Message from the President

I sincerely hope that you all enjoyed the summer and had a chance to visit the extraordinary exhibition *Vanishing Beauty: Asian Jewelry and Ritual Objects from the Barbara and David Kipper Collection*. We salute Barbara not only for her inspirational gift of over 300 objects from many cultures throughout the Asian continent, but also for her longtime commitment to the Asian Art Council as a member of our Board of Directors.

Over the summer, the Friends of Indian and Islamic Art (FIIA) merged with the AAC. Many in this important group of museum supporters already held membership in the AAC, and we are now under one umbrella dedicated to supporting the work of the Department of Asian Art. The AAC leadership is focused on providing programs that span all Asian cultures—a daunting task, but one that we relish. After all, diverse programming is what makes the AAC such a dynamic organization.

Our 2016–17 season kicked off September 15 with gallery tours conducted by curators in the Department of Asian Art. We discovered hidden gems in the galleries and enjoyed a convivial social hour. I hope to see many of you at our second fall gathering on October 20 at the Casino. This special evening organized by Richard and Janet Horwood features Edward Wilkinson, a specialist in Indian, Himalayan, and Southeast Asian art at Bonhams. Please mark your calendar and join us.

A full roster of AAC programs and other Asian art–related events and exhibitions is listed on the calendar on the back of this newsletter. It includes the grand and festive Diwali Ball in Griffin Court on October 22, chaired by Anita and Prabhakant Sinha and Diane and Richard Weinberg. Our Encounters with Asia series in April of 2017 focuses on various aspects of “dressing up” across Asian cultures and features lectures from experts in their fields. You won’t want to miss a single one!

I’ll close by saluting Charles (Chip) Mottier for his two years of superb leadership as president of the AAC. A talented executive, Chip’s steady hand contributed greatly to the continuing success of the AAC. Bravo!

Sincerely yours,

Ann Grube
Department News

The Shogun’s World: Japanese Maps from the 18th and 19th Centuries, June 25–November 6, 2016
—Janice Katz, Roger L. Weston Associate Curator of Japanese Art

A first for the Japanese print gallery, this exhibition features 18th- and 19th-century maps of the world, the Japanese archipelago, and major cities for a well-rounded presentation of mapmaking in Japan in the last century of shogunal rule.

The majority of works on display have been generously lent by the MacLean Collection. Located in Lake Forest, Illinois, this collection includes a comprehensive map library consisting of more than 40,000 maps dating from the 15th century to the present. The works feature a broad range of media and formats and represent all parts of the world.

Highlights of the exhibition include a Buddhist world map—a visual representation of spiritual forces shown as a physical location. In addition, a porcelain “map plate” painted in underglaze blue features a map of Japan, the central section molded in relief and outlined to identify distinct provinces and the periphery depicting additional land masses, including mythical sites such as “the land of women.” Also of interest is an aerial view of Yokohama entitled Revised Panoramic View of Yokohama (Saikai Yokohama fukei), made up of six standard-sized prints presented as one image. Each important building and section of the foreign settlement is labeled for ease of use.

I would like to thank my co-curator Richard Pegg, as well as Barry MacLean, for making this exhibition possible.

Ando Gallery Update
—Janice Katz, Roger L. Weston Associate Curator of Japanese Art

You may have noticed that the gallery designed by Tadao Ando within the Japanese art galleries has gotten an upgrade. Thanks to Roger Weston’s support of these improvements and Lightswitch’s brilliant design, the lighting now functions perfectly for displaying works of art on paper, like gold-leaf folding screens. An inconspicuous light track below casts a natural glow and balances out the new lighting from above. Fixtures can be controlled remotely by iPad, making it easier to accommodate frequent gallery rotations with customized light levels and direction.

