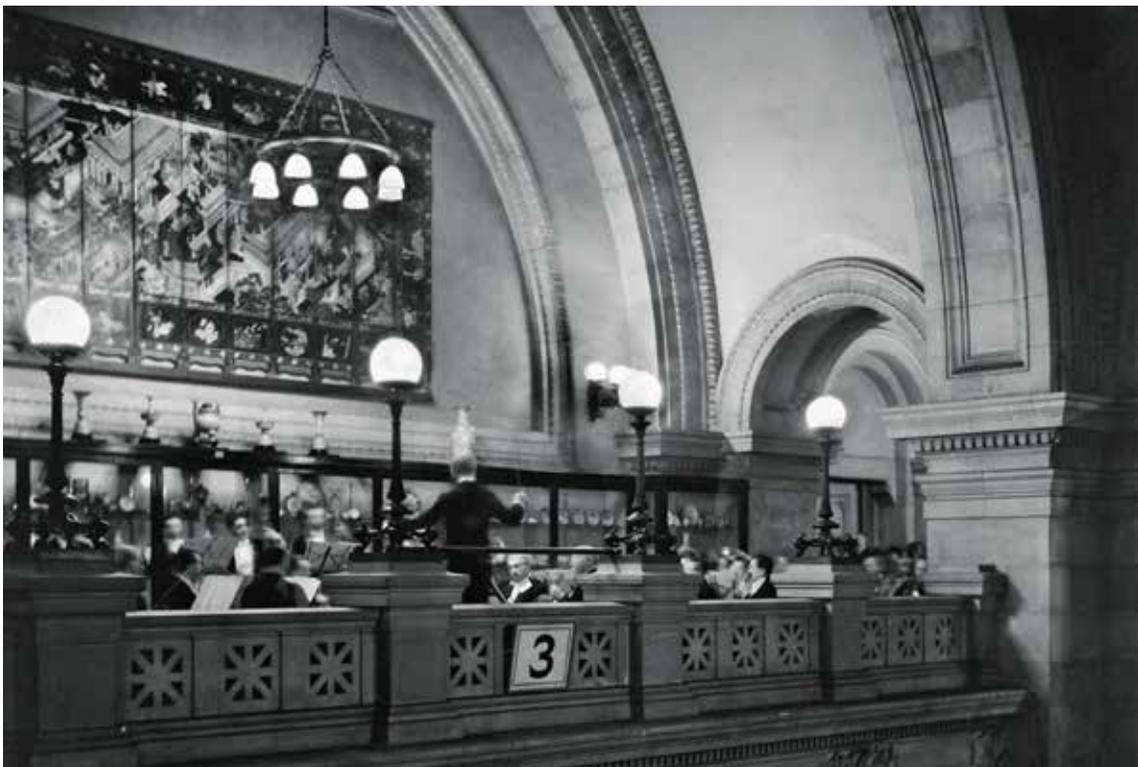
Given to acquiring entire art collections, Morgan missed one remarkable opportunity that would have transformed the course of Asian art studies in the West early in its evolution. After



Morgan's death, a telegram was found on his desk with an offer to sell him the entire Chinese imperial collection—the future contents of the Palace Museum in Beijing—for \$10 million, part of a plot by Manchu royalists to buy guns in order to help restore the Qing monarchy. Although more than half of Morgan's collection—including all his Chinese ceramics—was eventually sold to cover death duties, the financier's son, J. P. Morgan, Jr., carried out his father's wishes and subsequently donated to the Metropolitan more than six thousand objects, including a number of significant Asian works. Typical of Morgan's taste for important pieces is a Shang dynasty wine container (*pou*) that remains the largest Chinese ritual vessel in the Museum's collection (fig. 10). At almost two feet in height, this imposing piece was further enhanced by a lengthy inscription—an attribute that greatly increased its value among Chinese connoisseurs—identifying it as dating to the late twelfth century B.C. We now know that the inscription was added by an unscrupulous dealer in the late nineteenth century, but the vessel

is otherwise intact and can be confidently dated more than a century earlier on the basis of its close resemblance to two examples excavated from the tomb of the Shang royal consort Fu Hao (ca. 1250 B.C.).

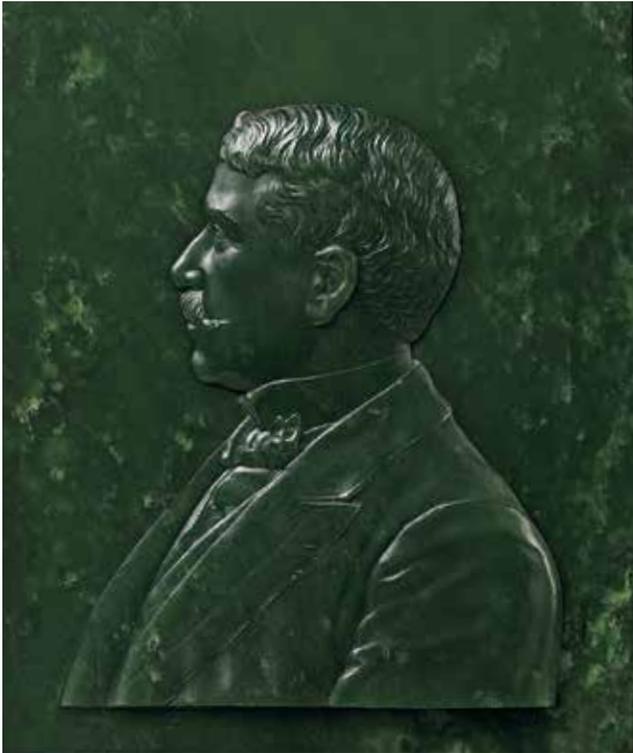
By 1918, the vast new wings that Morgan had either built or helped plan were completed, bringing the expansion of the Met's physical space to an end for the next fifty years.¹ But the Museum's collections continued to grow apace alongside the nation's civic ambitions, particularly those of New York City. In an era of railroad barons and skyscrapers, New York epitomized the Gilded Age. Having absorbed Brooklyn, most of Queens, and Staten Island in 1898, the city could now boast a population of nearly four million. Morgan himself was from an established banking family and had been educated in Europe, but there were increasing numbers of self-made successes in New York who in the coming decades would use their newly acquired wealth to collect staggering quantities of art and, ultimately, become significant benefactors of the Museum.





9. Morgan's lacquer screen and Asian ceramics on the balcony of the Great Hall (completed in 1902), 1924

10. Covered vessel (pou). China, Shang dynasty (ca. 1600–1046 B.C.), 13th century B.C. Bronze, H. 21 3/4 in. (54 cm). Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, 1917 (17.190.524a, b)



11. Heber R. Bishop (1840–1902)

ONE EXEMPLAR of these new-money tycoons was Heber R. Bishop (fig. 11). Born in Ipswich, Massachusetts, Bishop moved to Cuba at the age of nineteen and within a few short years made a fortune in sugar refining. In the 1870s, as Cubans began to assert their independence from Spain, Bishop, fearing instability, took his profits back to the United States, where he invested in iron ore and railroads (he helped build the Third Avenue El) as well as New York financial companies. Like Morgan, Bishop was an avid collector, and he proved an enthusiastic patron of such institutions as the American Museum of Natural History, where he is best remembered for the Northwest Coast tribal art he donated between 1879 and 1883, including a sixty-four-foot-long Haida canoe. But Bishop's greatest triumph as an art collector was his unrivaled assemblage of Qing dynasty jades, including some, like an imposing jade wine basin (fig. 12), that were just coming onto the art market after the destruction of the Yuan Ming Yuan Summer Palace (the imperial retreat razed in 1860 during the Second Opium War by Anglo-French forces under

orders from Lord Elgin, then British high commissioner to China). The basin, which is carved in high relief with dragons chasing flaming pearls through a cloud-filled firmament, bears an inscription by the Qianlong emperor (r. 1736–95) likening it to an even larger wine container commissioned in 1265 by the great Mongol ruler Khubilai Khan.

Bishop's mode of displaying his collection was equally regal. In 1902, he left his entire collection of 1,028 mostly eighteenth- and nineteenth-century jades to the Met, where he had been a trustee for twenty years. At the same time, he provided funds to have them displayed in a replica of the Louis XV ballroom where they had been shown in his Fifth Avenue mansion (fig. 13). The room was fabricated in Paris with a gift of \$55,000 from Bishop to cover installation costs.

Another bequest of \$50,000 subsidized a massive two-volume catalogue, which was published in a limited edition of just one hundred copies intended to be donated to other institutions and crowned heads of state—none were to be sold. Today at auction, those volumes have sold for as much as \$400,000. Strikingly, Bishop's collection held only one archaic Chinese jade, that is, a piece dating to the Han dynasty (206 B.C.—A.D. 220) or earlier. Only after the fall of the Qing empire, China's last imperial dynasty, in 1911, and the building of railroads through the ancient burial grounds surrounding China's historic cities did large numbers of such objects find their way onto the art market, by which time the nascent field of archaeology had begun to reveal the historical basis of the theretofore unsubstantiated Shang dynasty (ca. 1600–1046 B.C.).

