

ASIAN ART

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RUBIN TO TRANSFORM INTO GLOBAL MUSEUM MODEL

Last January, the Rubin Museum of Art announced that it will close its current building in the autumn of 2024 and launch a global programme, designed to bring awareness and understanding of Himalayan art to more people by partnering with artists and communities around the world. In its 20th anniversary year, this decision gives the museum the freedom to build a non-physical institution on the solid foundation of its existing resources, which will ultimately strengthen future partnerships, programmes, and further expand the facility of grants and loans, as well as support travelling exhibitions and scholarships. It will also extend its digital offerings for the online global audience. The museum will be closed to the public until 6 October 2024.

Founded in 2004 by Donald and Shelley Rubin, the Rubin Museum of Art has engaged audiences in New York City in the exploration of Himalayan art, and the cultures and ideas inherent in it, across time and place. With a collection largely comprised of Buddhist works from the

Tibetan Plateau, the museum fosters understanding and appreciation of the art from this region by sharing and illuminating the ability of Himalayan art to reveal insights into the human condition.

Led by the board of trustees, the Rubin examined how to best use its collection, knowledge, creativity, relationships, and financial resources for the long term – and the leadership reached the difficult decision to sell its building on 17th Street after an in-depth analysis of the cultural sector and its position in it, the needs of international audiences, and the opportunity to execute its mission with a global outlook and impact.

In a letter to members and the community concerning the next phase of the Rubin, Jorrit Britschgi, the Executive Director of the Rubin wrote, 'Over the last several years, we have been piloting new ways of reaching people, pursuing projects from Bilbao to Boston, from Kathmandu to London, and from New York to Venice. In the digital space, we have launched major resources to learn



about Himalayan art, and shifted some of our programmes to become podcasts, reaching people in over 150 countries.

During this phase of experimentation and reinvention, we examined how to most effectively use

our collection, knowledge, creativity, networks, and financial resources in order to best serve you, the public, for the long term and with the greatest impact. After an in-depth analysis of the cultural sector and our important place in it, we have decided to fully

The Rubin Museum of Art on 150 West 17th Street, New York

embrace and pursue the model of being a global museum, serving the public locally, nationally, and internationally.'

Shelley Frost Rubin, co-founder, commented on this new life for the Rubin, 'Building and sharing this collection of Himalayan art was one of my family's great joys. Creating a museum was a life-changing moment. While it has been a privilege to welcome visitors to the Rubin in New York over the last 20 years, our anniversary inspired reflection on how we can achieve the greatest possible impact well into the future.'

The result is the firm belief that a more expansive model will allow us to best serve our mission – not changing "why" we share Himalayan art with the world, but "how" we do it. Bold change has always been in the Rubin's DNA, and we are excited to embrace what our future as a global museum has to offer.'

NEWS IN BRIEF

JAPAN SOCIETY, NEW YORK

Japan Society has announced the appointment of Dr Michele Bambling, an experienced leader, curator, and scholar of Japanese art who has spearheaded ambitious international cultural projects, as the next Director of Japan Society Gallery. Bambling joined Japan Society on 1 February, 2024.

Bambling brings more than three decades of expertise in Japanese art as well as extensive international curatorial experience to the role. She is currently Visiting Associate Professor of Art History at New York University Abu Dhabi, with a research and teaching focus on Japanese art history and design. Bambling was selected following an extensive search process supported by an external committee. Raised in Tokyo and a fluent speaker of Japanese, her vast leadership, curatorial, research, and personal experience will enable Bambling to strengthen Japan Society Gallery's mission through innovative exhibitions, new scholarship, and cultural programmes celebrating the plurality of Japanese art and culture in the global sphere.

In concert with Japan Society, Japan Society Gallery has played a key historical role in international exchange since its founding in 1971, introducing audiences to Japanese cultural traditions as well as modern and contemporary visual art, architecture, and design, often in collaboration with the Agency for Cultural Affairs, Government of Japan as well as leading national and private museums. Significant past exhibitions include *YES Yoko Ono* (2000–2001) and *Awakenings: Zen Figure Painting in Medieval Japan* (2007), among many others. In addition to exhibitions, publications, and public programmes, the institution has supported a number of contemporary artists and cultural producers.

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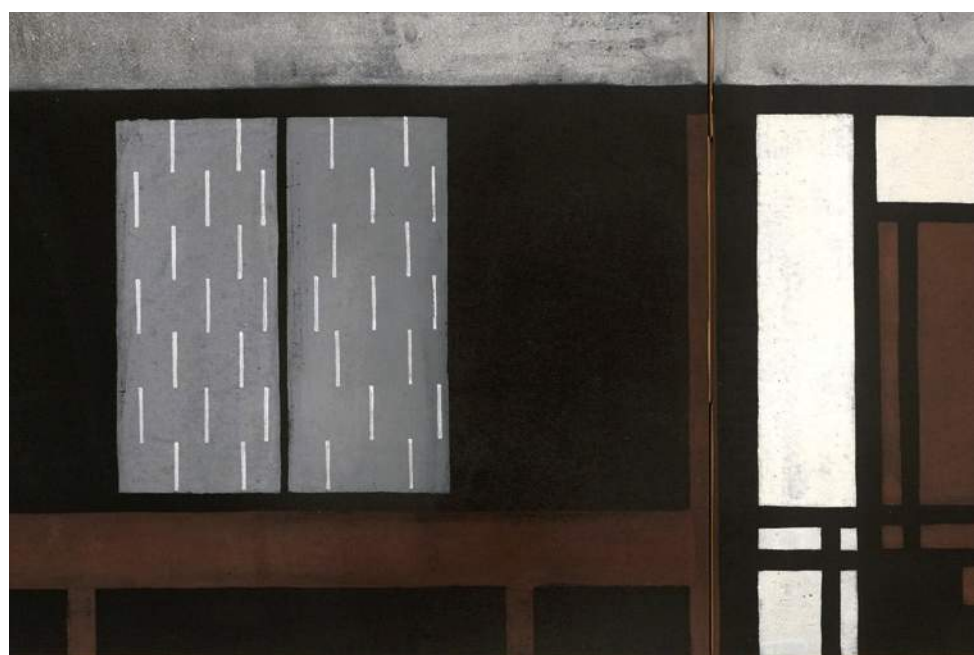
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NO ROOM FOR EXCUSES

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TSHERIN SHERPA

by Olivia Sand

Despite the growing interest over the past decades in contemporary art from China, Japan, India, and more recently Korea, the neighbouring Himalayan region has somehow remained overlooked. Initially destined to be displayed in Asian art institutions, it has taken substantial time for contemporary art from the area to be featured in biennials and finally in leading international art galleries. Today, one of the pioneering ambassadors of contemporary art from the Himalayas is Tsherin Sherpa (b 1968) from Nepal. Trained as a traditional *thangka* painter, he has gradually liberated himself from its strict and rigid rules, with creativity driving and expanding his practice. Having further developed his artistic vocabulary, Tsherin Sherpa is determined to continue the endeavour he started at the 2022 Venice Biennale – to highlight the local contemporary art scene beyond painting, also associating extraordinary skills from the world of bronze making to carpet weaving.

In the interview below, Tsherin Sherpa looks back on his trajectory from a traditional *thangka* painter to a recognised contemporary artist, and on how the outlook towards the Himalayan region is in the process of change.



Tsherin Sherpa

NEWS IN BRIEF

BROOKLYN MUSEUM OF ART, NEW YORK

This year marks the 200th anniversary of the Brooklyn Museum – one of the oldest, largest, and boldest museums in the United States. Starting in autumn 2024, the museum will celebrate its legacy and chart its future as a cultural organisation that has continually evolved and innovated since its founding. Tracing its origins to 1824, when it was incorporated as Brooklyn's first free circulating library, the museum is grounded in a mission of building community, knowledge, and opportunity through art and culture. Today, the Brooklyn Museum is a global cultural hub, nurtured by the freethinking spirit and creative energy of its home borough. Anniversary programmes continue into 2025 and will include an exhibition of new gifts to the museum's collection, an installation from the museum's archives tracing the history of the collection and building, and the launch of the Brooklyn Museum's Museum on Wheels, a social impact initiative that will bring art and action to communities across the borough.

NORDIC COUNTRIES PAVILION, VENICE

For the 60th International Art Exhibition – Venice Biennale (20 April to 24 November 2024), the Nordic Countries Pavilion is embarking on a journey through time and space in search of safe harbour aboard a spectral dragon

ship which will occupy the light and open architecture of Sverre Fehn's meditative masterpiece in the Giardini. The Pavilion will be book-ended by a huge and ornate dragon's head prow and tail, which will soon make the voyage from its mooring on the frozen waters of the Stockholm Archipelago to the Venetian Lagoon.

Conceived and conceptualised by artist Lap-See Lam (b 1990, Sweden), *The Altersea Opera* is a poetic exploration of the existential implications of displacement and belonging, which veers between the real and the imaginary to tell a story about the desire to stay and the need to move on. For the duration of the Biennale, the Nordic Pavilion will be transformed into a dragon ship, powered by magic sails made of stories and filled with mythological water creatures trying to find their way back to the places of their past. A richly layered audio-visual installation, *The Altersea Opera* is inspired by the spirit of the Red Boat Opera Company – the travelling opera troupe that popularised Cantonese opera in the 19th century. Lam has extended the invitation to artist Kholod Hawash (Finland) and composer Tze Yeung Ho (Norway), and an international ensemble of collaborators ranging from singers, costume designers, and film-makers to interpreters and a certified bamboo scaffold engineer.

On crossing the threshold into the Nordic Pavilion, visitors will enter into an imaginary ship inspired by Floating Restaurant Sea Palace, a

100-foot long, three-storey Chinese dragon ship. Built in Shanghai and decorated by master craftsmen, the lavishly appointed ship was towed to Gothenburg in 1991, where it originally served as a Chinese restaurant.

TWO NEW CURATORS FOR TATE MODERN

The museum has announced that Alvin Li has been appointed to the role of Curator, International Art, supported by Asymmetry Art Foundation, and that Hera Chan has been appointed Adjunct Curator, Asia-Pacific, also supported by Asymmetry Art Foundation. Both of these roles ensure that vital expertise on art from the Asia-Pacific region is embedded in Tate Modern's curatorial team, devising and delivering ambitious exhibitions, displays, and initiatives in the gallery. They will also research new strategic acquisitions of modern and contemporary art for Tate's collection, and forge new relationships with artists, cultural producers, scholars, and curators based in the region.

Yan Du and Michèle Ruo Yi Landolt, Directors at Asymmetry Art Foundation, said: 'As a young organisation with an ambitious vision in supporting curatorship and cultural agents in the arts ecosystem, it is important for us to also collaborate with different organisations, from independent commissioning art spaces to renowned universities and

Asian Art Newspaper: There is another artist in your family – your father is a Buddhist master painter who was eager to pass his knowledge and skills on to the next generation. Why did he pick you?

Tsherin Sherpa: Between my brother and sister, I was the only one who had actually been taught art. Growing up, my parents used to bring these poster-like charts to our house. They were hung on the walls in order to educate us, the names of birds or fruits, for us to see before we had access to books with pictures. When I was very young, I copied these charts and, since I loved drawing, I also later started reproducing various characters from comic books. At school, I did not perform well, mainly because I found it boring, but also because I suffer from dyslexia. My father, therefore, decided to let me leave school altogether, when I was thirteen, and he began teaching me traditional painting full time.

AAN: Did the training with your father also include a spiritual aspect?

TS: Yes, absolutely.

AAN: What was your reaction to all of these changes in your life?

TS: I was not thrilled at all. Throughout my childhood, I have always been extremely scared of my father who stood as this very serious person in the family. When my mother told me that I did not have to go to

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FREEMAN'S | HINDMAN



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This is not a Rorschach Test (2023), gold leaf, acrylic, and ink on canvas, 151 x 126 cm. Images courtesy Tsherin Sherpa and Almine Rech. Photo: Nicolas Brasseur

school anymore, I was ecstatic, but finding out the next day that I was going to study with my father was a disturbing idea. Looking back, I just learnt out of fear of him. I trained under my father for five years, however, I did enjoy part of this study time. I needed to do this to have an opportunity to obtain a scholarship to learn Mandarin and computer sciences in Taipei. I then grabbed this chance and left. At home, I realised that the intake of so much detailed and complex information and the traditional training had all been too much for me. However, coming back to Nepal after three and a half years in Taiwan, the only skill I had actually mastered was traditional painting, therefore, I began assisting my father for a few years helping with mural projects for monasteries and requests for traditional paintings. Then, in 1988, another opportunity to travel abroad arrived, this time to go to California. During my visit, I found out about a Buddhist Centre that was looking for a traditional Tibetan painter, since they had many American students who wanted to learn how to paint the images used for meditation and visualisation. Once they found out I was a trained traditional thangka painter, I became their resident artist.

Being in California gave me the opportunity to visit museums for the first time. It was very different from growing up in Nepal, where we only had one national museum featuring military artillery together with archaeological items that showed hardly any paintings. In addition, in the 1980s, the practice of traditional painting, or Buddhist painting, was diminishing, becoming increasingly commodified towards a commercial market and souvenirs for tourists. Even within the community of painters, the younger generation was looking down on our traditions because they felt they were just handicrafts, a term that the government was using, too, when classifying religious art. However, in the US, traditional thangka painting was the only skill I had. I relied on it,

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The only skill I had actually mastered was traditional painting
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but was also trying to start to do something beyond it. It took a visit to the Asian Art Museum in San Francisco for me to realise that I had a unique skill and knowledge. Walking into this institution, I was expecting to see Chinese, Japanese, and Indian art. To my surprise, the first thing I saw was a big traditional thangka – and I realised I had just paid \$10 to see one! Later, as I was going through the museum's collection and looking at catalogues by different scholars, it suddenly hit me: what I was trying to run away from was actually extremely valuable. Interestingly, when we were growing up in Nepal, my generation never connected with our art on a deeper level, because we were always only seeing it in two different categories: a religious object, or as a souvenir with nothing in between. My visit to the museum was the first encounter that taught me that there can also be something in the middle that is a form of art. This opened up my eyes and also gave me the courage to actually continue with this endeavour. Also, the timing seemed to be right, as from 2003–2004 onwards, Asian contemporary art was reaching new audiences. In 2008, an exhibition of Uli Sigg's Chinese contemporary art collection in Berkeley blew me away. Studying in Taiwan, I knew a little bit of Chinese history and had been following what was happening at that time on the mainland, monitoring how these artists were expressing themselves. In 2011,

I also saw an exhibition at the San Jose Museum of Art featuring Pakistani and Indian miniature painters engaging in a contemporary context. Before that, when I used to go to museums, I used to suffer some disconnection, as growing up in Nepal, I did not have a reference point when seeing Warhol's *Campbell's Soup Cans*, for example. It did not mean anything to me, as I did not have a reference point.

AAN: As you mentioned, arriving in California was an eye opener, how did it impact your practice?
TS: Although there were numerous research theses written on traditional thangka painting, we were completely unaware of it. All this material – theses, books, and catalogues published in the West – were inaccessible, expensive, and impossible to find in Nepal at the time. It was only after I arrived in the West that I realised how valuable this tradition was. I was also trying to figure out a way for me to reach a larger audience, which was not necessarily made of spiritual practitioners, or Buddhists. I wanted to tell a story, a narrative of someone like myself, who was not really dislocated, but had to go to a different place for survival. How did I feel as an individual? This narrative began to shape my work. It featured an element of nostalgia towards home, but also recounted the various stories my grandmother used to tell me as a child that referred to spirits of the mountains, of the water, of the valley, etc. All these things played a crucial role in my practice alongside the contemporary elements to which I was being exposed. For example, Bollywood movies were a big thing when I was growing up and some of my works may have been influenced by these giant, hand-painted, billboards, which I would reference with comic books.

AAN: Ironically, you were teaching traditional painting in California, but turning your back on it within your own practice.
TS: I was teaching a class of traditional painting to students who were not necessarily Buddhists, but rather artists who appreciated the skillset of the Tibetan style. Among the students, there were also art professors, who encouraged me to learn about Western art history. I studied this very intensely on my own, based on books they recommended. In addition, I started spending time with local artists, just being in their studio and engaging in conversations. Gradually, I was finally able to create some works, but I was too afraid to show them. One day, The San Francisco Asian Art Museum's



Re-examining the Habitual Pattern I (2023), white gold leaf, acrylic and ink on canvas 126 x 103 cm

curator (at the time), Terese Tse Bartholomew, wanted to see what I was doing. After visiting my studio, she made sure to bring my work to the attention of a gallery in London that was looking out for Himalayan art, and could perhaps showcase my work. I have now been with this gallery for more than 10 years. This was how it all started.