Vivekananda Memorial Program Ends
—Madhuvanti Ghose, Alsdorf Associate Curator of Indian, Southeast Asian, Himalayan, and Islamic Art

The Vivekananda Memorial Program for Museum Excellence (VMPME), a four-year professional exchange program between the Art Institute of Chicago and the Ministry of Culture, Government of India, honoring the legacy of Swami Vivekananda, wrapped its final year on June 30. Over the past four years the Art Institute of Chicago, working closely with the Ministry of Culture, instructed program fellows on a variety of topics—collections management and preventive care (2012–13), museum best practices (2013–14), exhibition planning and management (2014–15), and collection stewardship, interpretation, and audience engagement (2015–16)—accomplishing a number of achievements of lasting value for the museums of India.

VMPME has trained 32 fellows from 22 museums from all over India. As part of the program, these fellows in turn have conducted over 100 training programs in their home country, sharing their newfound knowledge with colleagues. The fellows are now equipped to effectuate major changes in their own museums, from modernizing storerooms to dramatically improving lighting and gallery displays. Another lasting legacy of the program will be the strong network of fellows.
who formally and informally share their knowledge and resources. Through its work with the National Council of Science Museums, our nodal agency, the Art Institute has been able to impart information to an even broader group of museum professionals within India.

Also of note, the Government of India has launched a website with our assistance, museumsofindia.gov.in, that displays objects from across ten museums—a major milestone and accomplishment. The Art Institute has also advised the Indian Ministry of Culture in rethinking its exhibitions, acquisitions, and registration policies. The final seminar of the VMPME program took place at the National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi, on July 8, with fellows presenting the work they have implemented across their respective institutions.

Meet the People
—Tao Wang, Pritzker Chair of Asian Art and curator of Chinese art

In April, Lu Zhang joined the Department of Asian Art as its new assistant curator of Chinese art. She received her MA in art history from Northwestern University and her BA in archaeology and museum studies from Peking University, in China. Her major research interests focus on traditional architecture and religious and funerary art in China and Eurasia. She is currently working with Tao Wang on a traveling exhibition of ancient Chinese ritual bronzes from the Palace Museum in Beijing and the Shanghai Museum. The exhibition will showcase the history of ancient bronze collections assembled by Chinese emperors and scholars and will explore the significance and impact of bronze on other media.

Prior to joining the Art Institute, Lu Zhang worked as a researcher at the Field Museum, where she and the museum’s exhibition team organized Cyrus Tang Hall of China, the country’s largest permanent exhibition to examine China’s history and prehistory from an anthropological perspective. She also played a vital role in developing the Field Museum’s major traveling exhibition China’s First Emperor and His Terracotta Warriors, which features more than 170 artifacts related to Qin Shihuangdi, the First Emperor of China. The exhibition includes dozens of terracotta figures, as well as chariots from the world-famous mausoleum site in Shaanxi.

New Acquisitions

Allegory of Balance #6, Hongwei Li, 2016
—Tao Wang, Pritzker Chair of Asian Art and curator of Chinese art

The acquisition of Hongwei Li’s (b. 1980) stunning Allegory of Balance #6 (see cover) marks our first acquisition of contemporary Chinese ceramics and contemporary Chinese sculpture. In three elegant and subtly poised groupings of wheel-thrown, crystal-glazed porcelains and industrial, reflective stainless steel, the artist has integrated China’s traditional aesthetics within its modern culture. Both the high-shouldered, tapered silhouettes and splashed surface designs of several porcelain forms subtly echo those of classic Song dynasty (11th/13th century) vessels seen in the Art Institute’s collection. Together with an intriguing variety of ovoid surfaces in porcelain and steel, these time-honored forms combine to express the Chinese ideals of harmony, subtlety, and simplicity. But perhaps most notably, the crystal glazes are entirely Li’s creation. Their recipes earned him the China National Invention Patents Award and cannot be duplicated.

Hongwei Li is recognized as one of China’s most accomplished and innovative ceramic artists. Currently on the faculty of the Capital Normal University in Beijing, he earned degrees at two preeminent art schools: the Central Academy of Fine Arts in Beijing (BFA in sculpture, 2005) and Alfred University in Alfred, New York (MFA in ceramics, 2007). He subsequently taught and published in both China and the United States. His works have been shown in international exhibitions in China, Europe, and America and are represented in several American museums.