Another self-made man and great benefactor of the Metropolitan was Benjamin Altman. The son of Bavarian immigrants who had emigrated to New York in 1853, Altman left school and went to work in dry goods after his father's death. By 1870, when he was just thirty, he had established his own business, and in 1906 he opened B. Altman & Company, one of the city's preeminent department stores, at Thirty-Fourth Street and Fifth Avenue.



12. Basin. China, Qianlong period (1736–95), dated 1774. Jade (nephrite), W. 30 in. (76.1 cm). Gift of Heber R. Bishop, 1902 (02.18.689)

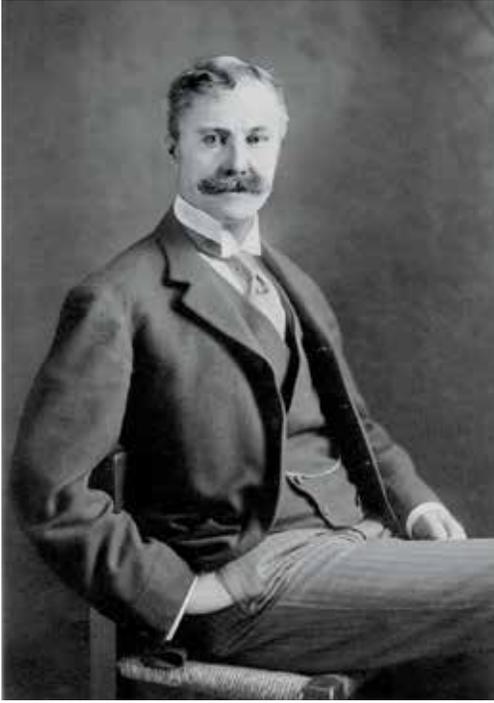
13. Heber Bishop Collection of jade installed in a replica Louis XV ballroom, 1903

14. Benjamin Altman Collection, 1926



Altman, as Calvin Tomkins chronicles in *Merchants and Masterpieces*, “never married, had few friends and no social life.”² When he died, Altman left the Museum 429 choice Chinese porcelains (fig. 14)—most eighteenth to nineteenth century and purchased from the renowned dealer Henry J. Duveen—as well as fifty-one old master paintings, acquired mainly from Henry’s brother and more flamboyant business partner, Joseph Duveen, who made a fortune selling European works of art to such wealthy American collectors as J. P. Morgan, Henry Clay Frick, Samuel H. Kress, and Andrew

Mellon. Thanks to these and other major gifts, Chinese and Japanese objects swelled the Museum’s Department of Decorative Arts. But there was still no department dedicated to the arts of the East, nor was there a curator in charge of them. Instead, it fell to individuals like Howard Mansfield (fig. 15), a trustee for thirty years, who acted in lieu of a curator of Asian art to expand the Museum’s holdings in other areas, especially Japanese arms and armor and woodblock prints. Between 1912 and 1936 Mansfield successfully advocated for the acquisition of more than 500 prints from various sources,



15. Howard Mansfield (1849–1938)

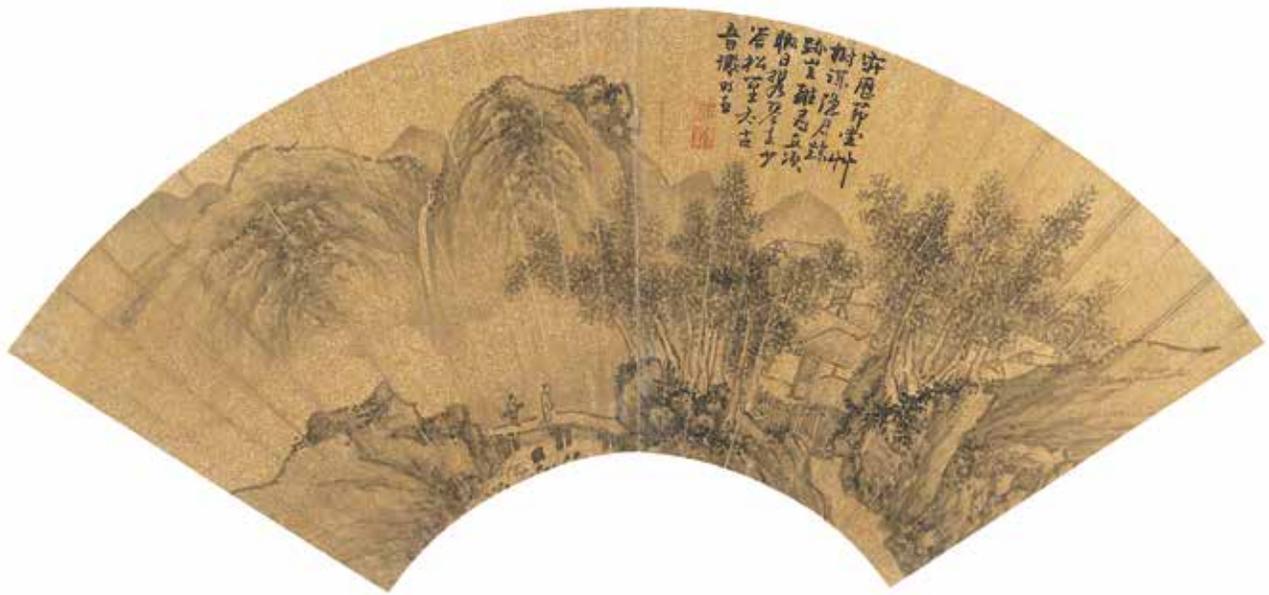
16. John C. Ferguson (1866–1945) with Sigisbert Chrétien Bosch Reitz (1860–1938) in Kaifeng, China, 1917



culminating in 1936 with the purchase of 336 prints from his own collection and the bequest of another 270 prints from Henry L. Phillips, who, like Mansfield, had been elected a fellow for life in the 1890s and who had placed his collection on loan to the Museum in 1927.

It must have been through the initiative of Mansfield and other like-minded patrons that in 1912, just a year after the fall of the Qing dynasty, the trustees engaged John C. Ferguson (fig. 16, left) as their agent in China, charging him with assembling a collection of Chinese art for the Museum with what by the standards of the day was the immense advance of \$25,000. Ferguson had traveled to China in the late nineteenth century as a missionary, but he ultimately renounced that calling to become an “art procurer” for American museums, a newspaper publisher, and an adviser to the new Chinese republic. Along the way, Ferguson’s embrace of Chinese language and culture led him to reject Western aesthetic preferences in favor of traditional literati ideals, and it was from this perspective that he formed a collection of more than three hundred antiquities for the Museum. The archaic bronzes that Ferguson chose, for example, were not aesthetically distinctive; rather, they were vessels that often bore inscriptions, which Chinese connoisseurs valued for their epigraphic and historical content. Similarly, in acquiring paintings Ferguson was more influenced by traditional records of provenance than by connoisseurship. In 1934 he published an index of works by 2,391 artists recorded in 108 Chinese catalogues, a text still used by scholars to trace the transmission of Chinese paintings across time.³

With the same zeal that Ferguson had applied to the mammoth task of compiling such a record, he then determined to assemble a comprehensive collection of Chinese painting for the Museum that would include examples by every historical master, from the fourth-century Gu Kaizhi to the orthodox painters of the seventeenth century. In less than one year he was able to send the Museum nearly two hundred works that he claimed to be “the highest class work which has ever found its way to the



Occident.”⁴ Ever cautious, the Museum asked Charles Lang Freer—an industrialist and well-regarded connoisseur whose collection subsequently became the basis for the Freer Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C.—to review these works before paying Ferguson an additional \$25,000. Doubts were raised, prompting Ferguson to decline part of the payment and instead donate a number of the paintings. One hundred years later, it is clear that most of the works in the group attributed to early Chinese masters are later copies. What is remarkable, however, is that while Freer and other American collectors, largely influenced by Japanese taste, favored works dated to the Song dynasty (960–1279), Ferguson was the first Westerner to systematically collect works of the Ming (1368–1644) and Qing (1644–1911) dynasties, including both calligraphy and scholar-painting (fig. 17).

The quickening pace of these donations and acquisitions culminated in June 1915 with the establishment of a Department of Far Eastern Art and the appointment of Sigisbert Chrétien Bosch Reitz, a native of Amsterdam, as the department’s first curator (figs. 16, right; 18). Bosch Reitz was well qualified. Trained as a painter in Munich and Paris, from 1900 to 1901 he had studied art in Japan, in particular woodblock printing, and in 1909 he had

17. Xie Shichen (Chinese, 1487–ca. 1567). *Landscape with Figure*, Ming dynasty (1368–1644). Folding fan mounted as an album leaf; ink on gold paper, 7 x 19 3/4 in. (17.8 x 50.2 cm). John Stewart Kennedy Fund, 1913 (13.100.81)

18. Bosch Reitz in Japan, 1900



taken up the study of Chinese ceramics. Invited in 1914 to become curator of Asian art at the Louvre, Bosch Reitz instead left for America following the outbreak of war with Germany and was promptly engaged by the Metropolitan with responsibilities for China, Japan, Korea, and Tibet, but not India. He was also charged with overseeing the collection “to be installed in the big gallery surrounding the Fifth Avenue entrance,”⁵ meaning the balcony space where Asian ceramics are currently displayed today.