AAN: Looking back, do you find that Tibetan art benefited from the growing interest towards contemporary art from China?
TS: Yes, to some extent, even if there were multiple factors involved. There are a lot of people fascinated with and collecting old Himalayan objects, but at one point, they found out these objects were actually stolen or fakes. Today, people still have that affinity with these objects, but it has become difficult, even for museums, to acquire such pieces, all the more so as there are ongoing repatriation programmes. How do these people fill up this gap in their collections from the Himalayan region? Coincidentally, my works along with my contemporaries started filling those vacuums. Our work started a dialogue by creating a connection between the classical and the contemporary.

AAN: It is a positive development for your work to be exhibited globally in a non-specialist Asian contemporary gallery. Do you agree?
TS: Absolutely. The first exhibition I had was at the Rubin Museum in New York. Although it was interesting for me and for my practice to have a platform, at a certain point, it became a little monotonous, because I was displaying my work only in the Himalayan galleries. When my first opportunity arrived to show in a more global setting at the Asia Pacific Triennial, it opened my eyes. The question I was facing back then was how do I continuously reach such an audience? Representing Nepal at the 2022 Venice Biennale also had an impact and directed me to an international audience. Therefore, when Almine Rech contacted me after this show, I was very pleased by the opportunity they offered.

AAN: With your work gaining more international exposure, are there any ramifications on the art scene in Nepal?
TS: In Nepal, I am trying to make sure the art community somehow benefits from these new opportunities that are coming up, working with some of the younger artists and local craftsmen. For example, the bronze sculpture in my exhibition in Paris (Jan-Feb 2024) was created by a person who has been making traditional bronze works for monasteries for many generations. His skillset is amazing, but he does not have a platform to show his work. I remember a craftsman who was making traditional Himalayan mandalas for monasteries, also with an outstanding skillset. As I got to know him, he told me about his intention to leave the country for Malaysia, or the Middle East, as a labourer since it had become impossible to make a living. In Nepal, no one appreciated the quality of his work and everyone was trying to bargain to get it very cheap. As I understood how much effort it takes to develop these skills as an artist, what could I do except suggest a possible collaboration? He knows nothing about the gallery or the museum world, and is only familiar with monasteries and tourists. There is nothing in between. I convinced



An Illusory Appearance of Loss and Gain (2023), cast bronze, 134 kg, 91.44 x 50.8 cm

him by commissioning a piece I had designed. This then travelled to Hong Kong, China, and New York and then the Rubin Museum acquired it. I always made sure to credit him, since in Nepal, if you are acknowledged internationally, you are more highly regarded locally. Now, he can stay in Nepal and continue his work without having to leave the country. This collaboration happened unintentionally and, maybe, this is another avenue for me to pursue by working with other traditional artists like the carpet weavers.

AAN: Are these craftsmen able to maintain their individual practices?
TS: Yes, they do. Although there are no workshops yet, I work with them individually. We get together sometimes, getting to know each other and talking about working with bronze, wood, and weaving techniques. It very much aligns with my practice where I take the traditional skill towards a contemporary platform that can be appreciated by different audiences. For example, in March, I am exhibiting a handmade rug at Art Basel Hong Kong.

AAN: In 2022, Nepal participated for the very first time at the Venice Biennale with its own pavilion. Whose initiative was it?
TS: The Pavilion of Nepal was actually the result of a group of artists who were talking about it, but needed to find sponsors in order to make it happen. I reached out to my collectors, asking them what did they think about Nepal participating in the Venice Biennale. Ultimately, we were able to raise enough funding, and since the government had no money to support us, it was almost like a private, grassroots, approach rather than the other way around. The most important impact was on the Nepalese community. It was not really about telling the world 'this is us'. It was more about telling the Nepalese community that we are also part of this whole movement and, therefore, we need them to join and support at other venues as well and maintain this momentum. In Nepal, I am now noticing that there are more exhibitions happening, there is more engagement with artists, and external institutions are also now looking at what is happening in the country.

AAN: Are people in Nepal disturbed by the way you have transformed traditional painting?
TS: Yes, they are. Even my father, when he first saw my art kept wondering what it was. I had to tell him exactly what was happening in my practice as an artist, as well as a spiritual person. Even in Buddhist teachings, it is acknowledged that one method does not work for everybody. In my case, using the classic grid for proportion is not an option, since now I am so desensitised to this approach and visuals. I therefore have to find my own way to generate the kind of emotion usually created by classical works. My process is not really about deconstruction, but rather about the regeneration of something new. I absolutely revere tradition and the people who practice this tradition. Sometimes, however, one way may not be the only way. When I explain this to Buddhist masters, like my father for example, eventually they understand. It took quite some time to get a certain degree of acceptance and, now with that acceptance, it also gives me courage to explore further. It is important for me to

AAN: What is the outlook for the 2024 Venice Biennale opening this spring?
TS: As there is no funding, I am trying to do what I already have done for the previous biennial: to invite Nepalese entrepreneurs over to Venice. I encourage them to go, explore, and observe why it is important for Nepal to be there. In 2022, 14 individuals

went to Venice and it planted a seed. Even for my current gallery exhibition in Paris, I explained it was a world-class gallery and that they had to come and support it. Since the government does not have any kind of funding programme, the initiative has to come from people who have the means, and who can actually make it happen. We are always in conversation, I invite them to my studio so we can talk and they can meet the artists. One businessman, for example, is a brewery owner who had this idea to put my art on his vodka label. I agreed to do it, but in exchange, he should support our classes where we teach traditional art to 15 people ranging from the age of thirteen to twenty plus.

On a more global scale, in March, we are having the first major Himalayan contemporary art exhibition at the Rubin Museum of Art in New York. I encouraged the director to come to Nepal and see what was happening on the grassroots level because I feel that as a Himalayan art museum, they have this responsibility. They were very responsive and this kind of engagement also helps foster an environment for the artists. So my life's work is becoming partially about doing these kind of things, working with traditional artists, and also finding some time for my own practice. I find it to be very satisfying and enriching.

AAN: As painter of traditional Tibetan painting, what is your view on Tibet?
TS: I have never travelled to Tibet and have not applied for a visa. I did have some friends who were artists in Tibet like Gonkar Gyatso, Gade, Nortse and Tenzing Rigdol, as we used to communicate and show together. After 2015, I started going my own way because sometimes when you are within that environment, you become stagnant, just looking at each other's work. In addition, I probably also did not want to be categorised solely as a Himalayan contemporary artist. Around 2015, I therefore started talking to galleries, making sure that I opted out when they were organising group shows. I rather wanted to show with unknown artists from different parts of the world where a dialogue that could occur. I was very fortunate as it happened as I had envisioned.

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Luxation 1 (2016), 16 stretched canvases (18 x 18 inches each), acrylic and ink on canvas from the collection of the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts

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In Buddhist teachings, one method does not work for everybody
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have the opportunity to engage in this type of conversation to allow them to understand my endeavours on a one-to-one basis. Otherwise, by merely seeing images of my work, they may still feel it is blasphemous.

AAN: Do you consider yourself a religious person?
TS: No. To me, religion is more about rituals. I do not know if there is an afterlife, but in Buddhist tradition, there is reincarnation. Conceptually, it is difficult to accept, but that idea is always there. Similarly, I appreciate the philosophy a lot, like coexistence, interdependence, an impermanence, which I find fascinating. Apart from that, I do not meditate or adhere to any other similar practices.

AAN: Did painting thangkas and the Buddha in such a disciplined way during your formative years change your perception of the Buddha?
TS: Yes. I did not grow up in the same frame of mind and environment as my father, who is involved in the painting process with the utmost devotion. In my case, completing thangka paintings over and over again actually desensitised me in a way, and I also feel after gathering so much information that it has somehow 'corrupted' me.

AAN: You use more colour in your work, more than is usually seen in traditional thangkas, as well as using a great deal on gold leaf. How did this practice come about?
TS: In traditional thangka painting, there is no gold leaf. Instead, we use gold dust. When I arrived in San Francisco, I visited the Asian Art Museum quite often, and I saw a range of Japanese antique screens – all had gold leaf. It was fascinating to me, especially the texture, so I taught myself how to use gold leaf. I also learned some technical skills from industrial sign makers, the ones who do the gold leaf on fire trucks, for example. Over a period of time, I started thinking about this use of gold, because conceptually we ordinarily see gold used with many

of collages and see if it works visually. Finally, I blow it up onto the canvas.

AAN: At this stage of your career, would you also be tempted to keep a studio outside of Nepal?
TS: Time will tell! This is something I am definitely considering for the future. Some of the technical aspects are still very difficult in Nepal today, like how to get rid of oxidation when working on a sculpture, or even the process of its composition. In Nepal, we proceed in a very traditional manner, doing one hand at the time with clay and then put it together. After that, we disassemble it, cast it, and put it together again. We still rely on a very rudimentary process, but in the West, technologies are available to do it much quicker and better. I would like to try these options in the future should the opportunity come up.

AAN: Now that you found people with skills in sculpture or embroidery, is this something you would like to develop further?
TS: Sculpture is interesting. I am also learning a lot while expanding the process to the West. I need to go to the foundries and try to understand the chemicals they use, this would be a fabulous experience. As for embroidery, I need to find the right people, conditions, and opportunity. It will probably present itself in a similar fashion as my experience with carpets. I was in Nepal, going through the country's history of carpets, from how it became one of the biggest exporting objects from Nepal in the 1990s followed by its sudden downfall. This was mainly due to the fact that all the designs started coming from abroad, and people in Nepal just became manual labourers. Today, there are cheaper manual labourers in different parts of the world with the result that the carpet industry has collapsed. The idea was how do we revive this again? How do we pay homage to our heritage, to the old carpets from Tibet and the region? Maybe the idea is to have a contemporary Tibetan or Himalayan design created and woven by the local people. Maybe they should be displayed as art objects rather than just commercial carpets? So we started showing it in museums and art fairs, also exhibiting one carpet in the making at the 2022 Venice Biennale. As a result, it is now seen slightly differently – it is not just a carpet, it is a work of art.



AAN: From the various institutions you visited, do you feel Tibetan culture will survive intact for the next generations?
TS: That is my hope. It is even more than just the Tibetan culture, but also the whole Buddhist philosophy with ideas such as impermanence, interdependence, and coexistence. We can share this with a wider audience. As an individual and as an artist, I am focusing on the philosophical aspect, it is valuable for the upcoming generation because it is not just about identity. For example, during the last Venice Biennale, when I was representing Nepal, we were already having this conversation about a borderless society, which is a beautiful concept. Humanity has reached a stage where we understand that everybody is related or interconnected with everybody else. There is no such thing as isolation and being independent, which is basically what the Buddhist philosophy is all about. These are things we should share with upcoming generations so they do not become selfish and all about themselves. If we manage to do so, it will benefit everybody. Let us also consider the topic of the environment, the younger generation is dreaming big, and nothing can stop them.

AAN: Does your name, Tsherin Sherpa, bear a meaning?
TS: Yes, it does. Tsherin means long life and Sherpa is my last name. When I was younger, within the Sherpa family, my mother called me 'Ang Tsherin'. 'Ang' means baby, and when I was getting my citizenship in Nepal, they wrote Ang Tsherin Sherpa, literally Baby Tsherin Sherpa. I got stuck with it, and when I came into the art world with my first show, I was quite specific about having Ang removed. For an outsider, it does not mean anything, but for Sherpa people or Tibetan people, it certainly does.

AAN: How would you like people to describe your practice?
TS: I would just like to be recognised as a simple, contemporary. After that, if people want to dig artist deeper, they can hear more of my story. In addition, my endeavour is about trying to exist, trying to be seen because the Himalayan region has been completely ignored in the mainstream of contemporary art for far too long. I think we all have different stories and narratives and, basically, to be heard and to be seen is part of this whole movement.



WATCH
Tsherin Sherpa
lecture at
The Berkely
Art Museum
(2018)

From Tales of
Muted Spirits-
Dispersed
Threads – Twisted
Shangri-la,
Pavilion of Nepal,
Venice Biennale
(2022),
courtesy
Venice Biennale.
Photo:
Andrea Avezzi

ZIMINZHONG TREASURES OF THE FORBIDDEN CITY



Gilt-metal zimingzhong by James Cox. Creating pieces out of solid gold was expensive with makers such as James Cox probably hiring gilders to create a solid gold effect, possibly using the ormulu technique, circa 1750-95, Qianlong period © The Palace Museum



Crane carrying a pavilion, zimingzhong with parts from China and Britain. The emperors often instructed the Zimingzhongchu (office of self-ringing bells) to combine parts from across Europe with elements made in the Forbidden City. While the clock in this zimingzhong is attributed to James Cox, a zimingzhong producer, the delicate casing and beautiful decorations are almost certainly Chinese, 1700s.

Zimingzhong made in the Zimingzhongchu had to be approved by the emperor © The Palace Museum
Zimingzhong with turbaned figure. This clock reflects the fascination and misconceptions that characterised popular attitudes towards China from people in 1700s Britain. With its turbaned figure and tasselled tent, it is in the chinoiserie style, inspired by imagery from China, India and Japan, circa 1770, Qianlong period © Science Museum Group

Moving pagoda zimingzhong. Made in London for the Qing court, and when wound, the mechanism causes its nine tiers to slowly rise and you can hear the soft tinkling of music, 1700s © The Palace Museum



Zimingzhong in the form of a pot of artificial flowers by Timothy Williams
This clock is delicately decorated with penjing (a potted landscape). Penjing was a popular art form in 1700s China which used real or artificial flowers. It was well known to British audiences from missionary texts and travel writing, such as 'A Particular Account of the Emperor of China's Gardens near Pekin' by Jean-Denis Attiret, circa 1769-90, Qianlong period © The Palace Museum

Elephant zimingzhong
The elephant in this whimsical zimingzhong has eyes that roll and a tail and trunk that sway when the mechanism is wound, 1700s, Qianlong period © The Palace Museum

A major new exhibition featuring 23 mechanical clocks from China, *zimingzhong*, are currently on loan from The Palace Museum. The exhibition takes visitors on a journey through the 18th century, from the Chinese trading port of Guangzhou to the Forbidden City in the centre of Beijing. Translating to 'bells that ring themselves', zimingzhong are more than just clocks: they present an enchanting combination of a flamboyant aesthetic, timekeeping, music, and sometimes movement using mechanisms new to most people in 1700s China.

Wang Xudong, Director of The Palace Museum, commented on the theme of the exhibition, 'In the 1580s, Western clocks entered China's interior from its southern coast, and the country's history of clock collection and manufacture began. The rich collection of timepieces in the Forbidden City serves not only as a medium of contact between China and the Western world, but also as a vehicle of cultural diversity: through a unique historical angle, it showcases over three centuries of communication, exchange, and integration between China and the wider world'.

The exhibition looks at successive emperors' obsessive collecting of these remarkable clockwork instruments, the origins of the unique trade, as well as how the inner workings of the elaborate treasures that inspired British craftsmen and emperors alike actually worked. The journey begins with the ornate Pagoda Zimingzhong, a celebration of the technology and design possibilities of zimingzhong. The clock, over one metre tall, dates from the 1700s and was made in London during the Qing dynasty

(1636-1911) in China. The complex moving mechanism is brought to life in an accompanying video showing how the nine delicate tiers slowly rise and fall. The Emperors and Zimingzhong section of the exhibition reveals the vital role of these clocks in facilitating early cultural exchanges. Visitors can learn how some of the first zimingzhong to enter the Forbidden City were brought by missionaries in the early 1600s, seeking to ingratiate themselves in Chinese society by presenting beautiful automata to the

emperor. Decades later, the Kangxi Emperor (r 1662-1722) began collecting the automata, which he christened 'zimingzhong', displaying them as 'foreign curiosities' and demonstrating his mastery of time, the heavens, and his divine right to rule. Lord Macartney, the first British Ambassador to the court noted in 1793 when he visited the Qianlong emperor (r 1736-1795) in the imperial audience hall at Yuanming Yuan, 'At the end I observed a musical clock that played 12 old English tunes ... On the dial

“
Successive
emperors had a
passion for
collecting these
types of clocks
”

appeared in large characters, "George Clarke, Clock and Watchmaker of Leadenhall Street, London".

