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I sincerely hope that you all enjoyed the summer, which arrived late but brought many beautiful days.

In July, a small group from the Asian Art Council traveled to Santa Fe. This trip is reported in detail elsewhere in this newsletter (see page 3), but I want to mention up front that our visits to private collections were extraordinary. Particularly memorable were David Frank and Kazukuni Sugiyama’s collection of Japanese ceramics, mingei, and paintings, the Dirks collection of ukiyo-e prints, and the Klein collection of Japanese baskets and contemporary art, including early works by Yayoi Kusama. During each visit, the collectors were present and their passion was contagious.


A full roster of AAC programs and other Asian art–related events and exhibitions is listed in the calendar on the back of this newsletter. It includes the grand and festive Diwali Gala on November 7, co-chaired by Anu and Arjun Agarwal and AAC board member Barbara Levy Kipper, and our upcoming Encounters with Asia series in April of 2016, focused on India. I encourage you to take part in as much of this programming as possible.

I’ll close by referring to a photo taken at our annual meeting in May, for which all past presidents of the Asian Art Council gathered with Tao Wang. Each former president remains actively involved in the AAC today, and the dedication of these leaders has been central to the continuing success of our organization. Hearty thanks to each of them!

Very truly yours,

Charles Mottier
Events

Asian Art Council Programs for the 2015–16 Season
—Heather Black and Keven Wilder, Asian Art Council vice presidents for programs

The 2015–16 season of Asian Art Council programs is packed with exciting opportunities to explore diverse aspects of Asian art and culture. At our festive Fall Kickoff on September 10, Tao Wang, Pritzker Chair of Asian Art and curator of Chinese art, regaled us with descriptions of celebrated Chinese collectors at the turn of the 20th century. Our September 30 evening at the Casino, chaired by Ann Grube and Susan Higinbotham, featured historian and Japanese-garden expert Kendall Brown. Brown expanded on his widely acclaimed book Quiet Beauty: The Japanese Gardens of North America, demonstrating that the Chicago area is arguably the most dynamic place for Japanese gardens in the United States. Our next event is a day-long, docent-led excursion to the famed Anderson Japanese Gardens in Rockford, Illinois on October 24.

Asia Week New York is always a highlight for collectors of Asian art. Next March, for the first time, the Asian Art Council is organizing informal, curator-led walking tours of select Asian galleries in New York City, allowing members to make their own travel plans but have the opportunity for exclusive introductions to some of the best Asian art available.

Finally, we are thrilled to announce that in April 2016 Encounters with Asia will feature the art of India, exploring Chola bronzes, Mughal paintings, jewels and enamel, and contemporary art from India. The 4-part weekly series is jointly sponsored by AAC, the Art Institute’s Friends of Indian and Islamic Art, and Sustaining Fellows.

Special thanks to those of you who participated in our recent e-mail survey, which helps ensure that future program planning reflects the broad interests of our membership.

We look forward to seeing you at upcoming programs.

Review: The Art of Display—Chinese Objects in Modern Museums and Historical Contexts, Jan Stuart, April 23, 2015
—Elinor Pearlstein, associate curator of Asian art

How does one install almost seventeen hundred Chinese ceramics from the most prestigious collection of its type in the Western world? This was the challenge faced by Jan Stuart in 2007, when the British Museum received the Sir Percival David Collection on permanent loan from the University of London on the condition that it be displayed in its entirety. Stuart, then chair of the museum’s Asian department, recognized this challenge as an unparalleled opportunity to attract, entice, and inform visitors about one of China’s greatest artistic traditions.

In recounting to the AAC the history of the collection and the events that led to the opening of the ceramic gallery in 2009, Stuart, now Melvin R. Seiden Curator of Chinese Art at the Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery in Washington, D.C., emphasized the importance of historical perspective when making modern decisions for assembly and display—the need to recognize, for example, similar objects in paintings of imperial settings. Stuart then turned to the remarkable academic achievements and connoisseurship of Sir Percival David (1892–1965). David’s success came largely from first-hand experiences with the imperial collection; he personally supported the refurbishment of the Palace Museum’s ceramic gallery in the early 1920s and the acquisition of imperial wares from a private sale in 1927. He also spearheaded the landmark International Exhibition of Chinese Art (London, 1935–36), which combined objects in the Palace Museum with those from public and private collections worldwide.

