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ASIAN ART COUNCIL
A Support Organization for the Art Institute of Chicago
Letter from the President

In this, my second letter to the Asian Art Council, I want to highlight our programming by thanking those who have taken the lead in organizing a number of our very successful events. First, Virginia Gerst arranged a memorable dinner at Saigon Sisters, the highly regarded Vietnamese restaurant in the West Loop.

Barbara Donnelley is chairing the Coordinating Committee of the AAC’s next “Encounters with Asia” series. It focuses on the art of Korea with four lectures, each followed by lunch. The kickoff lecture is scheduled for Wednesday, April 29.

In the summer we will sponsor a trip to Santa Fe, the organization of which has greatly benefited from the advice and guidance of Mack Trapp.

Susan Higinbotham and Ann Grube are organizing our second lecture and dinner at the Casino Club for September 30. Last year Stephen Little spoke about the incomparable show he organized on Chinese painting at LACMA; this year Kendall Brown has graciously agreed to speak about Japanese gardens of North America. We will also visit the Anderson Gardens outside Rockford in October through the good efforts of John Notz.

The efforts of these individuals are essential to the programming AAC provides. Simply put, we couldn’t do it without them.

Finally, as you all know, Daniel Walker will step down as chair of the Asian Art Department in April and will be succeeded by Tao Wang (see article, p. 4). During his tenure, Dan oversaw significant gallery exhibitions, his most recent accomplishment being the splendid installation of the new Islamic galleries. Fortunately Dan will remain in the department as curator of Islamic Art while continuing his duties as Christa C. Mayer Thurman Chair and Curator of Textiles.

As of the date this newsletter is published, we expect Tao Wang to attend our annual meeting on May 7 and to join us for a welcome dinner afterward. Please be sure that May 7 is blocked out on your calendars.

Very truly yours,

Charles Mottier
Events

Encounters with Asia: Korean Art

—Heather Black, Asian Art Council vice president for programs

Korean Art: An Embroidery of Tradition and Innovation, our fourth annual Encounters with Asia series, kicks off at 11 a.m. on Wednesday, April 29.

“Bound to the great landmass of Asia,” explains associate curator Elinor Pearlstein, “Korea’s location between the Yellow and Eastern seas has fostered the exchange of ideologies as well as Korea’s own very distinctive art and social history.”

In the opening lecture of this four-part series, Soyoung Lee of the Metropolitan Museum of Art endeavors to address the not-so-simple question, “What is ‘Korean’ about Korean art?” On May 6, Burglind Jungmann of UCLA explores male and female orientations in pictures of the Joseon dynasty (1392–1910) and considers how certain subjects may reflect the active involvement of women in the arts. On May 13, Lee Talbot of the Textile Museum in Washington, DC reflects on the role of textiles in shaping and transmitting social and ideological traditions. Finally, on May 20, Richard Born of the Smart Museum of Art at the University of Chicago examines the formation of their comprehensive collection of Korean art spanning classical, traditional, and contemporary works.

Chairperson Barbara Donnelley and her committee are reaching out to the Art Institute and Korean communities for this truly exceptional learning opportunity. The events include lecture-only or lunch-lecture options.

For further information and reservations, contact Susan Packard at 312-443-7282 or visit http://www.artic.edu/calendar?keyword=Encounters%20with%20Asia.

The series is being sponsored by ANA Airlines.

Trapp Japanese Art Lecture by Henry Smith

—Review by Janice Katz, Roger L. Weston Associate Curator of Japanese Art


Professor Smith explained what is known about the use of colorants in Japanese prints and the recent advances that have allowed us to track the use of specific dyes. Thanks to new scientific methods used to identify the precise colors used in prints, we can get a clear picture of which dyes were available in Japan and when. New dyes seen in the Meiji period (1868–1912) account for the changing look of the prints and also have implications for understanding global trade in dyes. The most distinctive of these colors are the bright reds and purples seen in late 19th-century Japanese prints. Professor Smith noted that the first truly synthetic color in Japan was purple, emerging in 1864. Safflower (beni), the traditional pinkish-red pigment, was increasingly supplanted by cochineal from about 1870.