One of the most popular London clockmakers at the Qing court was James Cox (died circa 1791), and he is also the best documented British clockmaker who participated in the Chinese market in the late 18th century. Cox's association with the Qing court began in 1766, when he was commissioned by the East India Company to construct an elaborate pair of clockwork automata in the form of chariots that were to be given as a gift for the Qianlong Emperor. His musical clock of a crane carrying a pavilion is redolent of Chinese motifs – the choice of bird, the single branch of *lingzhi* (fungus of immortality) it carries in its beak, as well as the pair of peaches on the saddle-flap offering wishes for longevity. The delicate outer casing and beautiful decorations were almost certainly made in China. These British zimingzhong although designed for the Chinese market were made by craftsmen who had often never travelled to Asia and merely reflected British perceptions of Chinese culture in the 1700s. Europeans were fascinated by the

exotic East and used a combination of elements from China, Japan, and India, such as pagodas, up-turned roofs, and roof ornaments, as well as a menageries of real and mythical beasts – elephants, dragons, and phoenixes.

On display in the 'Design' section is a selection of clocks that embody this attempt at a visual understanding of Chinese tastes, including *Zimingzhong with turbaned figure*. This piece mixes imagery associated, again, with China, Japan, and India to present a generalised European view of an imagined East, reflecting the 'chinoiserie' style. This not only highlights British people's interest in China, but also their lack of cultural understanding of these faraway lands.

One theme that pervades the exhibition is trade, or exchange, and the important trade route from London to the East. This journey, which took up to a year, is traced in order to explore how the sought-after goods in Europe, which British merchants bought in the great trade ports of China, such as silk, tea, and porcelain, made their way back home. Whilst the demand for Chinese goods was high, British merchants were also keen to develop their own export trade and British-made luxury goods like zimingzhong provided the perfect opportunity to grow. This exchange of goods also led to the exchange of skills.

The 'Mechanics' section explores how automata and mechanical and musical clocks worked. One such clock in the exhibition features decorative lotus flowers that were created by using Chinese and European technology. When wound, a flock of miniature birds swim on a glistening pond as the potted lotus flowers open. The sumptuous decorative elements are powered by a

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The Courtesans Hinazura and Chōzan with Their Attendants, from Yoshizawa Courtesans: A New Mirror Comparing the Calligraphy of Beauties (Yoshizawa keisei: Shin bijin awase jibitsu kagami)

Color woodblock printed album, *oribon*, with original dark blue covers (some wear). Title slip missing; 15 x 10 1/4 in. (38.1 x 26 cm). 1 volume complete, early Spring, 1784, in blue cloth covered slip case. Colophon: artist, *Kitao Rissai Masanobu ga*; Seals: *Soseki* and *Masanobu no in*; publisher Kōshōdō, Tsutaya Jūzaburō of Toriaburachō Minamigawa.

Provenance: Toni Strauss-Negbaur, sold at Paul Cassirer and Hugo Helbing, Berlin, 5th and 6th June 1928, lot 203.

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mechanism made in China while the musical mechanism was made in Europe.

The 'Making' section explores the artistic skills and techniques needed to create these special clocks. On display together, for the first time, are the Temple zimingzhong made by key British maker, James Upjohn, in the 1760s that is displayed alongside his memoir, which provides rich insight into the work involved in creating its ornate figurines and delicate gold filigree. Four interactive mechanisms that illustrate technologies used to operate the clocks are also on display. Provided by Hong Kong Science Museum, these interactive elements allow visitors to look deeper into the complex inner workings of these delicate workings.

Although beautiful to behold, zimingzhong were not purely decorative. As timekeepers, they had a variety of uses, including organising the Imperial household and improving the timing of celestial events such as eclipses. The ability to predict changes in the night sky with greater accuracy helped reinforce the belief present in Chinese cosmology that the emperor represented the connection between heaven and earth. Accompanying the clocks is a publication, from 1809, written by Chaojun Xu and on loan from the Needham Research Institute, is the *Illustrated Account of Zimingzhong*. The document was used as a guide for converting the Roman numerals used on European clocks into the Chinese system of 12 double-hours (*shi*) and represents the increasing cultural exchanges between nations.

Part of the appeal of the elaborate clocks is the sophisticated music technology they showcased; these objects often played a selection of

popular European or Chinese songs. Skilled programmers would convert written musical scores into mechanisms. Throughout the exhibition, an accompanying soundscape of the clocks' melodies is heard, including an extract from the 'Molihua', or 'Jasmine Flower', a popular Chinese folk song.

Also on show are rare books and archival material from the Science Museum Group Collection, including Louis Le Comte's account of his visit to China; a clock made by one of London's leading clockmakers, George Graham; an analemmatic sundial made by the talented mathematical instrument maker, Thomas Tuttle; and a selection of hand tools from James Watt's workshop. These objects aim to complement the stories represented by the zimingzhong, showcasing the complexity of the instrument and the clockmaking trades.

The final section explains why the zimingzhong trade began to decline. In 1796, Emperor Jiaqing ascended the throne and he believed zimingzhong to be a frivolous waste of money and, with his influence, the trade simply faded away.

However, today, there are more than 1,500 zimingzhong that are cared for by the Palace Museum Conservation Hospital and are on permanent display in the Forbidden City. Zimingzhong now reveal a snapshot in time, allowing the viewer to not only enter imagined 18th-century lavish interiors of the Forbidden City, but also to contemplate the complex global trade and exchange created by these miraculous clocks.

● Until 2 June, Science Museum, London, sciencemuseum.org.uk

MOTHER-OF-PEARL

The Relatively Unknown Pride of Palestine

by Lucien de Guise

Palestine seldom receives the cultural credit it deserves. Some of this comes down to a confusion with the name. The unflattering English term 'Philistine' is almost the same as the Arabic word for Palestine: *Filastin*. As is often the case, this uncomfortable association begins with the *Bible*. The residents of Philistia are described in the Jewish and Christian Bibles as being vigorous warriors but not senseless louts. Goliath and Delilah were among the most famous Philistines. The Philistines appear to have been a civilised people, vilified by Victorians and other slaves to biblical history.

DNA testing of ancient burial grounds suggests that the Philistines were just one of the many groupings that had always existed in the Middle East. The long-term heirs to the Philistine homeland are the modern Palestinians, or Filastinin. They are probably to some extent descended by blood as well. The majority of those heirs are Muslims, with an ever-dwindling Christian population in places with such evocative names as Bethlehem and Jerusalem.

Whatever may have been achieved in Palestine during antiquity, centuries of Ottoman rule did little to nurture creativity among Muslims, Jews, or Christians. There is one especially distinctive contribution, though. Continued in a less elegant manner in the modern era, Franciscan friars initiated the production of wonderful creations in wood inlaid with mother-of-pearl around 500 years ago. Some were large and enchanting models of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and the Church of the Nativity, along with crosses and other devotional items. A few of these superior tourist wares ended up in English stately homes. One even made it into the 2017 *Living with Gods* exhibition at the British Museum; an 18th-century wooden model was the only item from the Holy Land.

The heart of the ancient Philistine kingdom was the coastal cities of the Gaza Strip. They may have lost some of their lustre over the millennia but they are – or were until recently – still cities. In the ancient Greek and Roman way of thinking urban equals civilised. These are not where the magnificent mother-of-pearl tradition is found, however. It is the West Bank centres of Bethlehem and Jerusalem that have created an art form that is barely written about and yet always elicits wonder among those who see and handle it.

Mother-of-pearl is a difficult material to work with, and few societies have mastered it with the skill of Palestinian artisans. Their chief rivals are in East Asia, mainly China and Vietnam, where the technique has typically been used for inlaying furniture and panelling, but also accessories such as Christian crosses. In the Middle East, too, mother-of-pearl inlay has been very popular, especially in Syria. Where Palestine has excelled is with smaller items for pilgrims. It's a tradition

Objects for the Muslim market, such as this Qur'an case, tend to feature the Dome of the Rock.
Photo: Christie's



“
Franciscan friars initiated production around 500 years ago
”

that goes back a long way – as mentioned above – and no doubt existed in a different form before the arrival of the Franciscans. Father Bernard Amico, in particular, seems to have made a huge difference in the 16th century when he stayed in the Holy Land. Having made tiny reproductions of churches from mother-of-pearl, he then published a manual to help others who wanted to do the same.

Franciscans had gained entry to the Holy Land long before that, when the founder of their order had established a curious presence in the 13th century. In what appears to be a genuine historical episode, St Francis of Assisi travelled to Egypt during the Crusades in order to stage an intervention. Captured by Sultan Malik al-Kamil, he was later released when his pacifism and all-round holiness became clear to the future saint's Muslim captors.

When the Franciscans later returned to Palestine, they were able to create an industry serving pilgrims, due to the presence of the right kind of shells for crafting mother-of-pearl. Red Sea oysters were among the most available in centuries past, becoming a valuable resource for Palestine. Nowadays, local supplies are declining but the global network has expanded with exports from places that were not known 500 years ago, such as Tahiti and Australia.

In a land without a vast supply of timber, the artisans of the Holy Land were also blessed with the



The British Museum model of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre is known to have been collected before 1753

right type of wood. Most of the objects made in Palestine were crafted from olive and sometimes pistachio wood. These are much harder woods than might be expected, and very durable.

Manufacture established itself in the places where demand was greatest. Bethlehem turned into the biggest centre of all. Visitors to the Holy Land have been returning with souvenirs since the time of the Crusades and before. Despite the scheming bloodlust of that era, the excuse for the First Crusade (1099) was harassment of Christian pilgrims by the Muslim occupiers of Palestine. The Seljuk Turks were among the least accommodating rulers, and it was during their time the Crusades got going. Their predecessors, the Fatimids, took a more arbitrary approach. One sultan demolished the Church of the Holy Sepulchre – the holiest site as it was the setting for Christ's death, burial, and resurrection. His successor then allowed it to be rebuilt.

That church has changed little since then. It is the same that features in the prestigious wooden models that were brought back to Europe and are now in museums such as the Ashmolean and British Museum.

They seldom appear on the open market, although the London-based Amir Mohtashemi gallery has one for sale at the moment. Appropriately, the gallery is close to a church of the Carmelites, a Catholic monastic order which started in Palestine during the 13th century.

Being souvenirs makes identifying these items a lot less mysterious than, for example, East Asian examples which are argued about extensively. These works in mother-of-pearl have locations spelled out on them. Those that state Jerusalem were often made in Bethlehem, and occasionally vice versa. What we can be certain of is that they are from Palestine. Not all were brought back by pilgrims. Of the two in the British Museum, it seems that at least one was bought by the founder, Sir Hans Sloane, much closer to home. In the late 17th century, London had been the site of an exhibition of wooden models of different religious buildings in the Holy Land. Interest in the buildings became as great as the urge to imbibe the atmosphere further east by being there.

Almost 300 years ago, one of the few intrepid travellers from the British Isles to record his journey to the Holy Land was the wandering

Church of Ireland prelate Richard Pococke. He commented on Bethlehem: 'There are many Christians here; they live by making not only crosses and beads of wood, inlaid with mother-of-pearl, but also models of the church of the Holy Sepulchre'. He was unimpressed by the conduct of the local community: 'It is remarkable that the Christians of Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Saint John's and Nazareth are worse than any other Christians'.

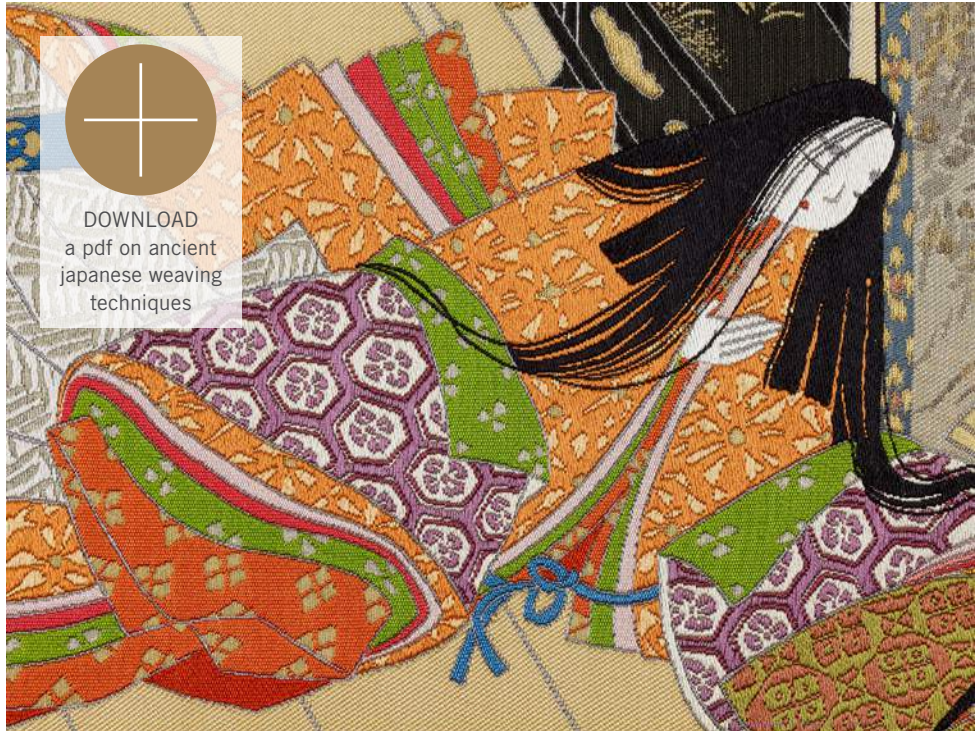
At the top end of the souvenir hierarchy were those scale models. Their finish was exquisite, with detachable parts allowing the owner to see the interior of a building such as the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. The mother-of-pearl inlay was augmented with bone, ebony, and sometimes ivory. The main difference between model and original is the proliferation of inlaid quatrefoils and rosettes, which are a stylised reimagining of the plain exterior stonework. These features might have replicated the thousands of crosses etched into the interior by pilgrims over the ages.

More typical souvenirs available for pilgrims were crosses using the same mother-of-pearl quatrefoil design as on the church models. These really got going in the 19th century, when visiting the Holy Land became a more viable prospect. The small crosses would have been much easier to carry, or wear, on the journey home. The wooden model in the British Museum is more than 42 cm long and very heavy.

The most distinctive feature of Holy Land crosses is the formation of 14 roundels marking the Stations of the Cross. On superior versions these provide additional decoration on the back, while the front is fully embellished with mother-of-pearl showing scenes from the life of Christ, the Virgin Mary, and saints. Many ended up on the altars of churches in Europe.

Not all the workmanship of Palestine was for Christian pilgrims, though. The Muslim clientele was also important; not so much in Bethlehem but in Jerusalem — the third holiest city in Islam. These wares tend to feature the Dome of the Rock. Most of the artisans were Christians, living in harmony with their Muslim neighbours. Certain families won distinction for their work, especially the Zoughbi, Dabdoub, Lama, and others that will be unfamiliar to anyone but enthusiasts of this field, which is being swamped by cheaper mass-produced alternatives aimed at tourists.

It remains a precarious living. Although most of the artefacts are of religious significance, there are also secular items. Picture frames remain a good business. The present crisis in the Middle East is limiting the number of every category of visitor, including pilgrims. The least stable product of all must be maps of Palestine; inspired more by wishful thinking than cartographical exactitude.



Second woven scroll from The Tale of Genji, completed in 1990, silk, gold and silver metallo-plastic threads, strips of gold and silver paper. Shaped, partially double-fabric, with several effects, dominant thrown, brocaded and complementary wefts, bound in taffeta, twill and satin weft. Woven on Jacquard mechanical loom © RMN-Grand Palais (Musée Guimet, Paris) / Thierry Ollivier

GENJI TEXTILES

The second part of the exhibition exploring visual culture influenced by *The Tale of Genji* in Paris, is dedicated to Itaro Yamaguchi (1901–2007), a master weaver from the Nishijin district of Kyoto, who wove and donated to the Guimet Museum four scrolls illustrating the epic tale. These scrolls represent the culmination of a life dedicated to weaving. Made by copying painted scrolls from the Heian period (794–1185) and a hybridisation with the high technicality of Western Jacquard mechanics – and its digital avatar – the four scrolls are on show for the first time together in their entirety. To put the creation of the scrolls into context, they are presented with everyday objects, preparatory drawings and other woven works by the master.