During his twelve years as curator, Bosch Reitz—known as “Old Dutch Cleanser” because of his passion for orderly arrangements⁶—acquired numerous masterpieces for the Museum. Like many collectors of the time, Bosch Reitz favored figurative art, and he was particularly drawn to Chinese sculpture, extraordinary examples of which were coming onto the market during his tenure after the fall of the Qing dynasty and the establishment of the Republic of China. Part of the reason for this was the new government’s wholesale embrace of Western technology and educational reform and the concomitant denigration of Buddhism as nothing more than superstitions based on a foreign religion. There was also no tradition in China of regarding religious sculpture as fine art, and as a consequence many Buddhist temples and monuments were desecrated. Enterprising art dealers took advantage of the situation to remove many works to Japan, Europe, and America, where there were receptive audiences for sculptures that in their age and beauty rivaled the finest works of classical and medieval art from the West. One such piece, a fifth-century figure of a bodhisattva from the Yungang cave temple complex near Datong, in Shanxi Province, was purchased by the investment banker Robert Lehman from a Paris dealer in 1915 (fig. 19). It is unlikely that Lehman was deeply versed in Buddhist iconography; rather, the figure’s patternized draperies, serene face, and enlarged hands, conveying a message of reassurance and well-being, must have reminded him of such famous Romanesque works as the Christ Pantocrater in the tympanum of the eleventh-century Basilica of Saint Magdalene, Vézelay.

While religious sculpture was not esteemed in China, accidental finds of ancient ritual bronzes had long been prized for their form, iconography, and, particularly, their inscriptions, which helped to validate later accounts of China’s earliest dynasties before their existence was confirmed through archaeology. In 1928, for example, Chinese archaeologists began to excavate the site of the last Shang capital, near modern-day Anyang, Henan Province. The inscribed bronze vessels they uncovered there as well as royal archives carved onto bones and shells used in divination largely corroborated the list of Shang kings that had first been recorded by Sima Qian (ca. 145–86 B.C.), the father of Chinese historiography, in his *Records of the Grand Historian* (*Shiji*). One of the most spectacular finds of ancient Chinese bronzes was a complete ritual altar set that had been unearthed in 1901 from Baoji, homeland of the Zhou dynasty (ca. 1046–256 B.C.), in western Shaanxi Province (fig. 20). Made to serve wine that was heated on the bronze altar table, the set belongs stylistically to the end of the Shang dynasty, which, according to Sima Qian, fell because of the last Shang king’s overindulgence in drink. The extravagant decor of the set’s wine buckets and beakers seems to confirm the Shang prediction. At the time it was found, the altar set had been added to the collection of the Manchu viceroy and antiquarian Duanfang, the region’s provincial governor (fig. 21), who had visited the West in 1906 as part of an effort to write a constitution for the Qing dynasty. In spite of his credentials as a modernizing influence, Duanfang died trying to face down the rebels who eventually toppled Manchu rule. John Ferguson was a longtime associate and friend of Duanfang’s; he managed to secure ownership of the set, and it was through him that the complete group was purchased for the Museum in 1924 for the extraordinary price of \$100,000. Ferguson predicted in a letter to Bosch Reitz that

19. *Bodhisattva with crossed ankles*. China, Northern Wei period (386–534), ca. 480–90. Sandstone with traces of pigment, H. 51 in. (129.5 cm). Gift of Robert Lehman, 1948 (48.162.2)





20. *Ritual altar set*. China, early Western Zhou dynasty (1046–771 B.C.), late 11th century B.C. Bronze, H. of table 7 ¹/₈ in. (18.1 cm). Munsey Fund, 1931 (24.72.1–.14)

21. Duanfang (1861–1911; seventh from left) and colleagues with bronze altar set (fig. 20), Beijing, 1907

22. *Universal Buddha*. Japan, Heian period (794–1185), 12th century. Wood with gold leaf and lacquer decoration, H. 86 in. (218.4 cm). Rogers Fund, 1926 (26.118)







23. *Illustrated Legends of the Kitano Tenjin Shrine* (detail). Japan, Kamakura period (1185–1333), 13th century. One from a set of five handscrolls; ink, color, and cut gold on paper, 11 ³/₈ in. x 22 ft. 7 ¹/₂ in. (28.9 x 689.6 cm). Fletcher Fund, 1925 (25.224a)

24. Ogata Kōrin (Japanese, 1658–1716). *Rough Waves*, Edo period (1615–1868), ca. 1704–9. Two-panel folding screen; ink, color, and gold leaf on paper, 57 ³/₄ x 65 ¹/₈ in. (146.5 x 165.4 cm). Fletcher Fund, 1926 (26.117)

25. Henry O. (1847–1907) and Louisine (1855–1929) Havemeyer in Paris, 1889

“the possession of this table and vessels would easily place the Museum in the front rank for all time in the department of ancient Chinese bronzes.”⁷

In contrast to the wrenching political and social changes taking place in China at this time, Japan in the early twentieth century was rapidly transforming itself into a Western-style modern society. As state patronage evaporated, however, the old daimyo and samurai families were no longer able to support themselves, and Buddhist temples likewise fell into disrepair. As a result, family heirlooms and religious treasures began to come onto the art market. As he did in China, Bosch Reitz actively took advantage of this historic opportunity to expand upon the foundation of ceramics, lacquers, and metalwork collected during the decades when Asian works were first acquired by the Department of Decorative Arts. Among the major sculptures and paintings he added to the Metropolitan’s holdings in this formative period are a late Heian Universal Buddha (fig. 22), a magnificent set of five thirteenth-century narrative handscrolls, *Illustrated Legends of the Kitano Tenjin Shrine* (fig. 23), and an iconic two-panel screen of ocean waves by Ogata Kōrin (fig. 24).

AMONG THE LENDERS to a 1928 exhibition of these newly acquired treasures were Mr. and Mrs. H. O. Havemeyer (fig. 25), two of the greatest benefactors in the history of the Museum. Long before Bosch Reitz came to the Met, Henry O. Havemeyer, who made a fortune importing and refining sugar (he was known as the “Sugar King”), and Louisine, his second wife, were building a substantial collection on the advice of their friend the American



Impressionist painter Mary Cassatt. Cassatt had introduced the Havemeyers to numerous French Impressionists, with whom she shared a passion for the Japonisme that had swept the art world after Japanese ports were opened to trade with the West in 1853 and Japan took a pavilion at the 1867 Exposition Universelle in Paris. Accordingly, while the Havemeyers’ collection is best known for its rich holdings of Impressionist paintings, it also included a number of fine Japanese prints admired by Cassatt as well as other important works of Asian art (figs. 26, 27). When Mrs. Havemeyer died, she left 142 paintings, prints, and objects to the Metropolitan and gave her son, Horace, discretion to donate others. It was his gift of some 1,972 works that transformed the scope of the Metropolitan’s Asian holdings. Among them was a fourteenth-century Buddhist painting of Kshitigarbha, a compassionate bodhisattva who rescues sentient beings from descending into hell or purgatory (fig. 28). The work entered the Museum catalogued as Japanese, having long been in a Japanese collection, but it has



26. Kitagawa Utamaro (Japanese, 1753–1806). *Woman Washing a Baby in a Tub*, Edo period (1615–1868), ca. 1795. Polychrome woodblock print; ink and color on paper, 14 ³/₄ x 9 ⁷/₈ in. (37.3 x 25.1 cm). H. O. Havemeyer Collection, Bequest of Mrs. H. O. Havemeyer, 1929 (JP1661)



27. Mary Cassatt (American, 1844–1926). *The Bath*, 1890–91. Drypoint, soft-ground etching, and aquatint, printed in color from two plates; image, 11 ⁵/₈ x 9 ³/₄ in. (29.5 x 24.8 cm). Gift of Paul J. Sachs, 1916 (16.2.7)

since been proved to be a rare painting dated to the Goryeo dynasty (918–1392) in Korea. The Metropolitan now owns four such paintings—more than the National Museum of Korea in Seoul—all of which were acquired prior to 1931 and were identified by visiting scholars at one time or another as either Chinese or Japanese.