AboVEx: Tsukioka Yoshitoshi (Japanese, 1839–1892). The Actor Ichikawa Sadanji as the Warrior Akechi Samenosuke (detail), from the series The Seven Glorious Pleiades (detail), 1876. Color woodblock print, ōban. Restricted Gift of Mrs. Gerald Gidwitz, 1984.4

Betty Seid’s engaging lecture was a chronological tour of India’s women artists. She began with 20th-century modernist Amrita Sher-Gil (1912–1941), the first named Indian woman artist, and closed with Dhruvi Acharya and Chitra Ganesh, both born in the 1970s. Seid said that the word “lineage” was more aptly a “web of visual relationships.” The works covered were mostly oils and mixed media on flat surfaces rather than sculptural works. Included was a spectacular, large-scale video installation that explored conflict and ongoing war: “In Search of Vanished Blood” by Nalini Malani (b. 1946), commissioned in 2014 by the Edinburgh Festival, which covered the entire western and southern facades of the Scottish National Gallery.

Some of the categories used in the discussion were figurative vs. abstract artists and global vs. India-specific work. The lineage of “older” artists jumped from Amrita Sher-Gil (1912–1941) to Nilima Sheikh (b. 1945), whose first solo exhibition of stunning floor-to-ceiling banners, Each Night Put Kashmir in Your Dreams, was shown at the Art Institute in 2014. Also included were Arpita Singh (b. 1937), Nalini Malani (b. 1946), and Anju Dodiya (b. 1964).

Three abstract artists discussed were Nasreen Mohamedi (1937–1990), most famous for her line-based drawings; Zarina Hashmi (b. 1947), whose exhibition Zarina: Paper Like Skin was shown at the Art Institute in 2013; and Sheila Makhijani (b. 1962), whose works are colorful distorted grids.

The youngest artists featured in the lecture were figurative and narrative artists. Dhruvi Acharya’s (b. 1975) “Sink” depicts a woman in a cocoon-like vermilion costume sinking through an atmospheric, war-torn landscape of weapons, helicopters, and burning buildings with graphic comic book sound effects such as “bam, boom, blam blam, fsshhh.” Finally there was Chitra Ganesh (b. 1975), who subverts the form and style of Hindu mythological comic books to deliver a contemporary message. Seid commented that because they are contemporary artists dealing with global issues rather than politics of national identity, “…it is almost coincidental that they happen to be Indian.”

The Art Institute recently announced the appointment of internationally recognized Chinese art scholar Tao Wang as Pritzker Chair of Asian Art and curator of Chinese art. Wang will lead the department as it aggressively seeks to expand the reach and raise the profile of the museum’s Asian collections and programs.

We all welcome Dr. Wang—a naturalized British citizen who was born in China and educated in Kunming, Beijing, and London. Wang is an expert in classical Chinese art, in particular early ritual bronzes, jades, and inscriptions. He also has a deep interest in contemporary art. Prior to his arrival in Chicago, Wang was senior vice president and head of Chinese works of art at Sotheby’s New York. Before joining Sotheby’s in 2012, he taught Chinese art and archaeology at University College London and the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) at the University of London.

Wang will oversee the museum’s esteemed collection of 35,000 works of Asian art, which comprises works spanning nearly five millennia from China, Korea, Japan, India, and Southeast Asia.

In his words, “I am thrilled to join such a storied institution and to collaborate with . . . colleagues in building on the great work that already has been done. This is an exciting time in the field of Asian art, and I look forward to using my knowledge and connections to enhance the Art Institute’s already distinguished collection of Asian art, as well as to promote its research in this area.”

Documents and images have traditionally provided the basic fabric for university training in art history. But what of the skills required to select, install, and elucidate objects, or to confront the unfamiliar or previously restored?