Since the Renaissance, the city of Lyon has been recognised for the quality of its silk production and weaving. In 1850, a disease, pebrine, decimated the silkworms, threatening to destroy this industry. In steps Japan, which was starting to open its borders again and wanting to position itself as an international silkworm supplier, helping to save Lyon's silk manufacturing. This trade cultivated strong links between France and Japan, and a number of French delegations were sent to Japan, where some members made their home. In 1872, a Japanese delegation of weavers from Nishijin was also sent to Lyon to study the loom invented by Joseph-Marie Jacquard in 1804.

The history of the Nishijin district of Kyoto dates back to the beginning of the Heian period with the creation of a workshop attached to the imperial court. Under court and aristocratic patronage, Nishijin fabrics was able to benefit from the most advanced weaving techniques of the period. In later centuries, weavers took the initiative of integrating loom into their workshops in order to



Itaro Yamaguchi (1901–2007) © Akira Nonaka. Photos © RMN-Grand Palais (Musée Guimet, Paris) / Thierry Ollivier

reduce the cost of production, while increasing yield. By the 19th century, an apprenticeship school was established to teach the principles of Jacquard mechanics. These techniques had certainly been adopted by the Japanese by 1876, when Seishiji Hasegawa designed the first Japanese Jacquard loom in wood with an improved version of his loom being available by 1896.

Master Itaro Yamaguchi (1901–2007) was born into this silk tradition. His family of silk weavers came from the Nishijin district and he was introduced to weaving at a very young age on a Jacquard mechanical loom, notably creating *obi* (kimono belts). By 1920, he had founded his own silk weaving factory.

After a career spanning 50 years, at the age of 70, Master Yamaguchi decided to 'leave a masterpiece which would be the embodiment of the highest quality and technicality achieved in the use of the Jacquard loom'. He wanted to show that despite the development of mass industrial production, which according to him hamper imagination, creativity can still exist. After studying The Tale of Genji scrolls, which date from the beginning of the 12th century,

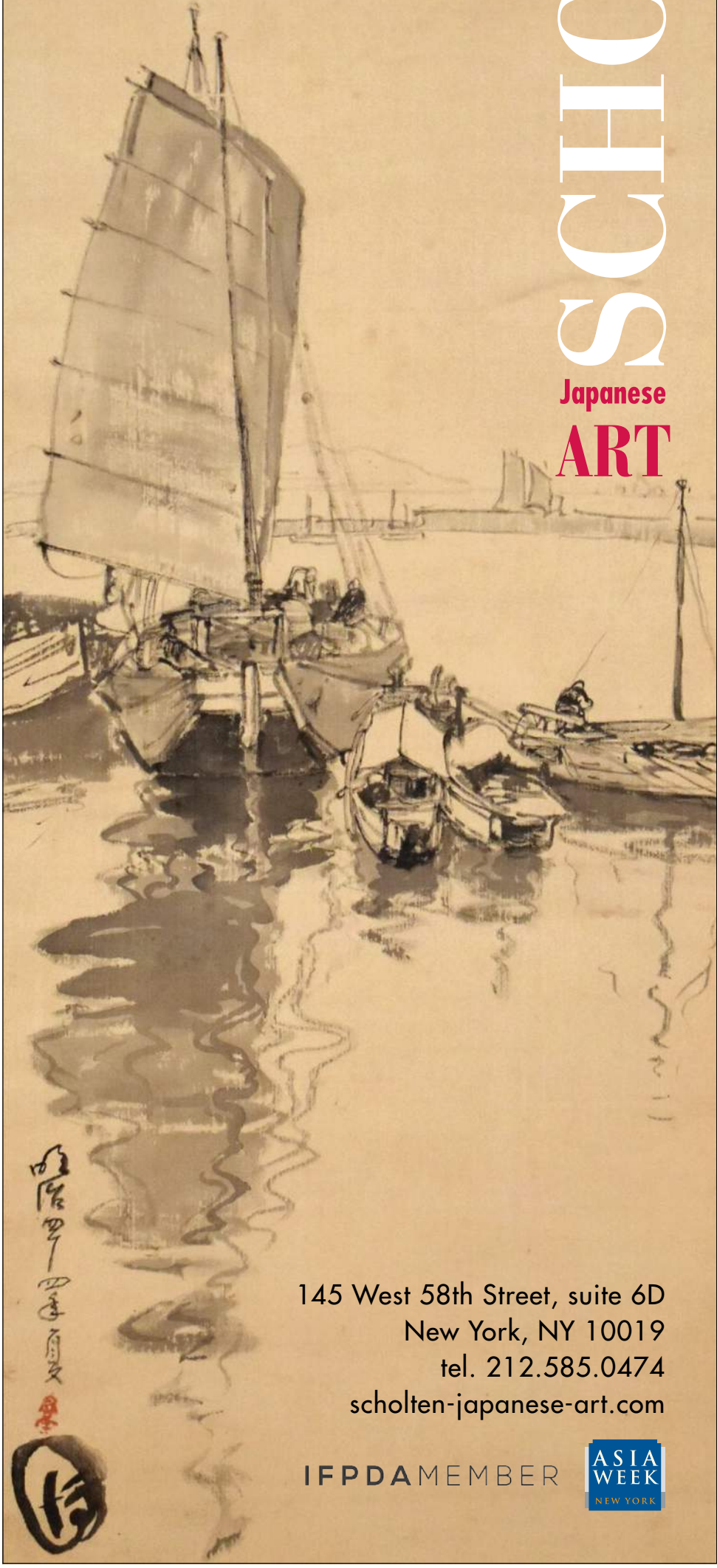
in the Tokugawa Museum in Nagoya and the Goto Museum in Tokyo, he decided to reproduce the National Treasure work by devoting the last 37 years of his life to weaving his own immense work.

His scrolls are composed of two parts: illustrated scenes representing episodes from The Tale of Genji and calligraphies of the text. On most woven rolls, the two elements are made in a technique derived from double-fabric: a superposition of several layers of fabrics woven one above the other which bind together. They are then decorated and the background of the fabric was programmed for the layout, with the design reproduced on graph paper. The preparatory drawings were then enlarged and mounted on screens, which enabled the layout to be made into cards for the loom before stitching the Jacquard boards for the actual weaving. His initial research led him to produce multiple tests, particularly for transparency effects. The master work combines several weaving methods from all over the world to satisfy Master Yamaguchi's aim for perfection.

Master Yamaguchi eventually offered these first two masterpieces to the Guimet Museum to thank France for inventing the Jacquard loom which saved the weaving industry in Kyoto. In 2002, the third scroll in turn joined the reserves of the Guimet Museum. The fourth, completed in 2008 by master weaver Kunio Tamura (a disciple and accomplice of the master for many years), completed this remarkable series.

Now, the four rolls are presented together in their entirety for the first time, unrolled they are over more than 30 metres.
● Until 25 March, part of the exhibition At the Court of Prince Genji, Guimet Museum, Paris, guimet.fr

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Utagawa Hiroshige (1797-1858)
Series: Tales of Genji in fifty-four
chapters Edo period, 1852,
full colour printing on paper
Paris, Jerzy Leskiewicz Foundation
© Fundacja Jerzego Leskowicza
© Michal Grychowski (AMG)

Famous for the extreme refinement of its court art and its artistic flourishing, imperial Japan in the Heian period (794-1185) gave birth to a major work of classical Japanese literature, *The Tale of Genji* (*Genji monogatari*). Written in the 11th century by a woman, the poet Murasaki Shikibu, (circa 978-circa 1014) it considered the first psychological novel in history, The Tale of Genji has been the source, since its creation a 1,000 years ago, of an extremely rich iconography as evidenced by lacquerware, prints, fabrics, kimonos, sculptures, paintings, and luxury objects inspired by the tale. The multitude of scenes described in the work can partly explain the enthusiasm of artists for the work since the 12th century. Particular attention is paid not only to the contexts of events, and places, but also to the seasons – essential elements in Japanese pictorial art. On show are works from the Guimet Museum, as well as several other French and Japanese collections. The French Queen Marie-Antoinette herself collected lacquer boxes representing scenes from Genji, some of which are on show in the exhibition.

Written in Japan in the middle of the Heian period, the tale narrates the life and romantic intrigues of Imperial Prince Hikaru Genji, who cannot claim the throne. The text seduces with its plot, rich in twists and turns, with the attractions of the main character and hundreds of others who appear there.

The story has inspired many artists and craftsmen over the centuries, including Itaro Yamaguchi (1901-2007), a master weaver in Kyoto, whose four exceptional woven scrolls are presented for the first time in their entirety in a specially created section (see page 9 of this issue).

The first part of the exhibition invites the visitor to immerse themselves in ancient Japan, through the evocation of traditional architecture to explore the Heian period and court art. This was a period of relative freedom for women, and particularly rich in its artistic



AT THE COURT OF PRINCE GENJI

production, which notably saw the emergence of women's literature, unique in the history of Japan. If Chinese *kanshi*-form of poetry remained the prerogative of the governing male elites, women seized the chance to create *waka*-style poems, written using a cursive form derived from Chinese and adapted to the Japanese language of the time. Freed from the Chinese model, they produced works mixing *waka* and prose, in the form of journals and stories.

Murasaki Shikibu was not alone in her ambitions. The last two centuries of the Heian period saw the flourishing of a unique women's literature in the history of Japan. Aristocrat women of the Heian period were kept away from political and social life. As they were relatively free in their use of time, their lives could be filled with the arts, study, religion, court intrigues, and romantic relationships. Not participating directly in political life, they are, however, on the front line observing it. Women's literature then developed at the court where several literary figures emerged: Sei Shonagon and Ono no Komachi alongside Murasaki Shikibu all enjoyed undeniable recognition. The founding works that they published bear witness to a culture in the making and the changes in society during the period. Helped by the establishment of the new writing style, they produced works combining poetry (*waka*, small poems very popular in the Heian period) and prose, in the form of journals, or stories (*monogatari*). The appreciation of this poetic and romantic literature is not only manifested in *The Tale of Genji*, but also in the way it is presented. Calligraphy, in fact, plays a major role in its presentation.

Writing about the world around her, Murasaki testifies to the sophistication of the imperial court, which was experiencing new heights of specifically Japanese culture. At its most basic, *The Tale of Genji* is an absorbing introduction to the culture of the aristocracy in early Heian Japan – its forms of entertainment, its manner of dress, daily life, and moral code. In the tale, Murasaki Shikibu also took inspiration from the physical life at court, observing both men and women in their complexities and their social and psychological evolution.

Although the period is marked by



Hatakeyama Shoji
Shigetada by Utagawa
Kuniyoshi (1797-
1861), Kiritsubo (No
1 Paulownia Court),
from the series
Comparisons of the
Floating World for the
Cloudy Chapters of
Genji (Genji kumo
ukiyo awase), Edo
period, 1843-1847,
print, oban tate-e,
Guimet Museum, gift
Tadashi Goino, 2003
© RMN-Grand Palais
(Musée Guimet) /
Michel Urtado



WATCH
a personal tour
of the exhibition

political upheavals, such as the movement of the capital from Nara to Heian-kyo (future Kyoto), and the growing influence of the Fujiwara clan who dominated affairs at court.

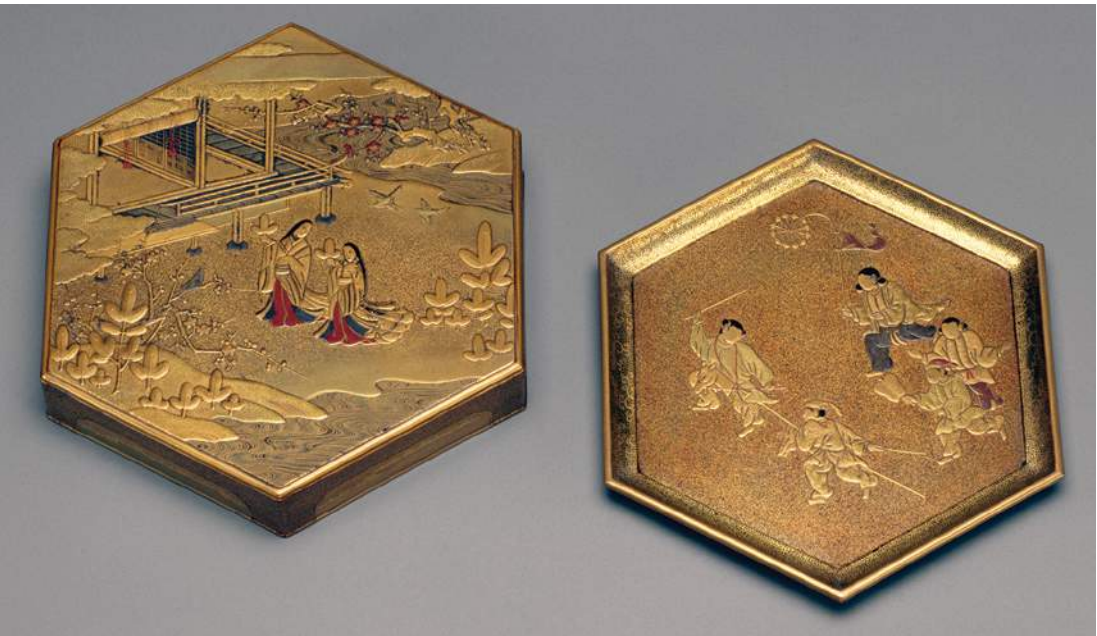
The Tale of Genji also was testament to the rise of Buddhism in Japan, touching on educational reform and is an opportunity to use the simplification of *kanji* characters. As mentioned, these ideograms, inherited from China, remained in the domain of Japanese scholars, but eventually would be transformed into *hiragana*, a cursive writing adapted to the Japanese language called, originally, *onnade* (woman's hand). Thanks to this easier method of writing and reading, Japanese women's literature grew considerably. Buddhism forms the

backdrop to this work and reveals the importance given to respecting rites to maintain peace and the sustainability of the kingdom, and also emphasises the link that unites man to the cosmic whole. The use of magical Buddhist ceremonies and the search for salvation in the world to come bring the court and the characters to life. Above all, it depicts individuals concerned about their salvation at a time when Buddhism is taking root in customs and codes, alongside Daoism and Shintoism, creating a syncretic system from which would emerge the esoteric Buddhist sects.

The keen sense of observation demonstrated by Murasaki, mixed with deep reflections on love and the ephemeral feeling of things that we



The poet
Ono no Komachi
(circa 825-900),
attributed to
Tosa Mitsunori,
Momoyama
period
(1568-1603),
National Museum
of Asian Arts
– Guimet
© RMN-Grand
Palais (Musée
Guimet, Paris) /
Thierry Ollivier



Box decorated with young girls in a garden, Edo period, 18th century, lacquered wood decorated with solid gold powder, gold powder, silver and green gold in relief with inlays of precious metals and red and black lacquer on a background of gold powder in relief, Guimet Museum, former collection of Marie-Antoinette © RMN-Grand Palais (Musée Guimet) / Thierry Ollivier

“
Murasaki
testifies to the
sophistication
of the imperial
court
”



find throughout the work, supported by the author's deep erudition on the culture and history of China and Japan have continued to seduce readers over the centuries. The poems punctuate the entire story, expressing the implications of the situations, the feelings, and deep thoughts of the characters. Because of the specific number of ideograms imposed on the writer in this form of poetry, the waka forces a style that is both incisive and evasive.

In the 17th century, the invention of wood engraving for prints offered a new medium and allowed the great masters of printmaking to renew the imagination of the most famous scenes from *The Tale of Genji*, sometimes reinterpreted or readapted to the creativity of contemporary fashion. The publication of a parody of the novel by Ryutei Tanechiko (1783-1842), *An Imposter Murasaki and a Rustic Genji*, published between 1829 and 1842, took the iconography of the work in new directions. Utagawa Kunisada (1786-1864) known as Toyokuni III, also produced works in this vein. To make the original work

more accessible, the author does not hesitate to change the temporal framework and transform the waka into *haiku* (a form of poetry invented in the 17th century). The profusion of details and the quality of the artist's productions largely contributed to the success of these parody versions.