The 1929 Havemeyer bequest and gift came little more than a year after Bosch Reitz retired and a young Harvard graduate student, Alan R. Priest (fig. 29), was hired as the Museum's next curator of Far Eastern Art. Just thirty at the time of his appointment, Priest worked at the Met for thirty-five years (1928–63) and left an indelible mark on the institution. Having begun his graduate career as a medievalist, Priest went on two expeditions to China with the celebrated archaeologist and art

historian Langdon Warner (sometimes said to be an inspiration for the movie character Indiana Jones) and came highly recommended by Harvard professor Paul J. Sachs, a seminal figure in the development of American museology. During his tenure, Priest became known for his eccentric behavior, practical jokes, and penchant for buying what he liked and largely ignoring what he did not. Chinese sculpture happened to be one of Priest's passions, and by the end of his first decade as curator he had acquired a number of important works of Chinese sculpture, primarily from the Chinese dealer C. T. Loo and the Japanese firm founded by Yamanaka Sadajirō, both of whom operated galleries in New York (fig. 30). But the Museum's acquisitions continued to benefit from generous patrons, too. Among the most important for the Asian collection



28. *Kshitigarbha*. Korea, Goryeo dynasty (918–1392), first half of 14th century. Hanging scroll; ink, color, and gold on silk, 33 1/4 x 14 1/2 in. (84.5 x 36.8 cm). H. O. Havemeyer Collection, Gift of Horace Havemeyer, 1929 (29.160.32)

29. Alan R. Priest (1898–1969), 1934



was Abby Aldrich Rockefeller, the wife of John D. Rockefeller, Jr., and the driving force behind the establishment of the Museum of Modern Art in 1929. An avid collector of Asian art as well, she eventually donated fifty-four Asian works to the Met, including fourteen important Chinese sculptures, such as an image of the Bodhisattva Manjushri, identified by the scroll he holds in his right hand (fig. 31). Seated in a pose known as “royal ease,” this elegantly naturalistic figure, carved from a single block of wood, presents a worldly and approachable personification of compassion.

In addition to expanding the collection of Chinese sculpture, Priest was responsible for integrating the arts of South and Southeast Asia, which formerly had been organized as part of the Islamic and



30. "Water Moon" Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara. China, Liao dynasty (907–1125), 11th century. Willow with traces of pigment (multiple-woodblock construction), H. 46 $\frac{1}{2}$ in. (118.1 cm). Fletcher Fund, 1928 (28.56)

31. Bodhisattva Manjushri (Wenshu). China, Northern Song dynasty (960–1127). Foxglove with traces of pigment (single-woodblock construction), H. 43 in. (109.2 cm). Gift of Abby Aldrich Rockefeller, 1942 (42.25.5)





32. *Standing Brahma*. Cambodia, Angkor period, Khmer style of the Bakheng, ca. first quarter of 10th century. Sandstone, H. 47 1/2 in. (120.7 cm). Fletcher Fund, 1936 (36.96.3)

33. *Noh robe (nuihaku) with design of butterflies, chrysanthemums, maple leaves, and miscanthus grass*. Japan, Edo period (1615–1868), second half of 18th century. Silk embroidery and gold leaf on silk satin, 63 3/4 x 54 in. (161.9 x 137.2 cm). Purchase, Joseph Pulitzer Bequest, 1932 (32.30.1)

Ancient Near Eastern collection. This transition was hastened by Priest's spectacular acquisition of six Khmer sculptures in 1936 from the École Française d'Extrême Orient, among them an early tenth-century image of the Hindu god Brahma (fig. 32). Another of Priest's areas of interest was costumes, and he became renowned for staging theatrical exhibitions that brought such garments to life. Two eighteenth-century Noh robes (fig. 33) that Priest purchased in 1932 from Louis V. Ledoux, an American poet and noted collector of Japanese prints, were included in the 1935 exhibition "Japanese Costume: Nō Robes and Buddhist Vestments," in which garments were installed upon a bridge to evoke a procession of Buddhist monks.

In 1959, he mounted a second exhibition of Japanese robes featuring a re-creation of a Noh stage (fig. 34). Priest's 1945 exhibition, "Costumes from the Forbidden City," was an even more extravagant affair. One room was installed with an imaginary re-creation of the tomb of Prince Guo (1697–1738), the seventeenth son of the Kangxi emperor (r. 1662–1722), whose 1729 portrait (lent by the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City) Priest hung on the back wall. The prince himself was represented by a gold-painted skeleton dressed in his robes and reclining on a funeral bier (fig. 35). Francis Henry Taylor, the Metropolitan's director, was so offended by this outlandish display that he ordered the skeleton to be removed, but Priest replaced it prior to the



34. Noh stage with Noh costumes from the exhibition "Aristocracy of Robes," 1959



35. Imaginary re-creation of the tomb of Prince Guo in the exhibition "Costumes from the Forbidden City," 1945

36. *Vimalakirti Sutra* (detail). China, Dali Kingdom (937–1253), dated January 13, 1119. Handscroll; gold and silver on purple silk, 11 x 26 ft. 7/8 in. (27.9 x 794.7 cm). From the Collection of A. W. Bahr, Purchase, Fletcher Fund, 1947 (47.18.2)



opening and it created such a sensation that the director had little choice but to relent.⁸

Yet one could say that Priest left more skeletons in the closet. In 1947, in an apparent effort to catch up with the notable collections of Chinese painting already formed by the Nelson-Atkins, the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, and the Freer Gallery of Art, Washington D.C., Priest orchestrated a purchase of 142 Chinese paintings from the dealer A. W. Bahr, a sale that even at the time was viewed as ill-advised. Priest dismissed arguments that most of

the works were late copies, insisting that since there were few authentic Song dynasty paintings, extant fine copies were the best one could hope for. Today only one-tenth of the collection is deemed suitable for exhibition, but among these are some rare masterpieces, including an illustrated *Vimalakirti Sutra*, a Buddhist scripture executed in gold and silver on purple-dyed silk that was submitted to the Song court by the Dali Kingdom of Yunnan on January 13, 1119 (fig. 36), and *The Pleasures of Fishes*, an escapist image painted



by Zhou Dongqing in 1291, barely fifteen years after the fall of the Song capital to the Mongols (see details on inside front and back covers).

After the controversy surrounding the Bahr collection, Priest wisely decided to focus more on Japanese art as many masterpieces were once again

coming onto the market in the aftermath of the Second World War. Two of the most notable were the vivid pair of screen paintings of irises by Ogata Kōrin (fig. 37) and the equally sumptuous *Morning Glories* by Kōrin's follower Suzuki Kiitsu (fig. 38). These acquisitions came at a moment



37. Ogata Kōrin (Japanese, 1658–1716). *Iris at Yatsunashi (Eight Bridges)*, Edo period (1615–1868), after 1709. Pair of six-panel folding screens; ink and color on gold leaf on paper, each screen 64 ¹/₂ in. x 11 ft. 6 ³/₄ in. (163.7 x 352.4 cm). Purchase, Louisa Eldridge McBurney Gift, 1953 (53.7.1, .2)



38. Suzuki Kiitsu (Japanese, 1796–1858). *Morning Glories*, Edo period (1615–1868), early 19th century. Pair of six-panel folding screens; ink, color, and gold leaf on paper, each screen 70 ¹/₄ in. x 12 ft. 5 ¹/₂ in. (178.3 x 379.7 cm). Seymour Fund, 1954 (54.69.1, .2)



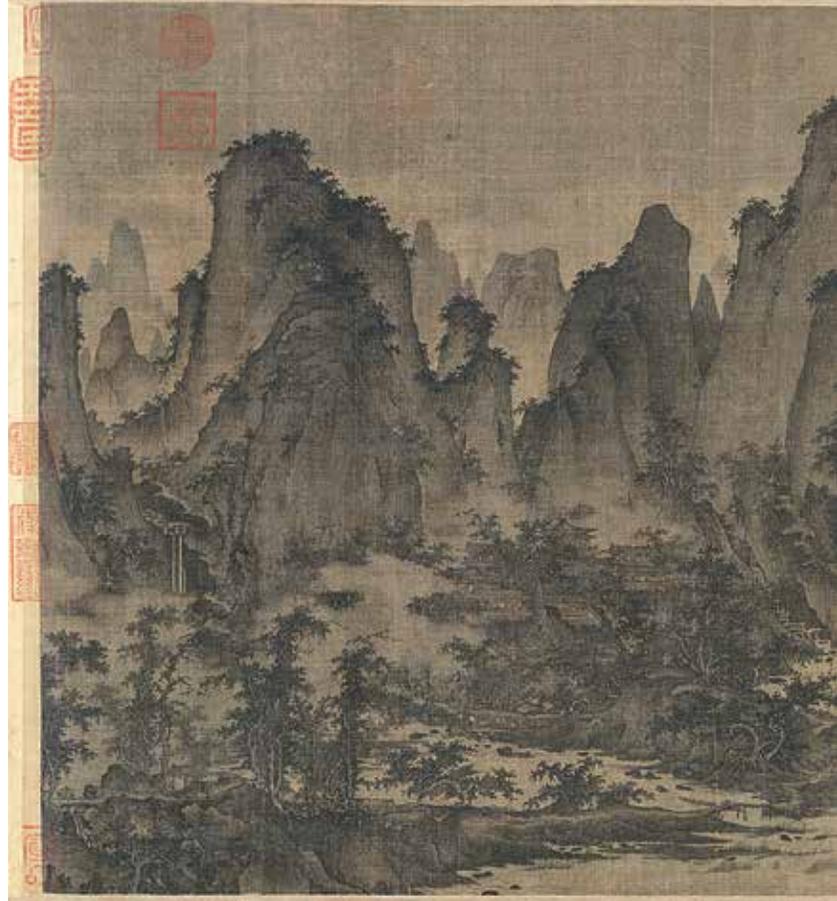
39. Wen Fong (b. 1930) and C. Douglas Dillon (1909–2003), 2000