Stuart described three areas of exceptional quality and rarity in the David collection: inscribed wares, some of which date as early as the 10th century, superb 11th- to 13th-century stonewares, 15th- and 16th-century imperial porcelains, and 18th-century imperial porcelains painted in overglaze enamels. Finally, she described the stages of gallery construction as well as state-of-the-art technologies designed to facilitate visitor education. Stuart concluded with the hope that the efforts of the project’s more than 100 collaborators would garner approval from those who originally commissioned these extraordinary works of art.
July 2015 Asian Art Council Trip to Santa Fe
— James M. Trapp, Asian Art Council director

Eight members of the AAC set off for Santa Fe, New Mexico on July 22 to see if there were any Japanese treasures to be found in the art center of the Southwest, and indeed there were! With our guide, local art expert Ellen Bradbury, we enjoyed an “insider’s” visit to Santa Fe.

Our little group was treated to three major collections and guided tours by the collectors themselves. First was the collection of David Frank and Kazukuni Sugiyama, featuring ceramics, paintings, lacquer, and mingei, followed by a festive lunch. Next we visited the magnificent home of Lee Dirks, where we viewed his exquisite ukiyo-e collection along with with a most engaging group of artworks by American painters in Santa Fe. The famed bamboo art dealer Rob Coffland hosted dinner at his home following a splendid luncheon and tour of bamboo baskets at Margo Thoma’s TAI Modern gallery.

We also enjoyed a tour of Georgia O’Keeffe’s Abiquiu homestead and studio and a warm welcome at the home of Mickey and Jeanne Klein, who shared their spectacular contemporary art collection. Meanwhile, Donezetti’s Daughter of the Regiment was playing at the Santa Fe Opera, and the annual Spanish Market was just a short walk from our hotel. The group also dined at three of Santa Fe’s finest restaurants.

Department News

Chairman’s Report
— Tao Wang, Pritzker Chair of Asian Art and curator of Chinese art

First of all, I’m pleased to report that thanks to the AAC and FIA annual gifts, along with several generous private donations, a total of five pieces—a scroll of Hon’ami Koetsu’s classical calligraphy, a painting by contemporary artist Ibe Gates of the Lord, a set of calligraphic prints, and a page from a ragamala set—have been recently added to the Asian art collection at the Art Institute.

We have a number of exciting Asian-art events occurring this fall and in the coming months. The exhibition Gates of the Lord: The Tradition of Krishna Paintings opened on September 13 (see following article) and is attracting significant attention from the international art world as well as the Indian community here in the U.S. It is the first exhibition of its kind, and all featured pieces have been borrowed directly from India. The Department of Asian Art is planning another exhibition for the summer of 2016 featuring Barbara Levy Kipper’s promised gift of Asian jewelry, including works from the Himalayan regions. Several other Asian exhibitions are currently in the planning stages.

For the permanent collection, we are considering changes to the galleries that will allow for more frequent rotations and the improved presentation of our masterpieces. We have begun an internal collection assessment and strategy initiative with the aim of upgrading our collection and making it more distinctive.

Finally, Craig McBride has retired (see page 7). While we are very sad to see him leave the department, the AAC has awarded him a lifetime membership, so we hope to see him often! We also want to congratulate Annette Gaspers on her promotion to departmental specialist.

Exhibition: Gates of the Lord—The Tradition of Krishna Paintings
— Madhuvanti Ghose, Alsdorf Associate Curator of Indian, Southeast Asian, Himalayan, and Islamic Art

Gates of the Lord: The Tradition of Krishna Paintings offers a rare glimpse into one of the world’s most private religious traditions: the art and aesthetics of the Pushtimarg sect of Hinduism. The exhibition comprises a magnificent assembly of drawings, pichwais, paintings, and historic photographs. It is the first time these artistic treasures—borrowed from two rarely exhibited, prestigious private collections from India, the Amit Ambalal Collection in Ahmedabad and the TAPI Collection from Surat—will be seen in the United States.