To bring the Tale of Genji into the modern world, there is also a section devoted to *manga*. This founding novel of Japanese culture continues to inspire many artists and craftsmen to create new forms of art with the first forms of modern manga being published in the early 20th century. Manga, in particular, reinterprets the pictorial codes, themes and scenes from the story of Genji with ongoing inventiveness, the most famous of which is probably *Asaki yume misbi* by Waki Yamato (b 1948). The Tale of Genji continues to be adapted today, as seen in a recent edition by Sean Michael Wilson, illustrated by Inko Ai Takita, which lines the walls and floor of part of the exhibition space in Paris.

● Until 25 March, 2024,
Guimet Museum, Paris, guimet.fr

Miniature chest
decorated
with flowers,
Edo period
(1603-1868),
lacquered wood
decorated with
gold powder in
relief with silver
and semi-
precious stones,
the set is
composed of six
drawers, a tray,
and a censer with
lid, Guimet
Museum, former
collection of
Marie-Antoinette
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Palais (Musée
Guimet) /
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Moharaja Ranjit Singh (c.1799–1839) 1835–1838 (detail)
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Folding screen with a view of Mexico City, attributed to Diego Correa, Mexico, 1690s wood, fabric, oil pigment, varnish, courtesy of Museo Nacional de Historia, Castillo de Chapultepec, City of Mexico department of culture

MANILA GALLEON

From Asia to the Americas

This is the museum's first large-scale exhibition tracing historical trade links across the Pacific that connected Asia to the Americas and Europe. Featuring over 140 objects spanning the 16th to the 20th centuries, the exhibition allows visitors to discover how the movement of people, goods, and ideas through the Philippines and Mexico created a distinctive cultural and artistic heritage that was shared between seemingly distant regions.

Looking at Manila as a precursor of Singapore, the exhibition also reflects on the unique qualities of the blended society and highlights the impact and importance of port cities on global affairs.

The Manila Acapulco trade began early in the era of exploration and early globalisation through trade, bringing new contacts along with the exchange of cultures and ideas. Dennis Carr writes in the catalogue *Made in the Americas* (MFA, 2015) that within decades after the Spanish conquest, Mexico had become a hub of global commerce, working as a linchpin between Asia and Europe in the early 16th century. This early Asian trade greatly helped the colonial Americas to flourish, producing an extraordinary array of goods for its citizens to enjoy. It allowed the elite and merchants to surround themselves with a mix of exotic goods alongside European decorations to show their status and power. The goods originating from Asian ports were imported in enormous quantities by Spanish and Portuguese traders. As Carr cites, 'By 1770 some 70 percent of household inventories in Boston recorded some type of imported porcelain'.

In 1565, the first Spanish ships sailed from the recently founded colony of the Philippines bound for Acapulco on the Pacific coast in Mexico. More were to follow and by 1573 regular trade commenced with the two port cities, establishing the route that would be known as *Galón de Manila* or *Nao de China*, with the ships sailing annually

with the trade winds. This trade would last almost 250 years. For the Spanish, Manila provided a gateway into the regional trading networks of East and Southeast Asian, a market that was first dominated by Dutch and Portuguese traders and the by the British East India Company in the 17th century.

From the port of Acapulco goods were shipped overland to Mexico City where they were traded and either consumed by the domestic market or sent onwards to the east-coast port of Veracruz, bound for Spain, or transported inland to the Spanish Viceroyalty of Peru.

In the exhibition, a 17th-century chest from the Philippines depicting a view of Manila, reflects this early trade. The travelling chest conserves one of the oldest extant view of the city, showing its walled town facing the sea and land, surrounded by water—the mouth of the



Carp tureens displaying the arms of a Spanish family in The Philippines, porcelain, Jingdezhen, China, 1760-80, with gilded bronze mounts probably added in Spain in the late 18th century, courtesy of Peabody Essex Museum



Map of the Philippines (1734) by Pedrom Murillo Velarde (cartographer) and Francisco Suarez (artist), engraved by Nicolas de la Cruz Bagay. This is one of the earliest and most important maps of The Philippines showing the many different ethnic groups living in the city, Fernando and Catherine Zobel de Ayala Collection

Pasig River. The early city had three bastions at the major corners of the town and shows densely clustered houses and churches that had been established on the opposite banks of the river. Many stylistic details seem to link to the probability that it was by a Chinese painter, perhaps living in Manila. Figures in Ming-dynasty clothing stroll about a *plaza* (seen on the lower right), while some are on horseback accompanied by attendants holding parasols, and Chinese ships are depicted floating in the harbour. To add to the Chinese connection, an area of thatched roof houses at the end of the waterway is labelled *Parian de los Sangleyes*, referring to the market quarter where the Chinese (*sangleyes*) were forced to live.

Chinese export porcelains also had a sizeable market in Mexico. The Portuguese were the first Europeans to order specific pieces from China and most of them were decorated in a rich blue with both royal and Catholic imagery. During this same late 16th-century period, the Spanish also began to commission porcelains from China,

including some destined specifically for Mexico. Their international route of trade started in Canton and continued to Manila, Acapulco, Mexico City, Vera Cruz, Cartagena, Havana, and home to Cadiz.

There is evidence that Mexico was also receiving Japanese goods during this early period of trade, brought to the Americas by the Manila galleons. Japanese folding screens (*byōbu*) were first brought to Mexico from Japan and China in the 17/18th century and quickly became coveted luxury items, which went on to influence creations of local Mexican versions (*biombos*). These screens reproduced local scenes of daily life, heroic deeds, allegories and city landscapes to feed the demand for exotic goods.

A striking portrait in the exhibition is of Hasekura Tsunenaga, who was of noble ancestry and from the *samurai* class. From 1613-1620, Hasekura was the head of the Keicho era (1596-1615) embassy to Pope Paul V, in Italy, and this painting was commissioned to celebrate the event. On his way back to Japan, Hasekura and his companions retraced their route across New Spain in 1619, sailing from Acapulco to Manila before sailing north to Japan in 1620. The figures in the background point to his Christian faith, a rarity in Japan at the time. Christianity was first introduced into Japan in the 15th century by the Portuguese, but Japan had begun to suppress the Christian faith and restrict foreign movement in the country. This turbulent period resulted in the country turning inward and becoming isolationist. However, Hasekura is remembered as the first Japanese ambassador in the Americas and in Spain, despite the other less well-known and less well-documented missions he concluded preceding this voyage. Japan's next embassy to Europe would not occur for another 200 years.

Elsewhere in the exhibition, coins, chests, and other objects show how silver carried by the galleons became the first global currency. A 17th-century



Chest with a view of Manila, Philippines, circa 1650-60, wood, pigments, binders and forged iron, Gobierno del Estado de Puebla/Secretaria de Cultura/OPD, Museos Puebla

Portrait of Hasekura Tsunenaga by Hasekura Tsunenaga or Archita Ricci (1560-1635) or Claude Deruet (1588-1660), circa 1615, Italy, private collection

“Silver was critical to the development of the Asian trade”

chest in the exhibition shows a most interesting aspect of this trade – the inlay decoration features the foundation myth of Tenochtitlan, the capital city of the Mexica (Aztecs). After independence, this became the coat of arms of Mexico. The fall-front cabinet is European in form, but was made in the Philippines, with local woods, bone inlay, and silver fittings. The beast-mask and paw-shaped feet at the corners, and lion heads' drawer pulls, are similar to features on Chinese furniture, so this might be the work of southern Chinese craftsmen – or Filipinos influenced by those works.

Silver was critical to the trade which created enormous demand. Mined in large quantities in the Americas, it was greatly desired in China, and soon came to dominate trade in Asia. The metal was minted into the Spanish dollar, which became the basis of many of today's currencies, including the Straits dollar (now the Malaysian *ringgit* and Singapore dollar), and the US dollar.

The final section of the special

exhibition offers a captivating look at how the galleon trade influenced artistic expression in fashion, textiles, and accessories well into the 19th century. During this period, Mexico and the Philippines sought to assert their national identity through a reinvention of traditional fashions. Highlights include embroidered silk shawls known as the *mantones de Manila* (Manila shawls), which became popular in Spain, the Philippines, and the Spanish Americas as a fashionable accessory worn by women, particularly *flamenco* dancers. Imported from China through Manila and brought to Spain and Europe, the embroidered patterns influenced the Tehuana ensemble, a distinctive form of Mexican dress adopted by celebrated artist Frida Kahlo.

Manila Galleon: From Asia to the Americas offers reflections on the legacy of the galleon trade, which continues to be felt through the languages, cuisines, and art of the countries involved in the trade. The exhibition explores Manila's role as an entrepot and central node within a global trade network. Asian commodities such as porcelain and textiles flowed across the Pacific to the Americas through Manila, and likewise, American goods such as silver and chocolate reached Asia from Acapulco in Mexico. Along with these goods came cultural exchange, the legacy of which is still palpable in the material culture of the Philippines and Mexico today.

● Until 17 March, 2024, Asian Civilisations Museum, Singapore, nbh.gov.sg



Writing cabinet with the arms of Mexico City, 17th century, courtesy of Asian Civilisations Museum

MARCH 2024

INOUE MANJI /
David Stanley Hewett
KOGEL and Art



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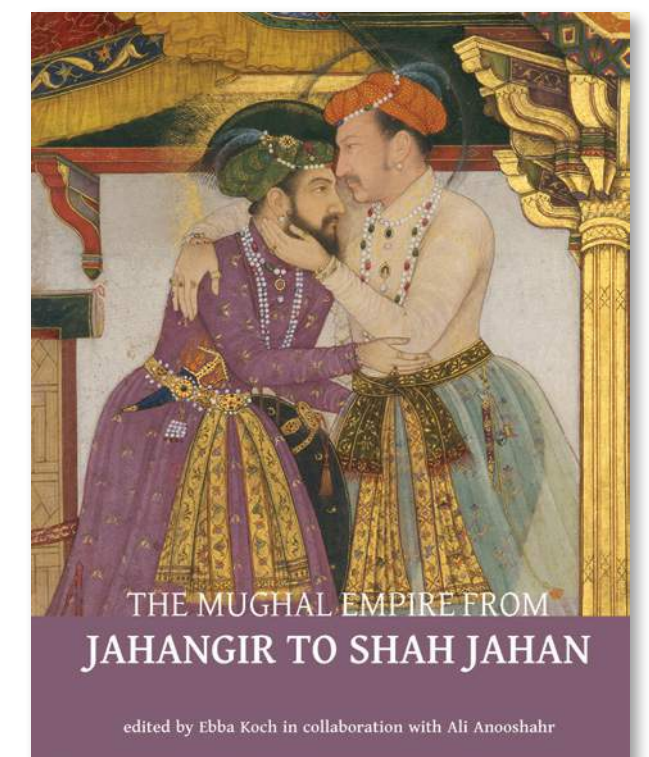
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ASIA WEEK NEW YORK

2024

Now firmly back in the international art calendar, this year's Asia Week New York (AWNY) marks 15 years of celebrating Asian and Islamic world art. A mix of 26 international and US dealers have come together to showcase works of art in Manhattan. The main event runs from 14 to 22 March. As usual, Asia Week New York coincides with the Spring sales at the auction houses, who are also both hosting physical and online sales. For ease, we are first listing a selection of the in-gallery shows followed by online only activities. More information can be found on the AWNY website, including all the connected events – asiaweekny.com.



Red Mountain Landscape (1962) by Lui Shou-Kwan, ink and colour on rice paper, 43.5 x 46.5 cm, Alisan Fine Art

Chinese Art

SHIFTING LANDSCAPES

Alisan Fine Art, 14 to 22 March

Shifting Landscapes is a solo exhibition celebrating the art of Lui Shou-Kwan (1919-1975). This first show in New York presents transformative works from the artist's career that bridged tradition and modernity while also creating new dialogue. Lui was a vanguard figure of the New Ink Movement in Hong Kong, a movement that reimagined the Chinese ink tradition and flourished from the 1950s to 1970s. Lui was not only influential on the following generation of artists, he was also instrumental in transforming traditional Chinese ink painting into a modern, global, art form.

In the adjacent gallery, there is this

round and decorated in elaborately painted robes in the *famille-verte* palette.

● 16 East 52nd Street, 10/F, NY 10022, tel 212 397 2818, rmchait.com. Hours: Mon-Fri 10-6pm, otherwise by appointment

LITERATI AND ROCKS Amidst Verdant Bloom

Fu Qiumeng Fine Art,

17 March to 20 May

In March, the gallery is featuring an ink-on-colour hand scroll by Sun Kehong (circa 1533-1610), *Auspicious Scholar Rocks*. The artist gained acclaim for his depictions of flowers, birds, and rocks and his ability to capture the essence of these subjects also reflected his deep connection to the natural world.

● 65 East 80th Street, G/F, NY 10075, tel 646 838 9395, fuqiumeng.com

Hours: Tues-Sat 10-6pm, otherwise by appointment.

KELLY WANG AND REN LIGHT PAN NEW MATERIAL PRACTICES

Ink Studio, 14 to 22 March

Two female emerging artists from New York, who are exploring the practice of ink are Wang (b 1992) and Ren Light Pan (b 1990). In one

of her featured paintings, *Brush Rest*, Wang uses newspaper twisted into strands and sculpted into two-dimensional and three-dimensional landscape forms to transform the normally passive, absorbent ground of ink art – paper – into an active, material inquiry into human society and nature. In contrast, Ren Light Pan, in her *Sleep* series, uses the heat of her body and the physical, material properties of ink and water – diffusion, absorption, and evaporation – to index and record her physical body in its sleeping state.

● 308 East 72nd Street, apt 3D, by appointment only, tel 646 510 2886, inkstudio.com.cn

CHINESE AND VIETNAMESE CERAMICS FROM AMERICAN AND JAPANESE COLLECTIONS

Zetterquist Galleries, 14 to 22 March

The Chinese pieces on offer date from the Tang through the Ming dynasties, with a highlight being a large Tang-dynasty white ware jar, rare for its size and condition. From southern China, there are examples of Qingbai porcelains and a Jian-yao 'Hare's Fur' tea bowl from a Japanese tea-ceremony collection. Ming-



Black flower vase by Yagi Kazuo (1918-1979), stoneware, 26.9 x 15.2 x 10.9cm, Dai Ichi Arts

dynasty pieces include two Longquan celadons, and a 'gu' form vase with Taoist trinary symbols, in an old lacquer bod, also from a Japanese tea-ceremony collection. Most of the Vietnamese works come from the collection of Mary and Cheney Cowles, with pieces representing northern Vietnamese kilns from the Ly dynasty (1009-1225) to the Le dynasty (1428-1788).

● 3 East 66th Street 2B, NY 10065, tel 212 751 0650, zetterquist.com Please call for an appointment.

Japanese and Korean Art

LITERATI PAINTINGS, SCHOLARLY LETTERS, AND JAPANESE KINTSUGI

Bachmann Eckenstein, 15 to 19 March

This Swiss gallery is returning to participate in Asia Week New York to show collections of literati paintings and hanging scrolls, scholarly letters, and *kintsugi*. In Japan, kintsugi are works that use the ancient art of repairing broken



Ken Matsubara, Long Blue Dragon (2023) by Ken Matsubara, 38 5/8 x 14 1/8 x 1 5/8 in, Ippodo Gallery

pottery with lacquer mixed with powdered gold, silver, or platinum. This technique not only restores the object but elevates it to a new level of beauty, symbolising resilience and the embrace of imperfections. A highlight of the scholarly letters is from Shibata Zeshin (1807-1891) to Gosetsu, a shop-owner, introducing his former apprentice Ikeda Taishin (1825-1903).