40. Attributed to Qu Ding (Chinese, active ca. 1023–ca. 1056). *Summer Mountains*, Northern Song dynasty (960–1127), 11th century. Handscroll; ink and color on silk, 17 ⁷/₈ x 45 ³/₈ in. (45.4 x 115.3 cm). Ex coll.: C. C. Wang Family, Gift of The Dillon Fund, 1973 (1973.120.1)

41. Qian Xuan (Chinese, ca. 1235–before 1307). *Wang Xizhi Watching Geese*, Yuan dynasty (1271–1368), ca. 1295. Handscroll; ink, color, and gold on paper, 9 ¹/₈ x 36 ¹/₂ in. (23.2 x 92.7 cm). Ex coll.: C. C. Wang Family, Gift of The Dillon Fund, 1973 (1973.120.6)

when Japan, seeking to repair its image in the United States after the war, organized a major loan exhibition of officially designated National Treasures, which came to New York as part of a five-city tour. Priest oversaw the installation of the show at the Metropolitan, but it would be his last major exhibition as curator. For the final decade of Priest’s tenure, his relationship with his peers became increasingly chilly, so much so that in 1961, when the Metropolitan was one of five museums to host “Chinese Art Treasures,” a groundbreaking exhibition of masterpieces from the National Palace Museum, Taipei, the Museum was represented by Aschwin Lippe, a Dutch scholar who had joined the staff in 1949 as curator of Chinese painting and Indian art.

AMONG THE MEMBERS of the Honorary Committee for “Chinese Art Treasures” in 1961 was C. Douglas Dillon (fig. 39, left), at the time the U.S. secretary of the treasury. Dillon, who had already served as a Museum trustee from 1951 to 1953, soon resumed his trusteeship and, together with director Thomas Hoving, began to plan for the Museum’s



centennial, in 1970, and to set a course for its second century. The master plan they devised with architect Kevin Roche led to an eventual doubling of the Museum’s floor space, the footprint Luigi Palma di Cesnola had envisioned more than ninety years earlier. But as Dillon and Hoving surveyed the Metropolitan’s curatorial departments, they asked themselves a fundamental question: Should the Met focus on what it excelled at and abandon those areas in which it was weak, or should it rededicate itself to being an encyclopedic museum? The question was especially relevant to the Department of Far Eastern Art, widely acknowledged to be the weakest in terms of collections, staff, and exhibition space. Dillon, who





recognized the growing political and economic power of Asia—especially at a time when America was mired in the Vietnam War—not only strongly advocated for the latter course, he resolved to become personally involved in rebuilding Asian art at the Met.

A year after the Museum celebrated its centennial, Hoving recruited Princeton University professor Wen Fong (fig. 39, right) to lead the rejuvenation of the Museum’s collection of Asian art. Hoving had known Fong, who was then in the midst of building a significant collection of Chinese art for



Princeton, from when they were both graduate students there in medieval art. (That same year, I was fortunate enough to be invited to join the department as a curatorial assistant.) For the next three decades, Dillon and Fong worked together to raise the profile of the Metropolitan's Asian collections both within the building and in the field. Arguing that the Museum could never hope to do so acquiring one piece of art at a time, Fong reasoned that the Met needed to seek out whole collections. To that end, two extraordinary groups of work were acquired in the next five years: twenty-five Song (960–1279) and Yuan (1271–1368) dynasty paintings from artist and collector C. C. Wang (figs. 40, 41) and 702 works of Japanese art—ranging in date from prehistoric times (including 160 bone and

stone artifacts) to the Edo period (1615–1868)—from collector and dealer Harry G. C. Packard (fig. 42). Packard (fig. 43), a colorful figure who had first encountered Japanese art while serving as a Marine officer with the American occupation forces in China and Japan, eventually became a major collector and dealer. In order to fund the Packard acquisition, Hoving asked something extraordinary of curators throughout the building: to vote on whether to forgo their own access to the Museum's unrestricted acquisition funds for five years. Happily, a majority agreed to Hoving's unprecedented request. In 1982, South and Southeast Asian art was similarly strengthened by the purchase of a major group of sculptures from the collection of financier Christian Humann that



42. Kano Sansetsu (Japanese, 1590–1651). *Old Plum*, Edo period (1615–1868), ca. 1645. Four sliding-door panels (*fusuma*); ink, color, gold, and gold leaf on paper, 68 ³/₄ in. x 15 ft. 11 ¹/₈ in. (174.6 x 485.5 cm). The Harry G. C. Packard Collection of Asian Art, Gift of Harry G. C. Packard, and Purchase, Fletcher, Rogers, Harris Brisbane Dick, and Louis V. Bell Funds, Joseph Pulitzer Bequest, and The Annenberg Fund Inc. Gift, 1975 (1975.268.48a–d)

43. Harry G. C. Packard (1914–1991) in Tokyo studying sketches by Ogata Kōrin, November 1975





44. *Yashoda with the Infant Krishna*. India (Tamil Nadu, Pudukkottai and Tanjavur districts), Chola period (880–1279), early 12th century. Copper alloy, H. 17 1/2 in. (44.5 cm). Purchase, Lita Annenberg Hazen Charitable Trust Gift, in honor of Cynthia Hazen and Leon B. Polsky, 1982 (1982.220.8)

45. Brooke Russell Astor (1902–2007) in the Astor Court, 1997

had been reacquired by noted dealer Robert H. Ellsworth, who had earlier worked with Humann to build the collection over the course of twenty years (fig. 44).

Alongside Douglas Dillon, Brooke Russell Astor (fig. 45) was another early trustee-benefactor of the Department of Asian Art. Mrs. Astor was not a collector, but her childhood experiences in Beijing—where her father, John H. Russell, Jr., commanded the Marine Detachment at the American Legation from 1910 to 1913—inspired her to help the Met acquire a group of Ming dynasty (1368–1644) furniture (again from Robert Ellsworth) and then to create a period setting for them: the much-loved Astor Chinese Garden Court, modeled on a Ming garden courtyard in the city of Suzhou. Constructed entirely of hand-crafted wood, tile, and stone components, the court was completed in 1980 with the help of twenty-seven Chinese workers, who spent more than five months assembling it in what had been a light well to the first-floor Egyptian galleries of the Museum’s 1913 wing.

Flanking the Astor Court were the Douglas Dillon Galleries for Chinese Painting and Calligraphy, which opened in June 1981. At the time, the Met did not possess enough exhibition-worthy paintings in the collection to rotate even once (works done on silk or paper must be regularly rotated off view owing to their sensitivity to light). Fortunately, the creation of such a large, dedicated display space was just the commitment several prominent collectors were looking for, chief among them John M. Crawford, Jr., a fellow of the Morgan Library whose interest in incubula led him to an appreciation of Chinese calligraphy. “At last,” Crawford proclaimed, “a space big enough to show my collection.”⁹ The year the new galleries opened, Crawford made a promised gift of





46. Mi Fu (Chinese, 1052–1107). *Poem Written in a Boat on the Wu River* (detail), Northern Song dynasty (960–1127), ca. 1100. Handscroll; ink on paper, 12 ¼ in. x 18 ft. 3 ¼ in. (31.1 x 557 cm). Gift of John M. Crawford Jr., in honor of Professor Wen Fong, 1984 (1984.174)

47. Emperor Huizong (Chinese, r. 1101–25). *Finches and Bamboo*, Northern Song dynasty (960–1127). Handscroll; ink and color on silk, 13 ¼ x 21 7/8 in. (33.7 x 55.4 cm). John M. Crawford Jr. Collection, Purchase, Douglas Dillon Gift, 1981 (1981.278)



his entire collection of 227 paintings and calligraphies, arguably the finest such assemblage in private hands, including the dramatic *Poem Written in a Boat on the Wu River* by Mi Fu, one of China's preeminent scholar-calligraphers, and *Finches and Bamboo* by Emperor Huizong (r. 1101–25), both created around the year 1100 (figs. 46, 47). Crawford had formed his collection in the 1950s, and his timing could not have been better. The noted Chinese painter-connoisseur Zhang Daqian (Chang Ta-chien) had recently moved to Brazil and was financing the relocation of his family and the building of a garden through the sale of his art collection. Because Zhang

was also a notorious forger, most museums shunned anything bearing his seal of ownership. Consequently, Crawford was able to acquire extraordinary treasures from him—including more than thirty major paintings and calligraphies dating from the eleventh through the fourteenth century—that have since proved to be authentic, world-class masterpieces. Zhang and C. C. Wang, his younger contemporary, were among the leading Chinese art connoisseurs of the twentieth century, and as a result, the Met's holdings of Chinese paintings reflect traditional Chinese literati taste, a unique distinction among Western museums. The same



48. Wu Boli (Chinese, active late 14th–early 15th century). *Dragon Pine*, Ming dynasty (1368–1644), ca. 1400. Hanging scroll; ink on paper, 48 x 13 ¹/₄ in. (121.9 x 33.7 cm). Edward Elliott Family Collection, Gift of Douglas Dillon, 1984 (1984.475.3)

year Crawford announced his promised gift, the Museum was able to acquire forty-four additional works collected under the guidance of Wen Fong by another Princetonian, John B. Elliott, and his family. Dillon (backed by The Dillon Fund) stepped up to purchase the entire group, including a powerful image of a spiraling, dragonlike pine from about 1400 by the Daoist master Wu Boli (fig. 48). Five years later, in 1986, Robert Ellsworth, a neighbor of Dillon’s, donated some 481 nineteenth- and twentieth-century Chinese paintings, among them a dramatic “splashed-color” landscape by Zhang Daqian (fig. 49).