The Pushtimarg is a religious community dedicated to the devotion of Shrinathji, a divine image of the Hindu god Krishna as a seven-year-old child. The religious and artistic heart of the sect is based in the temple town of Nathdwara (literally, “the Gates of the Lord”), near Udaipur in the state of Rajasthan, India. Nathdwara and its artists are renowned for having preserved painting traditions in an unbroken legacy for more than four centuries. Gates of the Lord celebrates these living, traditional artists who have long gone unrecognized.
Mellon-funded program entered a new phase with the award of a ten-month research fellowship to Jin Xu of the University of Chicago. Xu taught a survey of Chinese art exclusively from our collection this past spring and is now turning to the focus of his PhD dissertation, carved stones used in the furnishing of Chinese tombs from the fourth to seventh century. Pictorial stones in the Art Institute’s collection will play an integral role in his research.

This June, Xu attended a summer institute in technical art history at the Conservation Center of the Institute of Fine Arts, New York University—an intensive two-week program conducted in state-of-the-art laboratories and museum galleries. Among the most important scientific advances discussed was reflectance transformation imagery (RTI)—a technology that enables the viewer to examine a work of art with previously unknown precision, as if it were hit with a raking light from multiple angles. Working with our conservation scientists, Xu hopes to apply RTI technology to our pictorial stones and glean insight into their technique and style. To garner preliminary feedback from his colleagues in China, Jin presented a paper on these stones at an international conference on ancient tomb art at the University of Chicago Center in Beijing. He took with him ink rubbings of the images so that attendees could study them up close despite being a half a world away.

Loans for the Islamic Galleries
—Daniel Walker, Christa C. Mayer Thurman Chair and Curator of Textiles and curator of Islamic art

The Art Institute’s Islamic collection consists largely of donations amassed over the years—and without an overriding collecting philosophy—from private collectors in Chicago. Our holdings include splendid material, but inevitably there are historical gaps. In the installation of Islamic art that opened last November, several of these were filled by loans, including two special objects discussed here.

Our collection is weak in early medieval metalwork. This has been remedied with the loan of a fine bronze incense burner in the form of a feline—a lion, or perhaps a lynx (see illustration)—from a private collection in New York. It dates from the eleventh or twelfth century and can be attributed to a region of northeastern Iran known as Khorasan. Incense was...
placed inside the burner by tipping the head forward (note the hinge at the base of the neck). Scented smoke escaped through the many holes in the scrolling vine pattern that adorns the body. The animal’s facial features, upper legs, and stance are highly stylized, suggesting that its creator did not intend a naturalistic form.

The Art Institute’s collection is rich in paintings and calligraphy from manuscripts and albums. Still, our complete manuscripts are very few. A splendid complement to our own holdings—and a reminder that objects have stories to tell—is a slender manuscript from a private collection in Cincinnati. Known as a muqaddimat as-salat, it is a guide to the religious obligations of a devout Muslim, particularly praying and fasting. The manuscript was completed from 1526–27 in the city of Herat, now in Afghanistan, by the famous calligrapher Mir‘Ali al-Katib. Its text of 170 verses, presented in ten chapters and embellished with illumination, was composed by Mir‘Ali himself for his son, who was perhaps seven or eight at the time. Numerous seals and inscriptions on the first and last pages reveal that the manuscript entered the Imperial Mughal Library in India on February 15, 1627, was properly signed in by the Emperor Jahangir, and was viewed by his son, the Emperor Shah Jahan, on at least fifteen occasions. One wonders if the manuscript was in fact used by these great rulers as it was originally intended—to educate young sons.

**Final Year of the VMPME at the Art Institute**
—Allison Siragusa, Museum Excellence program coordinator

On behalf of the Art Institute, Madhuvanti Ghose attended the final Vivekananda Memorial Program for Museum Excellence (VMPME), which kicked off with a seminar at the National Council of Science Museums in Kolkata on July 15. Presentations were held on the subject of museums in the digital age. For the 2015–16 year of VMPME, the Ministry of Culture, the government of India, and the Art Institute mutually decided to focus on the subjects of collection stewardship, interpretation, and audience engagement. The 2015–16 Museum Excellence Fellows visit the Art Institute of Chicago from September 28–October 14. As in past years, after the fellows’ time in Chicago, intensive follow-up will continue via videoconference and monthly assignments.

**Acquisitions**

**Ibe Kyoko’s Galaxy**  
—Janice Katz, Roger L. Weston Associate Curator of Japanese Art

At the annual meeting in May, *Galaxy* by Ibe Kyoko was voted this year’s Asian Art Council gift to the Department of Asian Art (see cover). The artist’s studio, which I was able to visit last November, sits high in the hills surrounding Kyoto. She has pioneered the use of *gampi* paper in contemporary art, having researched ancient methods and extant works to arrive at her unique process of mixing in mineral pigments to create a swirling universe of color.