● Exhibiting at Leslie Feely Gallery, 4/F, 1044 Madison Avenue, NY 10075, tel 212 988 0040, bachmanneckenstein.com Hours: Fri-Tues, 10am-6pm, otherwise by appointment

CERAMIC FRONTIERS Sodeisha & Shikokai in Post-war Art

Dai Ichi Arts, 12 to 28 March

In the landscape of mid-20th-century Japan, two significant sculptural ceramic movements, *Sodeisha* and *Shikokai*, emerged concurrently during the post-war period. The gallery is presenting a group exhibition in March that illuminates the richness of these historical movements, offering a distinctive lens through which to explore post-war ceramics from Japan. The exhibition unveils a curated collection of masterpieces by renowned artists integral to the Shikokai and Sodeisha canon in Japanese ceramic art history. Among the artists featured are Hayashi Yasuo, Suzuki Osamu, Kumakura Junkichi, Yagi Kazuo, Yamada Hikaru, Fujimoto Yoshimichi, and other influential figures that defined this pivotal period in Japanese ceramic art.

● 18 East 64th Street, 1/F, NY 10065, tel 212 230 1680, daiichiarts.com Reception on 14 March at the gallery, from 5.30pm. Catalogue available



Telescope (Tomogane) by Katsushika Hokusai (1760-1849), colour woodblock print with mica, oban tate-e 36.8 x 25.4 cm circa 1801-4, from the series: Fashionable Seven Bad Habits Fūryū nakute nanakuse), signed: Kako; publisher: Koshodo (Tsutaya Juzaburo II), Sebastian Izzard

political affairs that affected the world of *ukiyo-e*, both in representations of the licensed entertainment quarter of Yoshiwara and the city at large. Suzuki Harunobu (1724-1770) and his contemporaries are represented as are his successors in the following decades such as Torii Kiyonaga (1752-1815) and Kitagawa Utamaro (1753-1806).

Poetry circles, already a significant source of patronage for artists such as Harunobu, flourished during the 1770s and 1780s as never before. The *samurai* and wealthy merchants who formed much of their membership enjoyed rowdy, alcohol-fuelled parties where they rubbed shoulders with celebrities including leading actors and the highest-ranking courtesans.

Poets such as Ota Nanpo (Shokusanjin, 1749-1823) and Akera Kanko (1740-1799) worked with the publisher Tsutaya Juzaburo (1750-1797) to promote the literary efforts of the participants, resulting in numerous *kyōka* anthologies illustrated by leading artists such as Kitao Masanobu (Santo Kyoden, 1761-1816), and Utamaro. The show also features

several important examples including a fine copy of Kyoden's masterwork *Yoshiwara Courtesans: A New Mirror Comparing the Calligraphies of Beauties*.

Also offered are a representative selection of beauty and actor prints from the 1790s and a group of drawings, prints, and paintings from the turn of the century by Katsushika Hokusai (1760-1849). Of these, the most important is *Telescope*, long regarded as a masterpiece by the artist and one of three known specimens. A painting of *Kumagai Naazane Riding Backwards on an Ox* was last seen in public at an exhibition of Hokusai's work organised by the Nihon Keizai Shimbun held in Moscow during the 1960s.

Kubo Shunman (1757-1820), a contemporary of Utamaro, was a painter deeply involved with the Edo poetry circles both as an artist and an author. He is represented in the exhibition by a fine painting on silk of a courtesan and her attendant in an interior.

● 17 East 76th Street, 3/F, NY 10021. Hours: 11-5pm, tel 212 794 1522, izzardasianart.com.

By appointment only. Closed Sunday 17 March. Catalogue available.

ETERNAL PARTNERSHIP Japanese Ceramics in Blue & White

Joan B Mirviss, 14 to 22 March

This year, the gallery features blue and white ceramics through the lens of the esteemed Kyoto-based Kondo family. Across multiple generations, their mastery of *sumetsuke* (cobalt blue-and-white porcelain) culminates in the work of our celebrated gallery artist, Kondo Takahiro (b 1958), who broke free of his forefathers' traditions with his patented *gintekisai* 'silver mist' overglaze on dramatic sculptural work. The show includes work by 20 additional Japanese ceramic artists applying blue and/or white across a wide range of innovative forms and styles, including Hamada Shoji, Kawai Kanjiro, Kitaoki Rosanjin, Kamoda Shoji, Kusube Yaichi, Ono Hakuko, Tomimoto Kenkichi and younger contemporary talents such as Inaba Chikako, Imai Sadamasa,

Continued on page 16

Hiroshi Yanagi Oriental Art

SELECTION OF JAPANESE and KOREAN ART

March 14-19, 2024, 10am-6pm

New exhibition location

Nicholas Hall 4F, 17 East 76th Street, New York, NY 10021
Tel. (212) 772 9100



KOREAN ART: Blue and white storage jar with flower and bird design; 18th century. 29 x 37 (height) cm



JAPANESE ART: Standing Statue of a Kongara Doji Wooden sculpture Muromachi period, 15th century. 72 (height) cm

Hiroshi Yanagi Oriental Art
241-1 Nakano-cho, Shinmonzen, Higashiyama-ku, Kyoto, JAPAN 605-0082
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Cobalt and green-glazed large conical bowl (2020) by Kondo Takahiro (b 1958), with small flat base, glazed porcelain with gintekisai 'silver mist' overglaze, 13 x 22 in, Joan Mirviss. Photo Richard Goodbody

Kuwata Takuro and Tanaka Yu.
● 39 East 78th Street, Suite 401,
NY 10075, tel 212 799 4021,
mirviss.com
Hours: Mon-Fri 11-6pm. Sat 16 March
11-5pm, Sun 17 March, 12-5pm

KOGEI AND ART
Onishi Gallery, 14 to 22 March

This exhibition celebrates the inauguration of Kogei USA, a non-profit dedicated to the revitalisation of Japanese crafts. Originally coined to translate the word 'craft', today the term *kogei* has a higher significance, denoting works that, even at their most innovative, use materials and methods that have stood the test of time and reflect an unrivalled dedication to technical perfection and refinement, from generation to generation over many centuries. In the show, there is a selection of recent work in ceramics, metal, and lacquer by both well-established artists and newcomers to the field

Alongside masterpieces by Living National Treasures such as Imaizumi Imaemon XIV, Nakagawa Mamoru, Osumi Yukie, and Murose Kazumi, the exhibition includes recent work



Incense Container "Kinka" (Sparkle), 2021, by Murose Kazumi (b 1950), Living National Treasure, wood decorated in lacquer with maki-e (sprinkled metals) and raden (shell inlay), 2.7 x 7.8 cm, Onishi Gallery



Shimo-Yoshida (Yoshida Village) by Hiroshi Yoshida (1876-1950), circa 1901-03, watercolour on paper, 33.9 x 51.3 cm, Scholten Japanese Art

tel 212 695 8035,
onishigallery.com. Hours: 10-5pm,
closed Sunday 17 March.
Opening reception, 14 March, 5-8pm

COLLECTING THE MASTER
The Binnie Collection of Hiroshi Yoshida Paintings

Scholten Japanese Art,
14 to 22 March

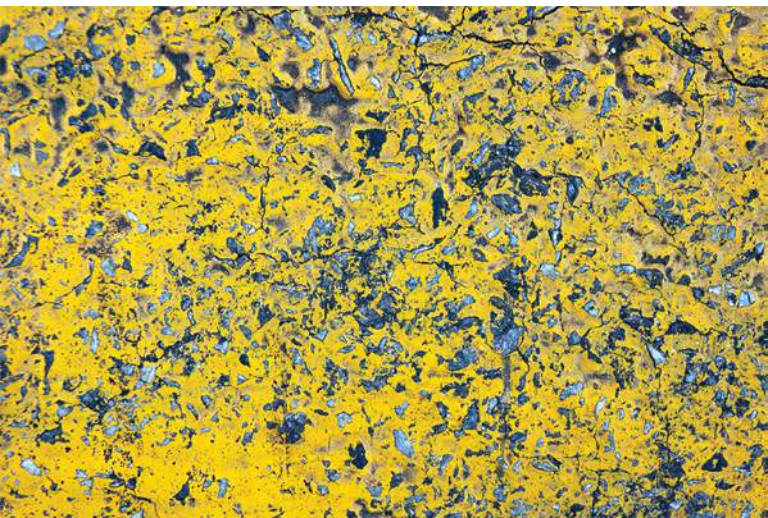
Hiroshi Yoshida (1876-1950) was a Japanese artist, painter, and printmaker, widely known throughout the world for his woodblock printed work. Part of the *shin-hanga* (new print) movement of the first half of the 20th century, Yoshida's prints were produced in the same way as earlier *ukiyo-e*, woodblocks would be carved by a specialist artisan following the design of an artist, and then printed in colours by a specialist printer, all under the direction of a publisher, who then undertook to sell the finished product. However, in Yoshida's case, he eventually employed the carvers and printers directly, acting as his own publisher and even occasionally carving and printing himself.

Yoshida was already a successful and widely recognised painter before he took up woodblock print designing in 1920 at the age of 44, at the request of the influential publisher Watanabe Shozaburo (1885-1962). The artist produced a small number of prints with Watanabe before starting the production of his own designs in 1925, which he then continued for the next 25 years until his death at the age of 73 in 1950.

Aside from this well-known print career, Yoshida had a very active life as a painter and exhibited in a range of Japanese government-sponsored exhibitions, private art society group shows, and commercial galleries. He began exhibiting his paintings in his early twenties, and in October of 1889, the independently minded twenty-three-year-old Yoshida embarked on his first trip (of three) to the US and Europe with his friend and fellow-painter, Nakagawa Hachiro (1877-1922). The young artists managed to arrange several exhibitions, primarily of their watercolours, at museums and galleries in the Midwest and New England to great acclaim. A watercolour included in the exhibition titled *Shimo Yoshida* (Yoshida Village), which likely dates to shortly after his return to Japan in 1901, illustrates the rural namesake village with a cluster of figures traversing a rocky dirt road with the white conical peak of Mount Fuji in the distance partially obscured by clouds.

Following the devastation of the 1 September, 1923 Great Kanto Earthquake that levelled huge areas of Tokyo and Yokohama, Yoshida quickly organised a travelling exhibition to the US supporting his fellow artists. This trip also allowed him to visit the mountains of the American West and Europe and included a tour of Greece. Two large oil paintings in the Binnie Collection relate to this third trip overseas; *Mount Breithorn* and *Parthenon Temple, Evening*, both of which Yoshida likely completed in the studio after returning to Tokyo in August of 1925.

The Scottish artist and printmaker Paul Binnie (b 1967) began to build a collection of Yoshida woodblock prints and original paintings and drawings around 1989, when he purchased his first landscape print by the earlier master. In those early days



Seoul (2011), archival pigment prints, 20 x 30 in © Joo Myung Duck / Datz Museum of Art & Miyako Yoshinaga Gallery



82-2-6 (1985) by Chung Sanghwa, HK Art & Antiques

of collecting shin-hanga and related material, prices were reasonable and over time, Binnie was able to assemble almost every woodblock print that Yoshida made, numbering over 250 designs.

● 145 West 58th Street, Suite 6D,
NY 10019, tel 212 585 0474,
scholten-japanese-art.com.
Hours: Daily 11-5pm during AWNY
(appointments appreciated),
otherwise by appointment until
13 April



Kurohige, noh mask, 17th/18th century, 16 x 21.5 cm, Hiroshi Yanagi



Circle design faceted jar with underglaze copper-red ceramic storage jar, Yi dynasty, 18th century, 21 x 19.5 x 19 cm, Hiroshi Yanagi

SELECTIONS OF JAPANESE AND KOREAN ART

Hiroshi Yanagi Oriental Art,
14 to 19 March

For many years, this Kyoto-based gallery only exhibited Japanese art, however they have decided to also start to show Korean works of art alongside their usual selection of Japanese works of art. Highlights from the Korean offerings includes an 18th-century faceted storage jar from the Yi dynasty and an 18th-century faceted storage jar with underglaze red, also from the Yi dynasty. From the Japanese collections, there is a 17th/18th-century *nob* mask, *Kurobige* (the mask of the dragon god) and a 15th-century wooden sculpture of Kongara Doji, from the Muromachi period (1336-1573).

Exhibiting at Nicholas Hall,
17 East 76th Street, 4/F,
NY 10021, tel 212 772 9100,
h-yanagi.com. Hours: Daily 10-6pm,
or by appointment

JOO MYUNG DUCK
Sensory Space in Photography and its Conversation with Korean Abstract Painting

Miyako Yoshinaga, 8 March to 13 April
Korean photographer Joo Myung Duck (b 1940) was originally known for his social documentaries as seen in his black-and-white photographs, moving on to develop a series of densely 'black' landscapes in the 1980s and the 1990s. In 2011, aged 71, Joo explored colour photography, primarily focusing on the urban locality intertwined with colours, patterns, and textures. In the series, Joo employs close-looking and erases reality through the practice of abstract art to create sensory space. This exhibition looks at the photographer's relationship with Korean abstract art, particularly, the Dansackhwa-movement artists, investigating their shared aesthetic, methodology, and philosophy.
● 24 East 64th Street, 3/F,
NY 10065, tel 212 268 7132,
miyakoyoshinaga.com
Hours: Wed-Sat 11-6pm,
otherwise by appointment

KOREAN ARTISTS IN PARIS

HK Art & Antiques,
15 March to 4 April

This exhibition features the works of Chung Sanghwa (b 1932), Shin Sung Hy (1948-2009), Nam Kwan (1911-1990), and Kim Sanglan (b 1952), four Korean artists who have lived and worked in Paris. They were active, successful, and known in both Korea and France. Individual biographies for each artist are
Continued on page 18

ASIA WEEK

NEW YORK

Dealer Participants

Alisan Fine Arts
Art Passages
The Art of Japan
BachmannEckenstein
Ralph M. Chait Galleries, Inc.
Dai Ichi Arts, Ltd.
Egenolf Gallery Japanese Prints
Oliver Forge and Brendan Lynch, Ltd.
Fu Qiumeng Fine Art
Francesca Galloway
HK Art & Antiques LLC
INKstudio
Ippodo Gallery
Sebastian Izzard LLC
Asian Art
Kaikodo LLC
Kapoor Galleries
Loewentheil Photography of China Collection
Joan B Mirviss LTD
Thomas Murray
Onishi Gallery
Carlton Rochell Asian Art
Scholten Japanese Art
Shibunkaku
TAI Modern
Thomsen Gallery
Hiroshi Yanagi Oriental Art
Miyako Yoshinaga
Zetterquist Galleries

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March 14-22, 2024





An illustration from the Bharany Ramayana Series: The Monkey Army intruding Upon a Demon's Cave, attributed to first generation after Nainsukh or Manaku, Bharany, India, 1775-1780, folio 25.1 x 35.6 cm, Kapoor Galleries

included below. Their careers cover a great span of time, ranging from the 1950s to the present, and each demonstrates in its own way the influences of the artistic cultures of Korea and Paris on one another.

- 49 East 78th Street, Suite 4B, NY 100075, tel 646 812 7185, heakyumart.com

Hours: Mon-Fri 11-5.30pm, by appointment only. Closed weekends

Indian & Himalayan Art

GODS, GARDENS, AND PRINCES INDIAN WORKS ON PAPER

Oliver Forge and Brendan Lynch, 14 to 22 March

For this year's exhibition, the gallery is presenting around 35 works on paper. Highlights include *Iskandar building the wall against the people of Gog and Magog*, attributable to Hiranand, Mughal India, circa 1595-1605 in which the myth of Gog and Magog originally of Hebrew and Biblical origins then also appears in the various later Islamic texts, such as the *Book of Divinations (Fihnama)* and the *Shahnama* of Firdausi. Identified with various invading tribes such as the Sythians, here Alexander the Great (Iskandar) is repelling them by heroically building a wall. In this finely rendered *nim qalam* (half pen), drawing, a technique of lightly coloured ink drawing unique to India and Iran, Alexander is giving instructions to a courtier who is overseeing workmen building the wall.

From the 19th century, is a Company School watercolour



Mango (*Mangifera indica*), Company School, India, circa 1830, watercolour on paper 43.2 by 56 cm, Forge and Lynch

painting of a mango (*Mangifera indica*), circa 1830. Following Clive's conquest of Bengal in 1757, Calcutta (Kolkata) saw the emergence of a burgeoning intellectual life with the adoption of indigenous Indian languages and interest in literature and art. Court artists found new patrons and natural history subjects were popular. Watercolours such as this often served a practical or strategic purpose, made to record useful and profitable plants. Many of the commissioners were doctors working for the East India Company, in Calcutta and Madras, in the late 18/early 19 century. Botany was then an integral part of medical training as most drugs were still plant-based.