As the Met’s Asian collections began to grow, so too did the department’s curatorial staff. In 1972 Martin Lerner, an assistant curator at the Cleveland Museum of Art, was recruited to become the first curator of South and Southeast Asian art, and in 1973 Julia Meech, who had been teaching at Tokyo’s Sophia University, joined the staff as the Museum’s first specialist in Japanese art. With the Packard Collection as impetus—and thanks to Douglas Dillon’s diplomatic skills as well as generous grants from the Japanese government and a consortium of Japanese corporations, community groups, and individuals through the Japan Foundation—construction soon began on the Arts of Japan galleries, which opened to the public on April 20, 1987 (fig. 50). Occupying nearly 11,000 square feet in the Sackler Wing, these ten galleries include flexible spaces that can accommodate four millennia of Japanese art, from ancient works such as Jōmon and Yayoi pottery and Kofun-period Haniwa figures to Muromachi ink paintings and folding-screen paintings and decorative arts from the Momoyama and Edo periods. There is also a room for religious sculpture whose design is based on a twelfth-century Buddhist temple; a replica of a seventeenth-century temple study (*shoin*) as a setting for Kano Sansetsu’s *Old Plum* sliding-door panels (see fig. 42); and numerous examples of Japanese modern and contemporary art (see back cover) as well as works by



49. Zhang Daqian (Chinese, 1899–1983). *Splashed-Color Landscape*, dated 1965. Hanging scroll; ink and color on paper, 23 ³/₄ x 37 ³/₄ in. (60.3 x 95.9 cm). Gift of Robert Hatfield Ellsworth, in memory of La Ferne Hatfield Ellsworth, 1986 (1986.267.361)

50. Opening of the Arts of Japan galleries, 1987. Left to right: Metropolitan President William H. Luers; The Honorable Takeshi Yasukawa, former ambassador of Japan to the United States; Trustee Emeritus C. Douglas Dillon; His Excellency Ambassador Hidetoshi Ukawa, consul general of Japan in New York; and Metropolitan Director Philippe de Montebello

modern Japanese-American artists, such as *Water Stone* by Isamu Noguchi (1904–1988) and a suite of gallery furniture by George Nakashima (1905–1990).

IN 1985, the eminent scholar and curator James C. Y. Watt, described by one colleague as perhaps “the best objects man in the field,” joined the Metropolitan’s staff as the perfect complement to Wen Fong and his expertise in Chinese painting. With the support of Museum benefactors Charlotte C. and John C. Weber, Watt immediately set about building the collections of ancient Chinese art, an endeavor that culminated in May 1988 with the opening of the Charlotte C. Weber Galleries for the Arts of Ancient China. These spaces enabled the Museum to reinstall its superb holdings of later Chinese Buddhist sculpture, acquired from the 1920s to the 1940s, and to create an extensive display of the arts from Neolithic times through the tenth century A.D. Many of the works were newly acquired with the Webers’ help, including a lithe



51. *Female dancer*. China, Western Han dynasty (206 B.C.–A.D. 9), 2nd century B.C. Earthenware with slip and pigments; H. 21 in. (53.3 cm). Charlotte C. and John C. Weber Collection, Gift of Charlotte C. and John C. Weber, 1992 (1992.165.19)

52. *Pair of ritual wine containers (hu)*. China, Western Zhou (1046–771 B.C.)–Eastern Zhou (770–256 B.C.), late 9th–early 8th century B.C. Bronze, H. 21⁵/₈ in. (55 cm) each. Charlotte C. and John C. Weber Collection, Gift of Charlotte C. and John C. Weber through the Live Oak Foundation, 1988 (1988.20.4a, b, .5a, b)

53. Han Gan (Chinese, active ca. 742–56). *Night Shining White*, Tang dynasty (618–907), ca. 750. Handscroll; ink on paper, 12¹/₈ x 13³/₈ in. (30.8 x 34 cm). Purchase, The Dillon Fund Gift, 1977 (1977.78)

dancer captured in midstep as she begins to pivot on her right foot (fig. 51) and a pair of monumental bronze ritual wine vessels unlike anything else in the Met’s collection (fig. 52). The galleries also benefited from the bequest of some 150 works of ancient Chinese art from Ernest Erickson, a collector who had immigrated from Finland at the age of thirty and pursued a successful business career while also cultivating a lifelong passion for the arts (see illustration on p. 1).

With the opening of the Weber Galleries, the Arts of Japan galleries and the Astor Court as well as the flanking galleries for Chinese painting were at last linked to the Great Hall Balcony, which in 1992 was reinstalled (in the refurbished original cases made for the 1970 centennial) thanks to a

contribution of funds as well as sixty-two Chinese ceramics from New York collector and philanthropist Stanley Herzman. Yet the audacious scale of the Museum’s new galleries, in particular those for Chinese painting, proved no match for the generous outpouring of gifts from New York collectors and the sustained support of both Douglas Dillon and fellow trustee Oscar L. Tang, who in subsequent years helped the Museum acquire, respectively, an additional 135 Chinese paintings and a second group of early paintings from the collection of C. C. Wang (figs. 53, 54). Consequently, in May 1997—just sixteen years after the Met had opened its Chinese painting galleries—Dillon and Tang funded a complete renovation of the existing space as well as the addition of the C. C. Wang Gallery and the Frances Young Tang Gallery. This expansion allowed the Museum to create new third-floor galleries dedicated to Chinese decorative arts, which were generously funded and partially filled with works from the collection of Florence and Herbert Irving.

James Watt had introduced the Irvings to the Museum’s director, Philippe de Montebello, in the late 1980s, an encounter that Herb Irving still takes great pleasure in recounting. Watt, evidently, had repeatedly urged de Montebello to visit the Irvings on Long Island, but the famously patrician director had demurred, confessing later to being skeptical that any collectors of note could live there. Finally persuaded to go, he and Watt spent a full afternoon examining some of the 1,500 works that filled the Irving home. As they prepared to leave, the director







54. Zhu Da (Bada Shanren; Chinese, 1626–1705). *Two Eagles*, Qing dynasty (1644–1911), dated 1702. Hanging scroll; ink on paper, 73 x 35 1/2 in. (185.4 x 90 cm). Gift of the Oscar L. Tang Family, 2014 (2014.721)

55. *Seven-lobed platter with children at play*. China, Yuan dynasty (1271–1368), 14th century. Carved red lacquer, Diam. 21 7/8 in. (55.6 cm). Gift of Florence and Herbert Irving, 2015 (2015.500.1.31)

turned to them and announced, “Herb and Florence, we have to get married.” Florence soon joined the board, and the Irvings began to support the expansion of the Asian wing with both objects and funds. Under Watt’s supervision, the new galleries for Chinese decorative arts gave the Museum the

opportunity to showcase works that had been out of sight for decades, including the Heber Bishop collection of jades as well as lacquerwares, largely from the Irving collection, dating from the Han (206 B.C.–A.D. 220) through the Qing (1644–1911) dynasty (fig. 55). Many of the Irvings’ finest small-scale carvings and scholars’ objects in jade, ivory, bamboo, and rhinoceros horn were reinstalled in 2014 as the Chinese Treasury.

In addition to working with the Webers and Irvings, one of Watt’s singular achievements was the expansion of the Met’s holdings of early Chinese textiles dating from the late Tang to the early years of the Ming dynasty (8th–15th century).



56. *Mandala of Yamantaka-Vajrabhairava*. China, Yuan dynasty (1271–1368), ca. 1330–32. Silk tapestry (*kesi*), 96 ⁵/₈ x 82 ³/₈ in. (245.5 x 209 cm). Purchase, Lila Acheson Wallace Gift, 1992 (1992.54)

57. *Necklace comprising nine leaf-shaped pendants*. Indonesia (Java), late Central Javanese period, 8th–early 9th century. Gold, L. 15 ¹/₄ in. (38.7 cm). The Samuel Eilenberg–Jonathan P. Rosen Collection of Indonesian Gold, Bequest of Samuel Eilenberg and Gift of Jonathan P. Rosen, 1998 (1998.544.11a–i)

58. *Portrait of Atisha*. Tibet, ca. 1100. Opaque watercolor and gold on cloth, 19 ¹/₂ x 14 in. (49.5 x 35.4 cm). Gift of Steven Kossak, The Kronos Collections, 1993 (1993.479)

Taking advantage of the large numbers of early Asian textiles that came to light during the mid-1980s and early 1990s, Watt assembled a collection that has greatly extended our knowledge of early Chinese and Central Asian weaving and embroidery. One of Watt's most important discoveries was a tapestry-weave mandala, reassembled from fragments acquired from different sources, that includes imperial portraits of the Mongol khans for whom it was made between 1330 and 1332 (fig. 56).