Less widely available than *kozo* (mulberry), the most common plant used for paper, *gampi* is a superior material in the artist’s mind. Its fibers are short and fine and spread easily in water. The pulp is spread out on a rack, portions of which have small bamboo stalks that create an undulating texture once the paper has dried. This effect can be seen at the top and bottom of *Galaxy*. Mica, gold, silver, and mineral pigments are added along with manuscript fragments.

The calligraphy set into the paper of this work is derived from fragments of manuscript books from the late Edo to Meiji periods. These books were purchased by the artist from antique dealers or owned by her family. The most visible characters on each side are “light” and “moon,” meant to refer to the eternal elements of the universe. According to the artist, the smaller characters focus on that which is ephemeral—love, war, and human life.

In November of last year, traditional handmade Japanese papermaking was added to the UNESCO intangible heritage list, and we are especially pleased to bring this work to the collection this year. The acquisition represents our continuing quest for traditional media in contemporary art, and I’m grateful to the Asian Art Council for making it possible.

**Chinese Scepter and Seal**
—Elinor Pearlstein, associate curator of Chinese art

For the man of letters in late imperial China, the studio was a private realm of intellectual and artistic inspiration. Its furnishings exhibited an aesthetic quite different from the luxuriously refined objects commissioned for the court, but they held an equally prominent place in Chinese art and culture. Together with an inscribed scholar’s rock, acquired last year (fall 2014 ACC Newsletter), two distinctive desk accessories (see cover) recently enhanced our very small collection of literati arts.

First is a slender scepter, or staff, carved of a golden brown species of boxwood, a small evergreen shrub. While preserving the stem’s naturally gnarled and twisted form, the scepter’s craftsman has powerfully sculpted the head in the form of an auspicious mushroom (*ruyi*, literally, “as one wishes”) with curling leaves and a double cloud-like head and
The Rajasthani style, developed in the princely state of Kishangarh, is regarded as one of the most important and sought-after schools of Indian painting. The Art Institute has very few quality examples of this style. A recent acquisition, *The Vallabhacharya Pontiff (Tilakayat) Dauji II and a Visitor (c. 1825)*, thus makes a valuable addition to our modest collection from this important school.

The painting shows Tilakayat Damodarji II (1797–1826), popularly known as Dauji, the religious leader of the important Pushtimarg sect, wearing a green halo and seated at the right. His visitor holds a book that mentions the tilkayat as author. Both figures are dressed in priestly style: bare-chested with saffron robes from the waist down. Their foreheads are smeared with sandalwood *tikakas*, and they wear elaborate jewelry.

The Pushtimarg sect has a large following of believers devoted to Vishnu and to his eighth incarnation, Krishna. It was founded in 1493 by revered philosopher Vallabhacharya. Its center, where Krishna in the aspect of Shrinathji is still worshipped, is Nathdwara, near Udaipur in Rajasthan. Damodarji was a powerful leader of the sect in the early 19th century. Like several other rulers of Rajasthan, the maharajas of Kishangarh were followers of the Pushtimarg, so it is not surprising to find a portrait of Dauji II in the Kishangarh style. This portrait makes a significant addition to *Gates of the Lord: The Tradition of Krishna Paintings* (see page 4).

**Meet the People**

**Farewell to Craig McBride**

—Elinor Pearlstein, associate curator of Chinese art

After more than 35 years of dedicated and discerning service to the Art Institute, Craig McBride, department specialist in Asian art, retired on August 7. He had personally overseen the transportation (if not installation) of virtually every work in our Asian collection.

Craig made equally impressive contributions to the public and behind the scenes. His astute sense of design guided and refined the installation of permanent galleries and special exhibitions alike. And he was instrumental in the complete refurbishment of our Asian storage facilities, creating innovative means for access and visibility and always resourcefully finding ways to accommodate the collection’s dramatic expansion. Staff, visiting scholars, and students universally respected and drew upon his intimate knowledge of the collection and its materials. Craig’s considerable talents as a potter gave him special insight into the strengths of our Asian ceramics collection. Many AAC members know Craig as the man in the blue art-handler’s jacket, who, with a deferential bow, kindly asked that wine glasses be kept at safe distances from works of art.