- Exhibiting at Victoria Munroe, 67 East 80th Street, Suite 2, tel 631 389 0150, forgelynych.com

Hours: Mon-Fri 11-6 pm, Sat-Sun 11-5 pm

INDIAN PAINTING Intimacy and Formality

Francesca Galloway, 14 to 22 March
Returning to Asia Week this year, the gallery is showing a group of

Mughal and Hindu paintings that are both intimate and formal. Amongst some of these most intimate scenes is that of a Mughal emperor, not in courtly splendour but tenderly cradling his favourite grandson, a religious gathering of devoted followers and a *zenana* scene more intimate than formal. By contrast, the formal scenes so often evoked in our imaginings of India can be seen in the grand processions, extraordinary tiger hunts and in formal portraits commissioned by the Emperor Shah Jahan – these paintings show us the courtly world in its stately splendour. There is also a folio from the Rajput *'Berlin Ragamala'* on show.

- Exhibiting at Les Enluminures Gallery, 23 East 73rd Street, 7/F Penthouse, NY 10021, francescagalloway.com

Hours: 10am-6pm

TIME IS A CONSTRUCT

Kapoor Galleries, 14 to 22 March

This exhibition asks you to pause and reflect on the dynamic, ever constant influence of artistic tradition and lineage across time. Examining Indian miniature painting is a focal point of this reflection. In the world of Indian miniatures, we witness a deliberate repetition of subject matter over centuries. The substantive repetition and thematic continuity reveal enduring symbolic resonance of tradition. Highlights of the exhibition include a fine render from the *Bharany Ramayana* series, a pair of carved and silvered horses, and a folio from *Gita Govinda*.

- 34 East 67th Street, 3/F, NY 10065, tel 212 794 2300, kapoorgalleries.com

Hours: Mon-Fri 11-5pm, Sat-Sun 12-4pm, otherwise by appointment

INDIAN AND HIMALAYAN ART

Carlton Rochell, 14 to 22 March

On show for Asia Week New York are paintings, sculptures, and ritual objects from Tibet, Nepal, and India. Many of the works are drawn from international private collections and have also been exhibited in various museum exhibitions. A highlight is a group of Tibetan Buddhist paintings, *thangkas*, including a mandala of Vajrapani Mahachakra, among the finest examples of late 14th/early 15th century central Tibetan *thangka* painting. The predominant use of red in the palette is a hallmark of early Nepalese painting for Tibetan patrons.

- Exhibiting at Adam Williams Fine Art, 24 East 80th Street, NY 10075, tel 917 582 6661, carltonrochell.com

Hours: Tues-Sun, 10-6pm, otherwise by appointment.

Online

A DISCOVERY OF DRAGONS

Kaikodo, online only, 14 March to 31 May, kaikodo.com

The exhibition was motivated by a number of recent acquisitions, including an extremely rare double-dragon decorated Tang-dynasty bronze mirror, a natural for a Year-of-the-Dragon show. A good number of other works presented themselves, as if each were perfectly crafted for the occasion, for example, a Western Han-dynasty jade sword guard (still attached to its original iron blade); a Ryukyuan lacquer stand with a mother-of-pearl dragon laying claim to the top surface; and a white stoneware Vietnamese bowl with



Lacquer stand inlaid with mother-of-pearl dragon and phoenix design, Ryukyuan, 17th/18th century, 52 x 40.6 x 33 cm, Kaikodo



Vajrapani Mandala, Tibet, 14th/15th century, distemper on cloth, 65 x 50 cm, Carlton Rochell

moulded dragons sailing gracefully through the firmament beneath a luminescent glaze. A dragon and tiger, symbols of the east and west, are the subjects of a pair of paintings by a Joseon-period painter, an idiosyncratic rendition of topical subject-matter during the Song and Yuan periods in China.

Independent

NO ROOM FOR EXCUSES

Ronin Gallery, 8 March to 26 April

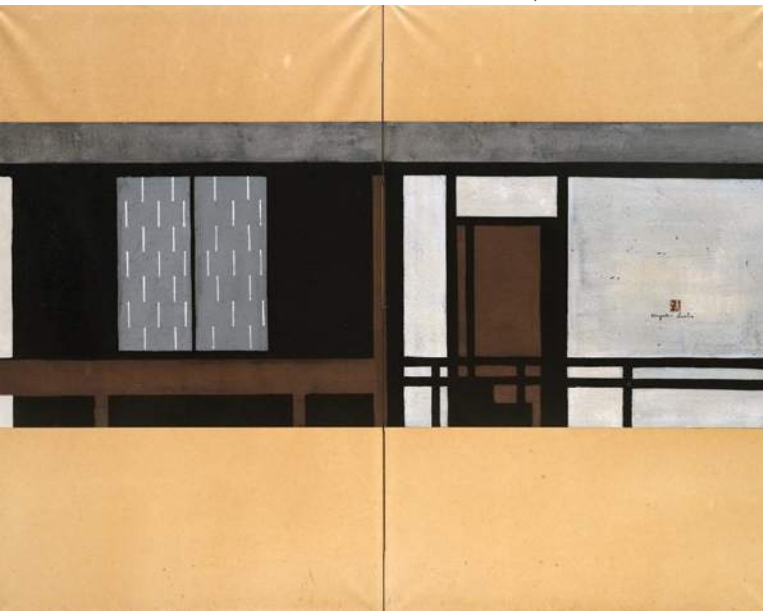
Celebrating originality and authorship, the *sosaku hanga*, or creative print, movement embraced the idea of transformation. From the mind of the artist, an image evolved through knife and ink, shaped by the artist's intention, emotion, and their

relationship with their materials and tools. As new materials invited fresh exploration of scale and texture, innovative uses for old tools proved equally revolutionary. While the origins of the movement trace to the turn of the 20th century, *sosaku hanga* experienced its own transformation in audience, patronage, and acclaim following WWII. From international imagery to abstractions of home, matte monochrome to layered iridescence, this show invites you to experience this renaissance through the work of artists such as Koshiro Onchi, Shiko Munakata, Jun'ichiro Sekino, Kiyoshi Saito, Yoshitoshi Mori, and many more.

While the movement offered no room for 'excuses', there was ample room for evolution. The American Occupation of Japan (1945-1952) brought with it an unexpected development – a renaissance of the *sosaku hanga* movement. Following a dark age of wartime scarcity and compulsory nationalism, the movement enjoyed an unprecedented period of prosperity and acclaim in the decades following WWII. As American GIs and other foreign visitors poured into Japan, their patronage enabled the movement to flourish. The influx of audience, interest, and capital allowed these artists to support themselves through their artwork as they pursued the ideals of *sosaku hanga* refined over the past 50 years.

- 32 West 40th Street, NY 10018, roningallery.com

Opening weekend: 10 to 11 March. Hours: Mon-Fri 11-6pm. Opening weekend: 8 March 5-7pm, 9 March 12-4pm



Katsura Imperial Palace by Kiyoshi Saito, circa 1957, 43 x 60 in, woodblock print on two-panel screen, Ronin Gallery

NONE WHATSOEVER Zen Paintings from the Gitter-Yelen Collection

Spanning over 400 years, the exhibition examines the origins of Zen Buddhism through the contributions of Buddhist painter-monks, whose ink paintings and calligraphies have helped to define this fascinating religious and artistic tradition. It features masterworks of *Zenga*-style Japanese paintings drawn from the collection of New Orleans-based Kurt Gitter and Alice Yelen Gitter, one of the most important collections of Zen Buddhist art in the world. The term *Zenga*, meaning Zen painting, designates paintings and calligraphies created primarily by Japanese monk painters from the Edo period (1615-1868) through the modern era. Playful, bold, and gestural, *Zenga* are often characterised by



Yamaoka Tesshu, Talismanic Dragon, 19th century, hanging scroll, ink on paper. The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, the Gitter-Yelen Collection

monochromatic, relatively simple designs, in contrast to other types of Buddhist painting, which are known for highly detailed compositions, bright colours, supernatural deities, and complicated cosmic diagrams.

The exhibition takes its title from a legendary encounter between a Chinese emperor and a Buddhist monk. In response to a question from the emperor about his good

deeds earned in the eyes of Buddha, the monk curtly replied, 'None whatsoever.' This exchange, seemingly casual and dismissive, yet also revolutionary and profound, has become a symbol of the Zen Buddhist student-teacher relationship. A feature on the exhibition will appear in the April 2024 issue.

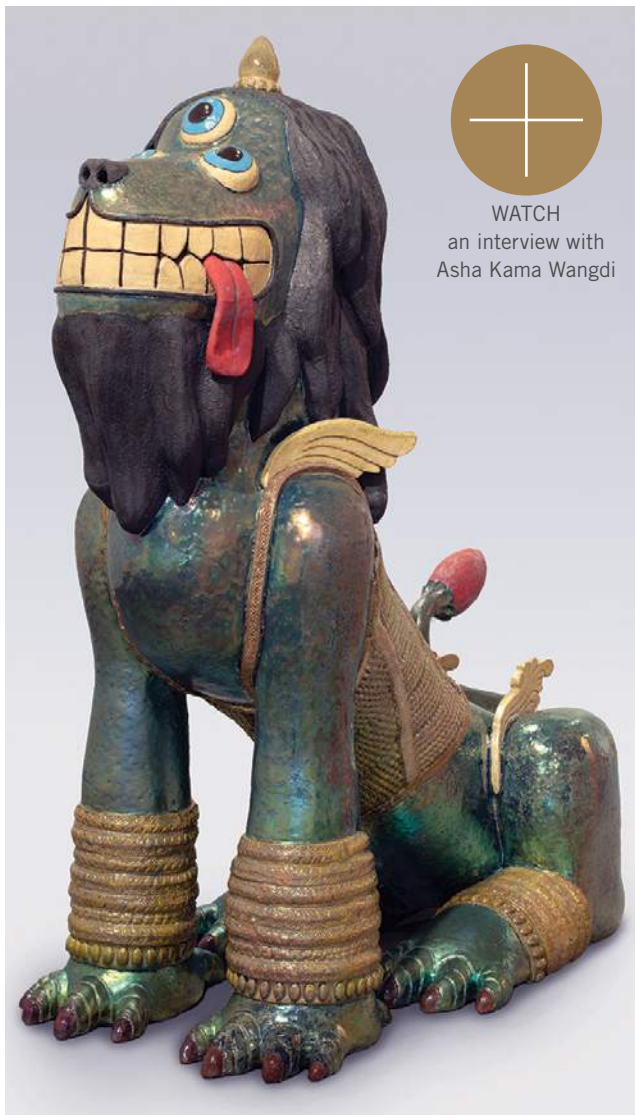
- 8 March to 16 June, Japan Society Gallery, japansociety.org

REIMAGINE HIMALAYAN ART

Thirty-two contemporary artists from the Himalayas, Asia, and diaspora have work presented in dialogue with objects from the Rubin Museum's collection. As a highlight of the Rubin's 20th-anniversary year, the exhibition features these 23 new commissions, as well as recent work across mediums – including painting, sculpture, sound, video, installation, and performance – that reimagine the forms, symbols, and narratives found within the living cultural heritage of Tibet, Nepal, Bhutan, and other Himalayan regions. The artists, many of whom are exhibiting in the US for the first time, explore the continuum of the cultures that shape their identities, merging past and present into one space, and posing questions about the potential for transformation today. The exhibition runs throughout the entire museum and represents the Rubin's largest engagement thus far with contemporary artists.

At the heart of the exhibition is a newly commissioned, large-scale, site-specific installation cascading down the museum's circular staircase. The artist, Asha Kama Wangdi, a founding member of the Voluntary Artists Studio (VAST), Bhutan, is one of the most well-known contemporary artists in Bhutan. Created by repurposing hundreds of once brightly coloured prayer flags from religious sites across the county, where they were littered throughout the landscape, Asha Kama Wangdi questions the wisdom of the practice of raising prayer flags for merit when they are having adverse effects on the environment.

The 50 artworks come from

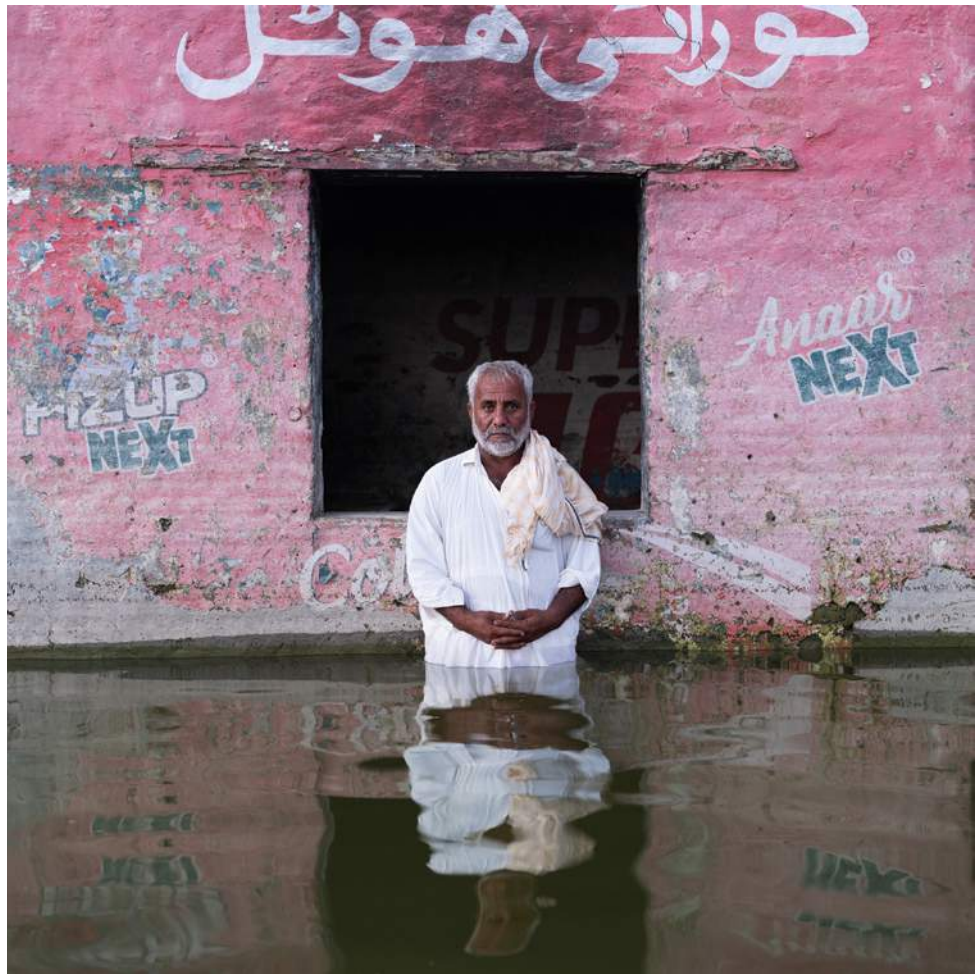


Male Guardian Lion Dog (2023) by Shushank Shrestha (b 1993, Kathmandu), one of a pair from Two Guardian Lion Dogs, ceramic, glaze lustre, courtesy of the artist

a group of multi-generational, living artists working in Bhutan, Canada, China, England, France, India, Japan, Nepal, Switzerland, Taiwan, Tibet, and the US. Connecting them are symbols and stories from Himalayan cultural heritage that the artists reimagine to express who they are and the important ideas that continue to shape them. Their works explore the complexity of cultural and

gender identity; the effects of displacement, migration, and technology; and the question of what it means to belong, asking what cultural norms should be held onto and what should be swept away. In their evolving self-examination, the artists speak to an acceptance of fluidity as a means to move forward.

- 15 March to 6 October, Rubin Museum of Art, rubinmuseum.org



Muhammad Chuttal Korai, Pakistan (2022), photograph by Gideon Mendel

COAL & ICE

Climate change takes centre stage at Asia Society with their latest presentation, an immersive photography and video exhibition. The exhibition is accompanied by a multidisciplinary programme series, with performances and activations throughout the city, designed to raise awareness and

catalyse responses to the climate crisis. Encompassing work by over 30 photographers and artists from around the world, the exhibition traces a photographic arc of climate change spanning the past century, from deep within coal mines to the melting glaciers of the

greater Himalaya. Greenhouse gases are warming the high-altitude climate of the Tibetan Plateau, disturbing the great rivers of Asia and disrupting the lives of billions of people downstream.