Allegory of Balance #6 represents a significant gift of the Asian Art Council and two of its most generous members, Richard and Heather B. Black. We hope that its installation will reward all expectations with many years of visual fascination and delight.
Two Chinese Porcelains: Gardenia Dish and Altar Set
—Elinor Pearlstein, associate curator of Chinese art

A major strength of this department is our ability to exhibit an extensive range of Chinese ceramics of exceptional beauty and importance. Two recent acquisitions of porcelain painted in overglaze enamel enable us to enrich that narrative in periods and styles previously unrepresented.

The first is a dish of the late 15th/early 16th century painted in underglaze cobalt blue with botanical motifs surrounding a central gardenia. Each of these conveys an auspicious meaning: pomegranates (fertility); persimmons (wealth); grapes, vines, and seeds (progeny); and lotus (purity). After glazing and firing, these motifs were carefully silhouetted with yellow enamel and refired, producing the appearance of blue decoration on a yellow ground.

The second acquisition, created three hundred years later, comprises an altar set of five vessels: a tripod censer to contain incense, two candlesticks with dished drip trays, and two beaker vases to hold flowers. The altar on which these vessels were placed would have been the focus of spiritual ceremonies—probably Buddhist, but conceivably Confucian as well. Each vessel is intricately painted in overglaze enamels with the so-called Eight Buddhist Emblems, which by the early 19th century were widely appropriated in other ceremonial contexts. Their exquisite palette of pastel tones is meticulously rendered against a background of lime green—a color likely inspired by enameled metalwork that had been introduced to China from Europe. But as most are derived from ancient bronzes, the forms of these vessels have a long and distinguished heritage in China.

In the early twentieth century, this dish and altar set were owned by the eminent Chicago architect and city planner Edward H. Bennett (1874–1954), best known today as the designer of Buckingham Fountain. Purchased from the Sotheby’s auction house last spring, these ceramics have again returned to his city.

Upcoming Events You Won’t Want To Miss

The Casino Dinner, October 20, 2016
—Richard M. Horwood, Chair, Casino Event

We are pleased to announce that Edward Wilkinson has accepted our invitation to speak at this year’s fall dinner at the Casino on October 20. Edward is the executive director, Asia, and global head of Indian, Himalayan, and Southeast Asian art for Bonhams. An acknowledged authority and an engaging speaker, Edward will speak on the topic of collecting Asian art with a talk titled “Himalayan Art: Appreciating the Aesthetics and Understanding the Global Demand.”

Since joining Bonhams, Edward has organized and presented several recent auction sales of note: the Sartin Collection, the Paul F. Walter Collection, the estate of Natasha Eielenberg, and masterworks by V. S. Gaitonde. Please join us for a rewarding evening for all Asian art lovers.

Diwali Ball, October 22, 2016
—Ann Gaziano, exhibitions and events coordinator, Indian, Southeast Asian, and Himalayan art

The sixth Diwali Ball will be held on October 22 at the Art Institute of Chicago, co-chaired by Anita and Prabhakant Sinha and Diane and Richard Weinberg. The museum’s celebration of the Hindu festival of lights will begin with cocktails and an exclusive fashion show, followed by dinner, dancing, and a choreographed Bollywood dance performance.


Dish with Floral and Fruit Sprays (Gardenia Dish), Ming dynasty, Hongzhi mark and period (1488–1505). Porcelain painted in underglaze blue and overglaze yellow enamel. Charles H. and Mary F. Worcester Collection Fund.
Reviews

Lecture: The Power and Pleasure of Tea Bowls in Japan, by Morgan Pitelka
—Janice Katz, Roger L. Weston Associate Curator of Japanese Art

On March 31, 2016, Morgan Pitelka of the University of North Carolina delivered a fascinating lecture on Japanese tea bowls to a packed auditorium. He charted the way that tea drinking in Japan became a popular but ritualized pastime and how the form and function of tea bowls were of prime importance. These wares and other objects for use in the tea ceremony were first imported from China, then Korea, before they began to be produced in Japan.