His contributions were featured in the fall 2006 issue of our newsletter. As noted by Tao Wang in this issue, the AAC executive committee has recognized Craig with an honorary lifetime membership. We are especially pleased to announce that Craig’s colleague Annette Gaspers has been promoted to succeed him.
Calendar of Asian Art Events

EXHIBITIONS

The Art Institute of Chicago

Gates of the Lord: The Tradition of Krishna Paintings
Regenstein Hall
September 13, 2015–January 6, 2016

Kesa: Japanese Buddhist Monks’ Vestments
Galleries 57–59

Transitory Beauty: Japanese Fan Prints
Gallery 107
October 17, 2015–March 27, 2016

California

Woven Luxuries: Indian, Persian, and Turkish Velvets from the Indictor Collection
Asian Art Museum, San Francisco
Through November 1, 2015

Looking East: How Japan Inspired Monet, Van Gogh, and other Western Artists
Asian Art Museum, San Francisco
October 30, 2015–February 7, 2016

Florida

Royal Taste: The Art of Princely Courts in 15th-Century China
The Ringling Museum, Sarasota
October 9, 2015–January 10, 2016

Kansas

Flowers to Frost: Four Seasons in East Asian Art
The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City
Through July 17, 2016

Massachusetts

Made in the Americas: The New World Discovers Asia
Museum of Fine Arts, Boston
August 18, 2015–February 15, 2016

New York

The Royal Hunt: Courtly Pursuits in Indian Art
Metropolitan Museum of Art
Through December 8, 2015

Masterpieces of Chinese Painting from the Metropolitan Collection
Metropolitan Museum of Art
September 12, 2015–April 24, 2016

Chinese Textiles: Eight Centuries of Masterpieces from the Met Collection
Metropolitan Museum of Art
September 12, 2015–June 19, 2016

Chinese Lacquer: Treasures from the Irving Collection, 12th–18th Century
Metropolitan Museum of Art
September 12, 2015–June 19, 2016

Japan Society
October 9, 2015–January 10, 2016

Celebrating the Arts of Japan: The Mary Griggs Burke Collection
Metropolitan Museum of Art
October 20, 2015–July 31, 2016

Encountering Vishnu: The Lion Avatar in Indian Temple Drama
Metropolitan Museum of Art

Washington

Calligraphic Abstraction
Seattle Asian Art Museum
Through October 4, 2015

Chiho Aoshima: Rebirth of the World
Seattle Asian Art Museum
Through October 4, 2015

Washington, D.C.

Vietnam’s Ceramics: Depth and Diversity
Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, sublevel 3
Opened July 11, 2015

Perspectives: Lara Baladi
Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, sublevel 3
Through June 5, 2016

Bold and Beautiful: Rinpa in Japanese Art
Freer Gallery of Art
Through January 3, 2016

Enigmas: The Art of Bada Shanren (1626–1705)
Freer Gallery of Art
Through January 3, 2016

Lineage of Elegance: Tawaraya Sotatsu
Arthur M. Sackler Gallery

London

The Fabric of India
Victoria and Albert Museum

Bejewelled Treasures: The Al Thani Collection
Victoria and Albert Museum
November 21, 2015–March 28, 2016

Paris

Ancient Tibetan Bonpo Art
Musée Guimet
Through October 12, 2015

Zurich

Revealing Strokes
Museum Rietberg
Through October 4, 2015

IEEE EVENTS

Excursion to the Anderson Gardens, Rockford, IL
Saturday, October 24, 2015
9:30–4:00

Trapp Japanese Art Lecture:
Kimura Kenkado—Prodigious Patron of the Arts
Felice Fisher, Luther W. Brady Curator of Japanese Art,
Philadelphia Museum of Art
Thursday, November 19, 2015
6:00

Nichols Board of Trustees Suite

Lecture on Islamic Art
Aimee Froom, curator, Arts of the Islamic World,
Museum of Fine Arts, Houston
Thursday, December 3, 2015
6:00

Price Auditorium

Art of Asian Cuisine
Private Dinner at Belly Q with talk by owner or chef
Wednesday, January 13, 2016
6:00

Price Auditorium

CHICAGO EVENTS

Natya Dance Theatre
Varna - Colors of White
Dance Center of Columbia College
October 22 and 23, 2015

Annual Convention of the International Chinese Snuff Bottle Society
October 27–31, 2015
International Hotel