Supported by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, the Art Institute has embarked on several pilot programs designed to introduce students to these skills through firsthand engagement with works of art. East Asia plays a dynamic role in this inaugural year. Janice Katz currently serves as mentor for a student enrolled in the two-year Undergraduate Curatorial

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**Review AAC Lecture: Contemporary Women Artists in India: A Lineage on Thursday, March 12, 2015**

—Marion Wood Covey, visiting scholar and Asian Art Council secretary

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**Department News**

Introducing Tao Wang

—Betty Seid, editor, Asian Art Council Newsletter

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Up and Running: Mellon Foundation Initiatives

—Elinor Pearlstein, associate curator of Chinese art

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ABOVE: Dr. Tao Wang
Fellowship Program. Janice and I have both participated in several components of the Andrew W. Mellon Chicago Object Study Initiative (COSI), organized in collaboration with Northwestern University and the University of Chicago (U of C). This winter, Janice conducted a seminar in Japanese print storage, and I, together with conservator Suzie Schnepp, discussed the analysis and treatment of a Chinese sculpture. We both selected challenging objects for research by first-year graduate students and brainstormed with them about these case studies. Janice selected Art Institute objects for students to address as part of their course in Japanese art, currently taught by Chelsea Foxwell of U of C, and I am working with Jin Xu, a PhD candidate, also at U of C, to facilitate the first student-taught COSI seminar. Jin’s class, “Materiality and Spirituality in Chinese Art,” focuses on Art Institute works of diverse media and is conducted entirely in our storerooms and galleries. We expect that these challenging and absorbing experiences will enrich the teaching of art history and perhaps inspire students to enter the museum profession.

Curatorial Conferences in Asia
—Janice Katz, Roger L. Weston Associate Curator of Japanese Art

This past fall, I was invited to participate in two inaugural conferences for curators of Asian art. The first was held in Seoul in late October and was organized by the Overseas Korean Cultural Heritage Foundation. This foundation was established in 2012 to help research and preserve cultural heritage abroad. Our Korean counterparts joined curators from the United States to discuss issues vital to the field of Korean art including conservation, exhibition display, and contemporary art. We visited the national museums and were given tours by each exhibition’s curator. A highlight for me was having the chance to meet Lee In-chin, the artist of our spectacular Faceted Round Jar (2012.230).

In Japan, I took part in a first-of-its-kind conference organized by the Agency for Cultural Affairs. Curators from the United States were invited to present on their collections and exhibitions of Japanese art, and curators from many of Japan’s leading museums presented as well. Melissa Rinne of the Kyoto National Museum and I gave a talk on recent trends in the display of Japanese art. We also toured on-site conservation projects for Buddhist sculpture and temple buildings, and were given special access to the major exhibitions being held at the Tokyo and Kyoto National Museums, among others.

Both of these conferences were unprecedented in bringing together curators of Asian art. I look forward to future opportunities to learn from and work with my colleagues in Korea and Japan.

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

*Gates of the Lord: The Tradition of Krishna Paintings* will be on view in Regenstein Hall from September 13, 2015 through January 3, 2016.

The exhibition explores the Pushtimarg, a Hindu sect founded in the 15th century by the Vaishnava saint Shri Vallabhacharya. Over generations, the veneration of the cult images of the Vallabha sect, or *sampradaya*, has been the subject of much scholarly attention, as has the art that accompanied this tradition. This exhibition focuses on the *pichhvais* (painted cloth hangings) and paintings that were generated by the sect, and explains how they were used in seasonal and daily veneration of Shrinathji, the chief deity venerated by the Pushtimarg, at the temple of Nathdwara in Rajasthan, India.

The paintings, drawings, *pichhvais*, and historic photographs in the exhibition are borrowed chiefly from two major private collections in India: the TAPI Collection based in Surat and the collection of Amit Ambalal in Ahmedabad.
This recently acquired album page combines a lovely floral border with a central panel of calligraphy drawn in the script style known as shikasta, which means “broken” in Persian. This style was introduced in Iran as a script to be used particularly in chancellery documents. It developed from the earlier chancellery style called ta’liq, known as the “hanging” style for its movement of letters downward and to the left. Like ta’liq, shikasta is difficult to read because of its disregard for the “teeth” that distinguish many letters from others and for the unusual way in which letters are connected. Deciphering a text written in shikasta is made even more difficult by the absence of any predictable rhythm in the flow of letters and through the tendency to “throw” the lines of script at the page without any apparent order or scheme in mind.