The Irvings' passion for Asian art encompassed Indian sculpture, a connection that led them to support the creation of the Florence and Herbert Irving Galleries for the Arts of South and Southeast Asia: eighteen grand exhibition spaces that constitute the largest such display outside Asia. Opened in April 1994, the galleries—totaling some 13,500 square feet—were the culmination of more than two decades of collecting. When curator Martin Lerner arrived at the Met, in 1972, he had concluded that no more than sixty objects in the Met's collection were worthy of exhibition. Thanks largely to his efforts, the Irving Galleries now feature more than eight hundred works, mostly donations from private collectors. Foremost among these additions was the acquisition of the Samuel Eilenberg Collection, a wide-ranging group of works comprising early Javanese bronzes, including Buddhist and Hindu deities; ritual utensils dating from the eighth and ninth centuries; and a rich array of Javanese gold jewelry (fig. 57). Major acquisitions were also made of early painting and sculpture from Kashmir, Tibet (fig. 58), and Nepal, and a broad selection of Indian miniature paintings from Rajput and Pahari Hindu courts (fig. 59). Among this wealth of new acquisitions, two stand out as particularly transformative. One is a half-lifesize representation





59. The Kota Master (Indian, active early 18th century). *Radha and Krishna Walk in a Flowering Grove*, ca. 1720. Ink, opaque watercolor, and gold on paper, 7 ¹/₂ x 4 ³/₈ in. (19.1 x 11.1 cm). Cynthia Hazen Polsky and Leon B. Polsky Fund, 2003 (2003.178a)



60. *Avalokiteshvara*. Cambodia or Thailand, Angkor period, late 10th–early 11th century. Bronze with silver inlay, H. 22 ³/₄ in. (57.8 cm). Purchase, The Annenberg Foundation Gift, 1992 (1992.336)

of Avalokiteshvara, the Buddhist embodiment of divine compassion, who is seated in a version of the “royal ease” pose and embodies the balance of naturalism and idealism characteristic of early Angkor-period Khmer sculptures (fig. 60). A somewhat earlier gilt-copper Buddha from Sri Lanka, in contrast, presents an austere vision of spiritual perfection that is heightened by the figure’s robe, which cascades across his body in a rhythmic, linear pattern of drapery folds (fig. 61).

With galleries for China, Japan, and South and Southeast Asia in place, the only culture missing from the Met’s collection was Korea. But thanks to the critical support of Philippe de Montebello and Emily Kernan Rafferty, who later served as Museum president from 2005 until her retirement in March 2015, the Met was able to gain the support of the Korean government as well as a number of key pri-

vate and corporate donors, including Samsung and the Korea Foundation, to establish the Arts of Korea Gallery in 1998. Along with the new exhibition space, a generous endowment was established to fund future programming, from the regular rotation of the permanent collection to important loan exhibitions such as “Korean Ceramics from the Museum of Oriental Ceramics, Osaka” (2000) and “Art of the Korean Renaissance, 1400–1600” (2009).

Thus, when Wen Fong retired, in 2000, and turned over leadership of the department to James Watt, he did so having fulfilled the three goals that he and Douglas Dillon had originally established in 1971: a wing dedicated to Asian art, comprising more than fifty permanent galleries and nearly 64,000 square feet of exhibition space; a collection that in just thirty years had grown not only in quantity but in quality and breadth, enabling the



61. Buddha offering protection. Sri Lanka, late Anuradhapura (8th–10th century)–Polonnaruva period (993–1235), 10th century. Copper alloy with gilding, H. 23 ³/₄ in. (60.3 cm). Gift of Enid A. Haupt, 1993 (1993.387.8)

62. Sutra box with dragons. China, Ming dynasty (1368–1644), Yongle period (1403–24). Red lacquer with incised decoration and gilding, damascened-brass lock and key, L. 16 in. (40.6 cm). Purchase, Sir Joseph Hotung and The Vincent Astor Foundation Gifts, 2001 (2001.584a–c)

63. Chan Buddhist Patriarch Bodhidharma. China, Ming (1368–1644) or Qing (1644–1911) dynasty, 17th century. Rhinoceros horn, H. 4 ¹/₄ in. (10.8 cm). Purchase, The Vincent Astor Foundation Gift, 2011 (2011.344)



Museum to present the most comprehensive display of Asian art in the world; and a full complement of curatorial specialists. Still, the department continued to make key acquisitions during Watt's tenure as Brooke Russell Astor Chairman (2000–2011), adding to the works of Chinese decorative art that he had been steadily acquiring since he began his career at the Museum in 1985. An imperial-quality lacquer and gold scroll box for a Buddhist scripture, for example—sumptuously ornamented with incised dragons and stylized clouds and sealed with a miniature lock—highlights the lavish religious patronage of the early Ming Yongle emperor (fig. 62), while a small sculpture of Bodhidharma seated in meditation, made more than two centuries later, is a tour de force of rhinoceros-horn carving (fig. 63). Legend has it that this Indian Buddhist



64. *Pensive bodhisattva.* Korea, Three Kingdoms period (57 B.C.–A.D. 668), mid-7th century. Gilt bronze, H. 8 ⁷/₈ in. (22.5 cm). Purchase, Walter and Leonore Annenberg and The Annenberg Foundation Gift, 2003 (2003.222)

65. *Garment plaque in the shape of a stag.* Kazakhstan, 6th–5th century B.C. Bronze, H. 3 in. (7.6 cm). Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Eugene V. Thaw, 2002 (2002.201.172)

66. *Vishnu riding on Garuda.* Nepal, dated 1004. Gilt copper repoussé, H. 16 ¹/₂ in. (41.9 cm). Purchase, Lila Acheson Wallace, Jeffrey B. Soref and Natalie Soref Gifts, 2012 (2012.463)

monk brought the Chan tradition (Zen, in Japanese) to China in the early sixth century. Revered as a model of spiritual concentration, this precious object may have been created for private veneration. As chair, Watt also championed the acquisition of important works from other Asian cultures. Most notable are a set of fifteenth-century Japanese narrative paintings, *Long Tale for an Autumn Night*; several major works of Korean art, including a sublime seventh-century pensive bodhisattva (fig. 64); and an entire collection of Asian nomadic art—metalwork ornaments depicting animals, often in combat, favored by the peoples living around the Ordos region of the Central Asian steppes—

donated by trustee Eugene Thaw (fig. 65). Watt also authored several monographic catalogues and guided two comprehensive loan exhibitions to fruition, “China: Dawn of a Golden Age, 200–750 A.D.” (2004) and “The World of Kubilai Khan: Chinese Art in the Yuan Dynasty” (2010).

THE COMMITMENT OF THE MUSEUM to broaden and deepen the permanent collection while simultaneously organizing ambitious exhibitions is as strong as ever under the leadership of Director Thomas P. Campbell. New and important acquisitions include thirteen major works of Nepalese and Tibetan art from the Zimmerman collection that

67. *Mahakala, Protector of the Tent*. Tibet, ca. 1500. Distemper on cloth, 64 x 53 in. (162.6 x 134.6 cm). Gift of Zimmerman Family Collection, 2012 (2012.444.4)

range from a rare gilt-copper image of Vishnu astride his winged mount, Garuda (fig. 66), to a spectacularly rare and colorful wall hanging, or *tangka* (fig. 67), depicting the protective deity Mahakala (a fierce form of the Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara) radiating a flaming aureole and encircled by tutelary spirits as well as idealized portraits of the early lineage of masters of the Sakya school, one of the “Red Cap” sects of Tibetan Buddhism. Equally significant for the Met’s Japanese collection was the acquisition of some 250 rare illustrated books from the Arthur and Charlotte Vershbow Collection (fig. 68). Created by some of the same artists renowned for their individual woodblock prints—Utamaro, Hokusai, and Kunisada—these early editions, acquired in 2013 with the generous support of Mary Wallach, are valued not only for their pristine quality but also for their historical provenance, as many come from nineteenth-century Parisian collectors who played a major role in fostering what came to be known as Japonisme among post-Impressionist painters and designers of the era.

In addition to these significant purchases, major exhibitions continue to offer comprehensive looks at artistic traditions seldom seen in the West, including the groundbreaking “Lost Kingdoms” in 2014, which explored the early art of Southeast Asia. One notable innovation of recent years is a commitment by the department to integrate works of contemporary Asian art into the collection when they can meaningfully extend and enrich understanding of traditional culture. “Ink Art,” a major loan exhibition in 2013–14, explored how contemporary Chinese artists draw inspiration from traditional sources even as they transform their



models. Several recent acquisitions, moreover—including Kohei Nawa’s *PixCell-Deer#24* in 2011 (see back cover) and Sopheap Pich’s *Buddha 2* in 2013 (fig. 69), as well as a number of recently acquired contemporary Chinese paintings and Japanese ceramics—confirm how the juxtaposition of ancient and modern serves to build audiences and enhance awareness of Asian art.

