The Art Institute of Chicago announces the appointment of internationally recognized Chinese art scholar Tao Wang as the Pritzker Chair, Department 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.

Wang, a naturalized British citizen who was born in China and educated in Kunming, Beijing, and London, will assume his new responsibilities in April 2015. An expert in classical Chinese art, in particular early ritual bronzes, jades, and inscriptions, he also has a deep interest in contemporary art. Wang is currently Senior Vice President and Head of Chinese Works of Art at Sotheby’s New York, where he will remain until the end of March. Before joining Sotheby’s in 2012, he taught Chinese art and archaeology at University College London and at the School of Oriental and African Studies at the University of London.

“Tao brings to the Art Institute an extensive knowledge of the art and archeology of China – one of
the world’s most ancient living cultures – as well as a network of cultural connections in Asia, Europe and the United States,” said Douglas Druick, President and Eloise W. Martin Director of the Art Institute. “He has the skills to lead our research efforts while enriching our historical collections and, most importantly, the vision to shape our growing Asian focus into the future.”

Wang will oversee the museum’s esteemed Asian collection, which comprises works spanning nearly five millennia from China, Korea, Japan, India, and southeast Asia. It includes 35,000 objects, many of great archaeological and artistic significance, including Chinese bronzes, ceramics, jades, textiles, and paintings; Japanese textiles, screens, and paintings; Korean ceramics; Indian and Persian miniature paintings; and Indian and southeast Asian sculpture. The collection of Japanese woodblock prints is one of the finest in the world.

“I am thrilled to join such a storied institution and to collaborate with Douglas and other colleagues in building on the great work that already has been done,” said Wang. “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.”

Born in Kunming, the capital of the Yunnan Province in China, in 1962, Wang first studied Chinese language and literature, earning a bachelor’s degree and teaching certificate at Yunnan Normal University in Kunming. He did post-graduate work at the Graduate School of the Chinese Academy of Arts in Beijing and received a PhD in Early Chinese Culture from the School of Oriental and African Studies in London.

While in London, Wang held a joint appointment at the School of Oriental and African Studies and the University College London, where he taught courses on the art and archaeology of China and the Silk Road. He participated in archaeological explorations into the Taklamakan desert and led several research projects, including studies on the Chinese manuscripts from Dunhuang in the British Library and on World Heritage sites in China.

In addition to authoring multiple scholarly publications, Wang is a regular contributor to The Art Newspaper, Orientations magazine and Arts of Asia. He has served on the editorial boards of the Early China Journal, Bulletin of the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities, Chinese Archaeology
Journal (English Edition), and East Asian Journal: Studies in Material Culture. He is the chief editor of the Shanghai Fine Art Press series Art, Collecting and Connoisseurship.

Wang additionally has acted as a consultant and presenter for the BBC and Discovery Channel and as a judge for the annual Asian Art festival in London. He has organized conferences on Chinese art and religion, Neolithic pottery, museums, and the Chinese art market, and he was instrumental in setting up the International Centre for Chinese Heritage and Archaeology, jointly housed at University College London and Peking University. Other posts Wang has held include vice president of the Circle of Inner Asian Art in London; visiting fellow at the Beijing Palace Museum, the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, and the Yunnan Center for Southeast Asian Studies; guest professor at Yunnan University; and member of the academic board of the National Museum of Chinese Writing.

Image: Tao Wang

# # #