Shikasta was introduced during the 17th century and, by general consensus, was perfected during the third quarter of the 18th century by the calligrapher Abdul Majid Talaqani. It was utilized at first for chancellery documents but later came to be used also for private correspondence and specimen pages of poetry. It may seem an odd choice for official documents given the difficulty it poses for comprehension, but the whole point was to restrict their readership to the literate few.

This page, which bears a date equivalent to 1767, is the only example of the shikasta style in our collection, and it will be shown in rotation in the new Islamic galleries. It is special in two ways. First, on the basis of other, signed works, it can be attributed to the hand of the master of the style, Abdul Majid Taliqani. Second, the work is unusual in that the panel and the border are all of a piece. The floral border is in a contemporaneous style established on an imperial level in the borders added to a royal album in Iran during the 1750s. In our page, too, the border was added to prepare the panel of calligraphy for inclusion in an album.

In this large painting recently acquired by the Department of Asian Art, Japanese artist Minol Araki (1928–2010) provides a sweeping aerial view of mountains and valleys, complete with a mist that settles into crevices and a road that winds through the scene. He deftly uses black ink to describe the terrain, adding flashes of brilliant color—green, blue, and, surprisingly, purple. The painting alternates between a carefully detailed description of the landscape and areas of ink wash and mist that obscure a clear reading. In this way, Araki effectively creates a tension between two modes of seeing, close-up and from a distance.

Araki was Japanese born in Manchuria and did not see the country of his family until they returned after World War II. Although he had studied painting in China, once back in Japan he turned his attention to more practical pursuits, earning a degree in architecture and eventually settling on industrial design. He founded his first design firm in Tokyo, NOL Industrial Design, and a second in the United States, PIPA, through which he created award-winning household design items for clients such as RadioShack. It was only after an encounter with the great Chinese literati artist Zhang Daqian in 1973 that he began painting in earnest. Araki’s work is collected by museums throughout the world, and he is considered one of the representative artists of 20th-century literati landscape painting.

Barbara Levy Kipper, Asian Art Committee board member and life trustee of the Art Institute, has pledged a gift of nearly 400 items of ethnic jewelry and ritual objects from her personal collection of more than 1,200 pieces. The most comprehensive part of this bequest is from the Himalayas, including Tibet and other regions in the Tibetan-Buddhist cultural sphere—Nepal, Bhutan, Ladakh, Mongolia, and the Buryatia region of Russia. The most extraordinary aspect of the Kipper Gift is the wide-ranging collection of ga’us (portable amulet boxes) that originate in Tibet (see cover) but also have been produced.
Exhibition Review

Block Museum Features Complexity of Kashmiri and Western Himalayan Artistic Legacy

—Marion Wood Covey, visiting scholar and Asian Art Council secretary

Upon entering the Block Museum’s exhibition Collecting Paradise: Buddhist Art of Kashmir and Its Legacies, one encounters two bronze Buddhas that, seen from the back, reveal holes where the patron or donor could insert consecration materials. This unusual dorsal display alerts the visitor to an exhibition with an agenda on the part of its curator, Rob Linrothe, associate professor of art history at Northwestern University. As visually stunning as the 44 works of art are, they are arranged not to be seen merely from the passive viewpoint of a Western museum visitor, but from the perspective of a knowledgable devotee as well.

Linrothe details the collecting practices of two distinct groups: those of 10th-century Western Himalayan monks or patrons who transported Kashmiri sculptures east, and a second group of early 20th-century collectors from the West. Two in particular are scrutinized: noted Buddhologist and linguist Giuseppe Tucci, who pioneered Tibetan art history with his monumental three-volume set Tibetan Painted Scrolls (1949), and zoologist Walter Koelz, who collected primarily for the University of Michigan’s Museum of Anthropology in the late 1920s and 1930s. [Note: these two collectors were the subject of a lecture delivered by Linrothe on December 6, 2012 at the Art Institute and reviewed in the Spring 2013 AAC Newsletter.]