This spring, as the department launched its centennial celebrations, two major gifts arrived that are among the most transformative in the history of Asian art at the Met. First, the Burke Foundation announced its donation of more than three hundred works from the Mary Griggs Burke Collection, widely regarded as the finest and most comprehensive private collection of Japanese art outside Japan. This gift comprises in excess of two hundred paintings—including some thirty pairs of folding screens, such as the spectacular early seventeenth-century *Willows and Bridge* (fig. 70)—as well as outstanding



68. Kitao Masanobu (Santō Kyōden; Japanese, 1761–1816). *New Mirror Comparing the Handwriting of the Courtesans of the Yoshiwara*, Edo period (1615–1868), 1784. Woodblock printed book; ink and color on paper, 15 x 10 ¹/₄ in. (38 x 26 cm). Mary and James G. Wallach Family Foundation Gift, in honor of John T. Carpenter, 2013 Purchase, Mary and James G. Wallach Foundation Gift (2013.768)

69. Sopheap Pich (Cambodian, born 1971). *Buddha 2*, 2009, shown installed in the Khmer Courtyard. Rattan, wire, and dye, H. 100 in. (254 cm). Purchase, Friends of Asian Art Gifts, 2012 (2012.349)



religious sculptures and decorative arts, effectively doubling the Met's holdings of top-quality Japanese art. Also in the Burke gift are four important Korean works, notably, a rare, royally commissioned early Joseon dynasty (1392–1910) painting of the Buddha Shakyamuni, dated 1565, and a monochrome painting of bamboo by Yi Jeong (active early 17th century), the premier literati artist of his time. Less than a month later, Florence and Herbert Irving capped their years of support with the gift of nearly 1,300 works of Asian art, encompassing all the major cultures of East and South Asia (figs. 55, 71) and virtually every medium explored by Asian craftsmen over five millennia. Areas of particular strength include Chinese, Japanese, and Korean lacquers; South Asian sculpture and Chinese jades, hardstones,



and scholars' objects of ivory, rhinoceros horn, wood, metalwork, and bamboo; Japanese ceramics; and Chinese and Japanese paintings. Taken together, these two gifts fill notable gaps and add to the Met's existing strengths in ways that further elevate the Museum's stature as one of the world's premier collections of Asian art.

As we observe the anniversary of the founding of the Department of Asian Art, the need for building greater understanding of Asian cultures has never been greater. For the past four decades, the Metropolitan has been a leader in mounting innovative exhibitions and producing scholarly publications that address all aspects of Asian culture. During that time, the department has published more than ninety volumes, including thirty-seven catalogues and monographs on the permanent collection, twenty-three major exhibition catalogues, sixteen *Bulletins*, six symposium volumes, and, in 2011, our first iPad publication, on the sensuous yet rustic Buncheong ceramics of Korea. None of this would have been possible without the extraordinary collaboration of collectors, dealers, curators, and museum professionals who share our commitment to making the arts of Asia an integral part of the Met's narrative of world culture. This collection of passionate individuals, with their belief that art from all cultures is humanity's shared heritage, is the true heart and soul of the Metropolitan Museum.



70. *Willows and Bridge*. Japan, Momoyama period (1573–1615), early 17th century. Pair of six-panel folding screens; ink, color, gold, copper, and gold leaf on paper, each screen 67 in. x 28 ft. 3 5/8 in. (170.1 x 345.3 cm). Mary Griggs Burke Collection, Gift of the Mary and Jackson Burke Foundation, 2015 (2015.300.105.1, .2)

71. *Standing Ganesha*. India (Tamil Nadu), Chola period, 12th century. Copper alloy, H. 25 1/2 in. (64.8 cm). Gift of Florence and Herbert Irving, 2015 (2015.500.4.12)

NOTES

1. The interior of Wing K, the southernmost portion of the Fifth Avenue building, remained vacant until 1926 owing to delays caused by the First World War. Morrison H. Heckscher, "The Metropolitan Museum of Art: An Architectural History," *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin*, n.s., 53, no. 1 (Summer 1995), p. 53.
2. Calvin Tomkins, *Merchants and Masterpieces: The Story of The Metropolitan Museum of Art*, rev ed. (1970; New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1989), pp. 169–71.
3. Unfortunately, Ferguson's index also gave Chinese forgers the opportunity to make paintings based on recorded descriptions of lost originals.
4. John C. Ferguson, letter to Robert W. deForest, July 23, 1912, MMA Archives, quoted in Lara Jaishree Netting, *A Perpetual Fire: John C. Ferguson and His Quest for Chinese Art and Culture* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2013), p. 53.
5. "Pick New Curator for Far East Art at Metropolitan," *Evening World* (New York), June 19, 1915.
6. Tomkins, *Merchants and Masterpieces*, p. 167.
7. Ferguson, letter to Sigisbert Chrétien Bosch Reitz, July 28, 1923, MMA Archives.
8. Tomkins, *Merchants and Masterpieces*, p. 290.
9. Personal communication with the author.



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This entire Bulletin is intended as an acknowledgment—however abbreviated and incomplete—of the generations of collectors, curators, dealers, donors, and directors who have together shaped the identity of the Metropolitan Museum and its holdings of Asian art. It is also an acknowledgment of the sometimes serendipitous ways in which this collection's contents have been guided by individual passions and interests. So while the Met's holdings are admirably diverse, encompassing works from every major Asian culture and spanning nearly five millennia of development, diversity is not the same as completeness. To achieve a truly encyclopedic representation of Asia's artistic traditions demands a knowledgeable team of professionals working in tandem with an international community of collectors and scholars whose areas of interest extend beyond inherited definitions of Asian art to embrace the full spectrum of both contemporary and traditional forms of expression and craftsmanship. To meet that challenge, the Department of Asian Art continues to benefit from the strong leadership of Director Thomas P. Campbell and the remarkable trustees, administrators, educators, editors, designers, fundraisers, and operational staff that make up the Met's unrivaled community of professionals

and advocates. Most of all, I would like to recognize the dedicated service of the members of the Department of Asian Art: our art handlers, collections managers, administrators, master conservators of East Asian painting, and our incomparable curatorial team, whose energy and expertise are what will propel the department into its second century: Kurt Behrendt, associate curator; Monika Bincsik, assistant curator; John Carpenter, Mary Griggs Burke Curator of Japanese Art; John Guy, Florence and Herbert Irving Curator of the Arts of South and Southeast Asia; Soyoung Lee, associate curator; Denise Leidy, Brooke Russell Astor Curator of Chinese Art; Shi-ye Liu, assistant research curator; Pengliang Lu, Henry A. Kissinger Curatorial Fellow; Joseph Scheier-Dolberg, assistant curator; and Jason Sun, Brooke Russell Astor Curator of Chinese Art. The Met's collection will always be a work in progress, but thanks to this aggregation of talent and to what we have inherited from the past, the future looks very bright.

MAXWELL K. HEARN

Douglas Dillon Chairman, Department of Asian Art

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Front cover: detail, Kano Sansetsu (Japanese, 1590-1651), *Old Plum*, Edo period (1615-1868), ca. 1645 (see fig. 44). Back cover: Kohei Nawa (Japanese, born 1975), *PixCell-Deer#24*, 2011. Mixed media, taxidermed deer with artificial crystal glass, H. 80³/₄ in. (205 cm). Purchase, Acquisitions Fund and Peggy and Richard M. Danziger Gift, 2011 (2011.493a-j). Inside front and back covers: detail, Zhou Dongqing (Chinese, active late 13th century), *The Pleasures of Fishes*. Yuan dynasty (1271-1368), dated 1291. Handscroll; ink and color on paper, 12¹/₈ x 19 ft. 4 in. (30.8 cm x 593.7 cm). From the Collection of A. W. Bahr, Purchase, Fletcher Fund, 1947 (47.18.10). Page 1: *Pendant in the shape of a knotted dragon*. China, Eastern Zhou dynasty, Warring States period (475-221 B.C.), 3rd century B.C. Jade (nephrite), H. 3¹/₈ in. (7.9 cm). Gift of Ernest Erickson Foundation, 1985 (1985.214.99). Page 2: *Buddha Shakyamuni*. Tibet, 11th-12th century. Brass with colored pigments, H. 15¹/₂ in. (39.4 cm). Purchase, Lila Acheson Wallace, Oscar L. Tang, Anthony W. and Lulu C. Wang and Annette de la Renta Gifts, 2012 (2012.458). Fig. 1: Raimundo de Madrazo y Garreta (Spanish, 1841-1920), *Samuel P. Avery (1822-1904)*, 1876. Oil on wood, 24 x 19³/₄ in. (61 x 48.9 cm). Gift of the family of Samuel P. Avery, 1904 (04.29.1). Fig. 11: Berquin-Varangoz Workshop, *Heber R. Bishop (1840-1902)*, 1898. Jade (nephrite), 10 x 8 in. (25.4 x 20.3 cm). Gift of Heber R. Bishop, 1902 (02.18.800)

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