He highlighted the work of Raku potters, whose urban kilns produced unusual black wares, the results of innovations in firing and glazing. Pitelka spoke about the artistry of the way a bowl is made, stressing the interplay between intentional design and the unexpected “happy accidents” that occur in the kiln. Even among today’s ceramic artists, such tension is key to creating the most celebrated works.

Vanishing Beauty: Asian Jewelry and Ritual Objects from the Barbara and David Kipper Collection, June 19–August 21, 2016
—Marion Wood Covey, Independent Scholar

This lushly contextualized exhibition displayed jewelry, regalia, and ritual objects from the Himalayas and Mongolia, Central Asia, South Asia, the Indonesian archipelago, and Southwest China. The significance of these spectacular objects was elucidated by large-scale videos, photos, music, and wall graphics with text. Many of the featured objects—notably, Uzbekistan breast ornaments, a Mongolian headdress, and personal adornment pertinent to Chinese, Japanese, Indian, and Islamic cultures. These include jewelry and special garments worn by men and women alike to celebrate festivals, the seasons, and ceremonial rites. The series will be presented over four consecutive Wednesdays in April 2017.

Encounters with Asia: Dressing Up—Ceremony and Celebration, April 2017
—Nancie Dunn, chair, Encounters with Asia, 2016

Inspired by past successful Encounters with Asia programs, the Asian Art Council and its curators are hard at work organizing yet another series of four thematic lectures by respected cultural authorities. Titled Dressing Up: Ceremony and Celebration, the series will explore diverse areas of beauty and
a magnificent silver wedding cape from Sichuan Province in China—are unexpectedly large in scale. The intricate, light blue enameled jewelry of Bukhara, Uzbekistan, reflects a refined urban taste and is particularly rare, represented sparcely in museums outside of the former Soviet Union and often neglected by private collectors. The most comprehensive part of the collection consists of gau, or portable shrines to house sacred objects worn for protection. Gau originated in Tibet but were subsequently made in surrounding areas within the Buddhist cultural sphere.

The exhibition comprised 300 pieces selected from a generous donation of almost 400 gifts to the Department of Asian Art by Barbara Levy Kipper. The works were chosen by curator Madhuvanti Ghose from a group of over 1,200 objects in the Kipper collection. Kipper’s fascination with the land and people of various regions of South, Central, and East Asia began in 1968 with her Land Rover expedition to Afghanistan, as she followed the popular trail of many young people in the sixties from Europe through Turkey and Afghanistan and on to India. Her trip not only sparked a lifelong interest in documenting people through photography but also began an abiding passion for collecting jewelry, regalia, and ritual objects.

This exhibition was generously sponsored by Barbara Levy Kipper and the Kipper Family Foundation.

Calendar of Asian Art Events

EXHIBITIONS

The Art Institute of Chicago

Islamic Art at the Art Institute: A Century of Exhibitions and Acquisitions
Ryerson and Burnham Libraries
Through September 26, 2016 (weekdays only)
The Shogun's World: Japanese Maps from the 18th and 19th Centuries
Gallery 107
Through November 6, 2016
Creative Imitation in Chinese Painting
Gallery 134
October 8, 2016–January 8, 2017
Ink on Paper: Japanese Monochromatic Prints
Gallery 107
November 12, 2016–January 29, 2017

California

Alternative Dreams: 17th-Century Chinese Paintings from the Tsao Family Collection
Through December 4, 2016

Colorado

Shock Wave: Japanese Fashion Design, 1980s–90s
Denver Art Museum
Through May 28, 2017

Illinois

Tseng Kwong Chi: Performing for the Camera
Mary and Leigh Block Museum of Art
September 17–December 11, 2016

Massachusetts

Conservation in Action: Preserving Nirvana
Museum of Fine Arts, Boston
Through January 16, 2017

Minnesota

Ink Unbound: Paintings by Liu Dan
Minneapolis Institute of Art
Through January 29, 2017