The exhibition, enhanced with captivating photographs of the region taken by Linrothe, features exceptional large bronzes such as the Crowned Buddha Shakyamuni from Gilgit, Greater Kashmir (Asia Society), displayed in its own small Kashmiri-style pavilion. There are also many smaller bronzes, several exquisite ivory pieces, some large manuscript pages, and, finally, an array of thangkas (scroll paintings), including one on loan from the Art Institute.

A companion exhibition, Collecting Culture: Himalaya Through the Lens, co-curated by Rob Linrothe and the Block’s associate director, Kathleen Bickford Berzock (formerly curator of African Art at the Art Institute of Chicago), is concurrently on view at the Block Museum.

The exhibition is on view at the Mary and Leigh Block Museum of Art, Northwestern University, Evanston, through April 19, 2015; the companion exhibition is on view through April 12, 2015.

In Memory

Dorothy Braude Edinburg (1920–2015)
—Elinor Pearlstein, associate curator of Chinese art

In Asian arts as well as Western drawings, the gifts of Dorothy Braude Edinburg, life trustee, have been justifiably acclaimed as some of the most significant in the history of the Art Institute. Her Asian contributions include Chinese and Korean ceramics, Japanese and Chinese illustrated books, and works of Chinese, Japanese, Indian, and Southeast Asian gold and silver. More than fifty of her ceramics are now on view in our galleries. Those who attended Mrs. Edinburg’s animated conversation with AAC members during her exhibition Deft Hands, Discerning Eyes (2008–2010) will remember her spirited passion (see Fall 2008 and Spring 2009 AAC Newsletter).

Dorothy Braude Edinburg was a long-standing member of London’s prestigious Oriental Ceramic Society. In 1937, its chairman, Sir Alan Barlow (1881–1968), delivered one of the society’s most eloquent lectures. With “The Collector and the Expert,” Barlow asked and answered his own question: How can a collector’s acquisitiveness be justified? “I would suggest that he can be forgiven,” Barlow replied, “indeed, can only be forgiven, for being acquisitive if he is also inquisitive; that a measure of hoarding is only pardonable if it leads, not merely to the development in the individual of knowledge, but to its dissemination.” Mrs. Edinburg’s inexhaustible curiosity—her keenness to handle each piece that caught her eye, to evaluate it against others of its type, to ask probing questions, and to share those questions and her discoveries with others—would certainly earn Barlow’s forgiveness. The fruit of Mrs. Edinburg’s curiosity is her legacy to this museum.

In the Buddhist cultures mentioned above. Other prominent regions are represented in the collection, which includes Turkmen jewelry of Central Asia—comprising present-day Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Afghanistan—as well as important collections of ethnic jewelry from India, China, and Indonesia. An exhibition of the Kipper Gift with an accompanying catalogue is planned for Regenstein Hall in the summer of 2016.


Above right: Painted Banner (Thangka) of Bodhisattva Manjushri with Vajrapani (right) and Padmapani (left), 15th century. Western Tibet, Guge. Opaque watercolor, gold, and ink on cotton. Gift of Marilyn Alsdorf 2014.984.
Calendar of Asian Art Events

EXHIBITIONS

The Art Institute of Chicago

Spreading Devotion: Japanese and European Religious Prints
Gallery 107
Through July 21, 2015

Figures of Chinese Imagination (part 2)
Gallery 134
Through June 5, 2015

Hiratsuka Un’ichi
Gallery 107
June 27–September 13, 2015

The Printer’s Eye: Ukiyo-e from the Grabhorn Collection
Asian Art Museum, San Francisco
Through May 10, 2015

Japanese Genre Painting
Satellite gallery within Charles of the Middle East
Collecting Paradise: Buddhist Art of Myanmar
Arthur M. Sackler Museum, Harvard University
Through May 25, 2015

New York City

On Kawara—Silence
Guggenheim Museum
Through May 3, 2015

Buddhist Art of Myanmar
Asia Society
Through May 10, 2015

South and Southeast Asian Sculpture from the Asia Society Museum Collection
Asia Society
Through May 19, 2015

Captain Linnaeus Tripe:Photographer of India and Burma, 1852–1860
The Metropolitan Museum of Art
Through May 25, 2015

Bazm and Razm: Feast and Fight in Persian Art
The Metropolitan Museum of Art
Through May 31, 2015

Guggenheim Museum
Through June 3, 2015

Life of Cats: Selections from the Hiraki Ukiyo-e Collection
Japan Society
Through June 7, 2015

Sultans of Deccan India, 1500–1700: Opulence and Fantasy
Metropolitan Museum of Art
April 20–July 26, 2015

China: Through the Looking Glass
Metropolitan Museum of Art
May 7–August 16, 2015

Calgary

Korean Art: An Embroidery of Tradition and Innovation
Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City
Through July 5, 2015

Guggenheim Museum
Through July 12, 2015

Arts of Islamic Lands: Selections from The al-Sabah Collection, Kuwait
Museum of Fine Arts, Houston
Through January 30, 2016

Washington, DC

Seasonal Landscapes in Japanese Screens
Freer Gallery of Art
Through September 6, 2016

Peacock Room REMIX: Darren Waterston’s Filthy Lucre
Arthur M. Sackler Gallery
Opens May 16, 2015

Becoming Another: The Power of Masks
Rubin Museum of Art
Through February 8, 2016

Pennsylvania

Ink and Gold: Art of the Kano
Philadelphia Museum of Art
Through May 10, 2015

Texas

Unfolding Worlds: Japanese Screens and Contemporary Ceramics from the Gitter-Yelen Collection
Museum of Fine Arts, Houston
Through May 10, 2015

Museum of Fine Arts, Houston
Through July 12, 2015

Between Action and the Unknown: The Art of Kazuo Shiraga and Sadamasa Motonaga
Dallas Museum of Art
Through July 19, 2015

Islamic Art Now: Contemporary Art and Traditional Ceramics
Philadelphia Museum of Art
Through February 8, 2016

Male Worlds/Female Worlds: Gender-Specific Aspects of Early Joseon Painting
Nichols Board of Trustees Suite, May 6

The Art of the Inner Quarters: Textiles and Women’s Culture in Joseon-Dynasty Korea
Lee Talbot, curator, Eastern Hemisphere Collections, The Textile Museum, Washington, DC
Nichols Board of Trustees Suite, May 13

Land of the Morning Calm: Forming the Korean Art Collection
Richard Born, senior curator and interim chief curator, Smart Museum of Art, University of Chicago
Millennium Park Room
May 20

EVENTS

AAC Lecture: The Art of Display—Chinese Objects Viewed in Historical Context and Modern Museums
Jan Stuart, curator of Chinese art, Freer-Sackler Galleries of Art
Price Auditorium
Thursday, April 23, 2015 at 6:00

Lunch and Lecture Series ENCOUNTERS WITH ASIA
Nichols Board of Trustees Suite, April 29

What’s “Korean” about Korean Art?
Soyoung Lee, associate curator, Department of Asian Art, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York
Nichols Board of Trustees Suite, April 29

Male Worlds/Female Worlds: Gender-Specific Aspects of Early Joseon Painting
Burglind Jungmann, professor of Korean art history, University of California, Los Angeles
Nichols Board of Trustees Suite, May 6

The Art of the Inner Quarters: Textiles and Women’s Culture in Joseon-Dynasty Korea
Lee Talbot, curator, Eastern Hemisphere Collections, The Textile Museum, Washington, DC
Nichols Board of Trustees Suite, May 13

Land of the Morning Calm: Forming the Korean Art Collection
Richard Born, senior curator and interim chief curator, Smart Museum of Art, University of Chicago
Millennium Park Room
May 20

AAC ANNUAL MEETING
Nichols Board of Trustees Suite
Thursday, May 7 at 5:00

AAC TRAVEL: SANTA FE
July 22–July 26, 2015
Join curator Janice Katz in Santa Fe, New Mexico with visits to museums, galleries, and private collections