New York

Power and Piety: Islamic Talismans on the Battlefield
Metropolitan Museum of Art
Through February 13, 2017
Masterworks of Himalayan Art
Rubin Museum of Art
Through February 6, 2017
Nepalese Seasons: Rain and Ritual
Rubin Museum of Art
Through March 27, 2017
No Limits: Zhao Wou-Ki
Asia Society New York
Through January 8, 2017
Monumental Lhasa: Fortress, Palace, Temple
Rubin Museum of Art
September 16, 2016–January 9, 2017
Cinnabar: The Chinese Art of Carved Lacquer, 14th to 19th Century
Metropolitan Museum of Art
Through October 9, 2017
Simon Starling: At Twilight
Japan Society, New York
October 14, 2016
Tales of Our Time
Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum
November 4, 2016–March 10, 2017
Gateway to Himalayan Art
Rubin Museum of Art
Through June 27, 2017

Ohio

Art and Stories from Mughal India
Cleveland Museum of Art
Through October 23, 2016

Texas

Kusama: At the End of the Universe
Museum of Fine Arts, Houston
Through September 18, 2016

Washington

Terratopia: The Chinese Landscape in Painting and Film
Asian Art Museum, Seattle
Through February 26, 2017

Washington, D.C.

Perspectives: Michael Joo
Arthur M. Sackler Gallery
Through July 9, 2017

Sky Blue: Color in Ceramics of the Islamic World
Arthur M. Sackler Gallery
Through 2017
Red: Ming Dynasty/Mark Rothko
Arthur M. Sackler Gallery
Through February 20, 2017
The Art of the Qur’an: Treasures from the Museum of Turkish and Islamic Arts
Freer and Arthur M. Sackler Galleries
October 15, 2016–February 20, 2017
Chinamania
Arthur M. Sackler Gallery
Through June 4, 2017

London

Musical Wonders of India
Victoria and Albert Museum
Through October 31, 2016
Courting to Contract: Love and Marriage in Iran
The British Museum
Through November 2016

Toronto

A Third Gender: Beautiful Youths in Japanese Prints
Royal Ontario Museum
Through November 27, 2016

Zurich

Ito Shinsui: Nostalgia and Modernity
Museum Rietberg
Through January 8, 2017

AAC EVENTS

Exotica: Paintings of Exotic Birds and Animals at the Mughal Court
Asok Kumar Das, former director, Maharaja Sawai Man Singh II Museum, Jaipur
Monday, October 10 at 4:00
Fellows Lounge
Annual Dinner/Lecture
Himalayan Art: Appreciating the Aesthetics and Understanding the Global Demand
Edward Wilkinson, Bonhams, Hong Kong
Thursday, October 20 at 6:00
The Casino
Diwali Ball
Saturday, October 22 at 7:00
Griffin Court

Selection of an Asian film from Chicago International Film Festival
October 13–27, 2016
Viewing and Post-Film Dinner/Discussion
Time and Location TBD
Art in the Shadow of the Taliban: Preserving the Cultural Heritage of Afghanistan
Gil Stein, Oriental Institute and University of Chicago
Thursday, December 1 at 6:00
Nichols Board of Trustees Suite
Trapp Japanese Art Lecture Series
Nikko Toshogu Shrine
Timon Screech, University of London
Thursday, December 8 at 6:00
Fullerton Auditorium
Art of Asian Cuisine
Mid-January, 2017
Thirteen Ways of Looking at Abstraction in Asia
Joan Kee, University of Michigan
Thursday, January 26 at 6:00
Price Auditorium
Chinese New Years Event at the Art Institute of Chicago
Location and time TBD
Digitizing Chinese Art
Wei-Chen Lin, University of Chicago
Thursday, February 2 at 6:00
Price Auditorium
Sense and Sensibility: Connoisseurship at a South Indian Court
Anna Seastrand, Society of Fellows in the Liberal Arts, University of Chicago
Thursday, March 2 at 6:00 p.m.
Price Auditorium