- Until 11 August, Asia Society, New York, asiasociety.org

PORCELAINS IN THE MIST The Kondo Family of Ceramicists

Featuring works by three generations of the Kyoto-based Kondo ceramic dynasty, the objects range from traditional porcelain vessels to meditative sculptures cast from the artist's body and accented with a 'silver mist' glaze, this compelling exhibition serves as a bridge between the past and the present, as well as meditation on the future of Japanese ceramics.

In this latest manifestation of the exhibition, Brooklyn Museum brings together 61 pieces that celebrate the Kondo family's innovations and talents. Their early creations range from hand-painted vases to pure-white jars. Most of the works on view are by Takahiro, who often pairs his 'mist', which he describes as 'water born from fire', with dramatic shapes and textures. Several of these powerful porcelains reflect his personal responses to monumental events, particularly the 2011 earthquake and tsunami that devastated northeast Japan.

- Until 8 December, Brooklyn Museum of Art, brooklynmuseum.org



Reflection: TK Self Portrait (2010) by Kondo Takahiro (b 1958), glazed porcelain, 48.5 x 15.7 cm, Carol and Jeffrey Horvitz Collection © Kondo Takahiro. Photo: Richard P Goodbody and John Morgan

SHAN SHUI REBOOT Re-Envisioning Landscape for a Changing World

An exhibition featuring the recent work of seven established and emerging artists born between 1974-1992, including Lam

Tung Pang, Yi Xin Tong, Kelly Wang, Peng Wei, Fu Xiaotong, Yang Yongliang, and Ni Youyu. More than 40 works are on show, with

many being shown in New York for the first time.

- From 7 March to 7 July, China Institute, chinainstitute.org



Large vibrant blue and white 'peacock' dish Kangxi period (1662-1722). Qing dynasty, acquired by The Met from Samuel Avery in 1879, est \$4-6,000, Bonhams

Bonhams
CHINESE ART FROM THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART
18 March, New York

A collection of Qing Chinese ceramics and archaic jades from the museum's collection. The material on offer has exceptional provenance hailing from 24 figures of the Gilded Age such as John D Rockefeller Jr (1874-1960), Samuel Putnam Avery (1822-1904), William Rhinelanders Stewart (1852-1929), and Samuel T Peters (1854-1921). The Met annually deaccessions works of art, following

comprehensive review with a focus on similar or duplicate objects. The funds from this sale will enable the museum to further prioritise acquisitions of outstanding works of art.



Reticulated white Korean porcelain jar, Joseon dynasty (1392-1910), circa 18th/early 19th century, \$200-300,000, Bonhams



Box of goblins from the Tongue-Cut Sparrow, Koma Kyuhaku, from the Kurstin Collection, est \$15-25,000, Bonhams

INDIAN, HIMALAYAN & SOUTHEAST ASIAN ART
20 March, New York

A highlight of this sale is an 11th century copper alloy figure of a silver inlaid Crowned Buddha from Northeast India, Pala period (\$1-1.5 million) and a grey schist relief of the Teaching Buddha, Gandhara, 3rd century (est \$500-700,000).

THE JOSEPH AND ELENA KURSTIN COLLECTION OF INRO
21 March, New York

Some 55 lots will be on offer from this private collection,

highlights include a Chinese sailing vessel signed by Ritsuo (est \$30-40,000), *Oni, Fleeing*, and *River Working Boat* by Shibata



Thangka of Vajravarahi, Nepal or Tibet, 13th/14th century, est \$400-600,000, Bonhams

Zeshin (each est \$20-30,000), and *Box of Goblins from the Tongue-Cut Sparrow*, signed Koma Kyuhaku (est \$15-20,000).

FINE JAPANESE AND KOREAN ART including Japanese Screens from The Metropolitan Museum of Art and The Simone and Alan Hartman Collection of Japanese Art Part II **21 March, New York**

A highlight of this sale is an important white porcelain reticulated Korean Jar from the Joseon dynasty, late 18th/early 19th century (est \$200-300,000). Also on offer is a selection of Japanese screens from The Metropolitan Museum of Art featuring Moon Over Mount Yoshino, Edo period, from the late 17th/early 18th century (est US\$6-9,000).

Other sales include Chinese Ceramics & Works of Art, 18 March; Fine Chinese Snuff Bottles from a Private collection on 19 March; Classical and Modern Chinese Paintings on 19 March.

Online sales: from 15-24 March, Indian Paintings, including selection from the Conley Harris Collection and Arts of India, Southeast Asia & Himalayas.



Figure of Panjarnata Mahakala, bronze, early Ming reign-marks, height 74 cm, est \$3-5 million, Sotheby's

Sothebys
WRATHFUL DEITIES: MASTERWORKS FROM THE BODHIMANDA FOUNDATION
19 March, New York

Leading the week's sales are two monumental early Ming Imperial bronze masterpieces from the Bodhimanda Foundation, offered in a two-lot separate sale, *Wrathful Deities: Masterworks from the Bodhimanda Foundation*, which together are expected to achieve more than \$7 million. These large gilt-bronze figures exemplify the distinct early 15th-century, Yuan-inspired style of the Imperial Ming workshop from which they were produced. The bronze figure of Panjarnata Mahakala, with early Ming reign-marks, is 74 cm tall. The figure of Kapaladhara Hevajra is also of exceptional size with a height of 66 cm.

Other sales include The Virginia and Ravi Akhoury Collection on 18 March; Modern and Contemporary South Asian Art on 19 March; Important Chinese Art on 19 and 20 March; Indian and Himalayan Art, 21 March.



Figure of Kapaladhara Hevajra, bronze, early Ming dynasty, height of 66 cm, est \$3-5 million, Sotheby's



Untitled (1968) by Kattingeri Krishna Hebbar (1911-1996), oil on canvas, painted early 1960s, 91.8 x 76.2 cm, from the Akhoury Collection, est \$100-150,000, Sotheby's

SCHULER AUKTIONEN

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19 March 2024 at 9 am (CET)



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www.schulerauktionen.ch



Foliate dish, ge, Southern Song-Yuan dynasty (1127-1368), diam. 14 cm, with a fitted cloth box, est \$1.8-2.5 million, Christie's

Christie's
JAPANESE AND KOREAN ART
19 March, New York

A highlight of this sale is a complete set of 46 prints of Katsushika Hokusai's (1760-1839) *Thirty-Six Views of Mt Fuji*, *Fugaku sanjurokkei*, circa 1830-32, created when Hokusai was in his seventies, and published by Nishimuraya Yohachi (Eijudo). This set is believed to be the first to be offered at auction in two decades and has a published estimate of \$3-5 million. These are considered some of the most masterful representations of landscape, nature, and observation of the seasons in the artist's oeuvre. In this series, the spiritual character of Mount Fuji, possibly the most iconic symbol of the country and the tallest mountain in Japan, is expressed in varying landscapes, weather, and times of day.

Other sales include, Indian, Himalayan and Southeast Asian Works of Art, 20 March; South Asian Modern +



Storm Below Mount Fuji (Sanka no haku u), or Black Fuji, by Katsuhika Hokusai, from the series Thirty-Six Views of Mount Fuji, sold as part of a complete set of 46 prints, est \$3-5 million, Christies'



South Wind, Clear Sky (Gaifu kaisei), commonly known as Red Fuji, by Katsuhika Hokusai, from the series Thirty-Six Views of Mount Fuji, sold as part of a complete set of 46 prints, est \$3-5 million, Christie's

Contemporary Art, including Works from the Collection of Umesh and Sunanda Gaur, 20 March; Important Chinese Art Including the Collection of Dorothy Tapper Goldman on 20 to 21 March, New York. Online sales: from 13-26 March, Landscapes of Japan:

Woodblock Prints from Edo to Post-War; from 13-27 March, South Asian Modern + Contemporary Art; from 13-28 March, Arts of Asia; and from 13-29 March, Chinese Works of Art from the Collection of Dorothy Tapper Goldman.

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貴賓預展 VIP Preview date 24/5/2024
展覽日期 Exhibition date 25-28/5/2024

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- 專題講座 Lectures
- 導賞團 Guided Tours

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INDIAN SKIES

Howard Hodgkin's (1932-2017) collection of Indian paintings includes works created at the Mughal, Deccan, Rajput, and Pahari courts dating from the 16th to the 19th century. It presents a unique and personal vision of India's great painting traditions. The artist Howard Hodgkin had been a devoted collector of Indian paintings since his schooldays in the late 1940s. He first encountered Indian paintings as a student at school, which was later fostered by a chance encounter in London, in 1959, with Stuart Cary Welch, the great American scholar and collector of Indian art, rekindled his passion. Progressively refined over the years, his collection has grown slowly but steadily, and has long been considered one of the finest in the world. It is above all a personal collection, formed by an artist's eye.

The Hodgkin collection comprises most of the main Indian court styles that flourished during the Mughal period (circa 1560-1858): the refined naturalistic works of the imperial Mughal court, the poetic and subtly coloured paintings of the Deccani Sultanates, the bolder Rajput styles at the courts of the Hindu Maharajas in the Punjab Hills and Rajasthan. And there was his love of elephant subjects, from the serene imperial elephant portraits by Mughal artists to the powerful action studies from Kota in Rajasthan.

In 2022, The Met announced a major acquisition of more than 80 drawings and paintings from the Howard Hodgkin Collection which has resulted in this latest show at the museum, which also includes works newly acquired by the institution and loans.

Arranged in a chronological sequence and by school, the show starts with the earliest works from

16th-century Mughal India and related Deccani works, followed by the later Rajput and Pahari schools. A highlight is a suite of *ragamala* paintings from Himanchal Pradesh, created in the 1680s-1720. Each of these paintings gives visual expression to a different *raga* (musical composition designed to evoke a particular mood or passion), and belongs to a specific season and time of day. They were kept as an unbound suite of pictures secured in a portfolio to be viewed for personal pleasure and, probably, shared with intimate partners.

Paintings from the Hindu courts of Rajasthan, and those from the Pahari region of Himachal Pradesh, represent two very different cultural traditions, as well as completely



A Lady Singing, attributed to Bhavani Das, Rajasthan, Kishanghar, circa 1740-45, opaque watercolour and gold on paper, 37 x 25.5 cm, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Howard Hodgkin Collection, purchase, gift of Florence and Herbert Irving, by exchange



Sangram Singh Hawking, attributed to The Stipple Master, active circa 1690-1715, Udaipur, circa 1705-10, opaque watercolour, gold and ink on paper, 31 x 43.5 cm, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Howard Hodgkin Collection, purchase, gift of Florence and Herbert Irving, by exchange

different geographical locations – from desert to mountains. The repertoire of Rajput and Pahari court painting revolved around portraiture and the depiction of a private inner world.

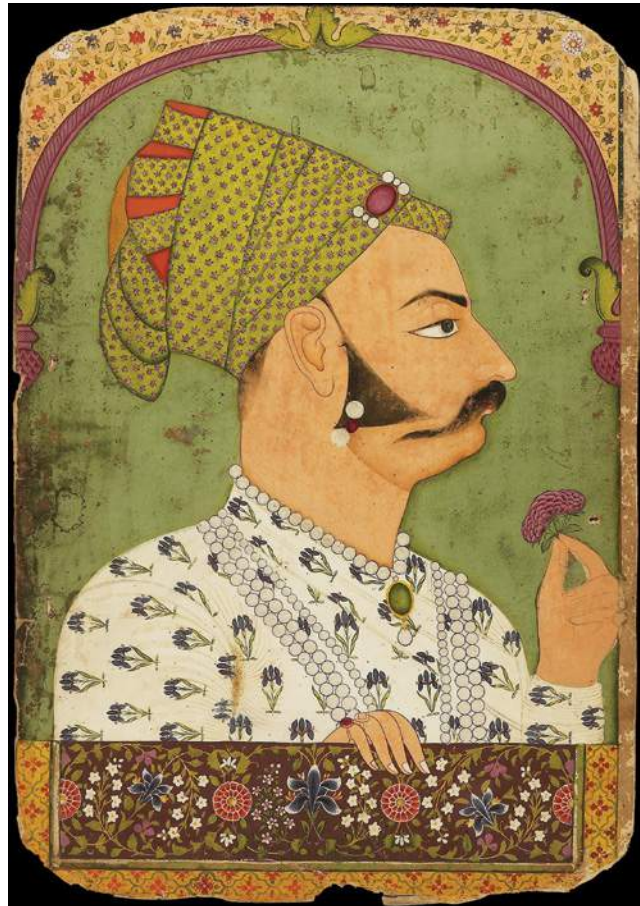
Many are devoted to the pursuit of the pleasures afforded by court life, others to displays of chivalry and bravery in hunting, and some to private acts of devotion. Displays of prowess and

valour were favoured, as can be seen in this image of *Sangaram Singh Hawking* (r 1710-34), from circa 1705-10, one of the earliest Rajput paintings devoted to hawking along with the

depiction of *Maharana Amar Singh* (1698-1710) *Hunting Saurus Crane*, circa 1700. Both images were painted by an artist known as 'The Stipple Master of Udaipur', who was active under the patronage of both Amar Singh II and Sangram Singh. A subdued palette applied with stippling (most evident in the treatment of the horse) evokes the European grisaille technique introduced via Mughal art.

A third space is given over to the celebration of the elephant paintings, which span all schools. An example for this section is *Elephant with Kepper*, circa 1660. Mughal elephant portraits are notable for their outstanding observation of these majestic animals, dignifying them by recording every feature with the sensitivity typically accorded high courtiers. The elephant is untethered, a sign of its maturity and trustworthiness, and is caparisoned with trappings and bells, along with sacred markings on the face.

The Bulletin, the quarterly publication of the museum has devoted its Spring 2024 issue to the exhibition.



Maharaja Bakhat Singh, Rajasthan, Nagaur, circa 1735, opaque watercolour and gold on paper, 43.5 x 30.5 cm, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Howard Hodgkin Collection, purchase, gift of Florence and Herbert Irving, by exchange

● Until 9 June, Indian Skies: The Howard Hodgkin Collection of Indian Court Painting, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, metmuseum.org

Auctions

PRIVATE COLLECTION SALE

Metayer-Mermoz, Antibes, France, 17 March

Before his final return to India in 2010, Sayed Haider Raza (1922-2016) set up his atelier in Gorbio, a small village in the Alpes-Maritimes in France. With his wife, artist Janine Mongillat, they took over the Château Lascaris, which is now a museum and exhibition space. The landscapes of the South of France were a great source of inspiration for Raza, who recaptured the wilderness of his childhood. A grant in 1950 originally enabled Raza to leave for Paris, where he studied at the École de Beaux-Arts. In 1953, he had switched his painting methods and

style from gouache to oil, and this change of technique was accompanied by a radical change of expression.

The 1961 painting, *Paysage Agreste*, is now being offered for sale in France as part of a private collection. The painting marks a turning point in Raza's career and heralds his interest in lyrical abstraction. His meeting with Mark Rothko in 1962, during a trip to the US possibly enabled him to develop this style even further.

● metayer-auction.com



Paysage Agreste (1961) by Sayed Haider Raza, oil on canvas, signed and dated (19)61, signed on the verso, 120 x 200 cm, est € 400-600,000, Metayer-Mermoz © ADAGP, Paris, 2024

Islamic Arts Diary

by Lucien de Guise

MORE THAN ELEPHANTS IN THE ROOM

The big happening this month in the Islamic-art field is at The Metropolitan Museum of Art. The focus is India, and not just the Muslim dynasties but anything that was admired by Howard Hodgkin. Despite being held in New York, *Indian Skies: The Howard Hodgkin Collection of Indian Court Painting* will surely be the definitive look at the taste of a quintessentially Indocentric English artist, now deceased. Like so many young Englishmen of the past, Sir Howard – as he later became – was captivated by the Subcontinent. He did start a bit earlier than most though. It is often related how he was a schoolboy at Eton when the love affair with India first began with the sighting of some miniature paintings. These went on to influence his entire life and his work.

I had not realised that Hodgkin was known well enough in the US to be granted what is, in effect, a solo show at the premier gallery in the nation. There may only be two of his paintings out of a display of 122 works, but the influence of India is what his art was all about. His connections looking westward were incomparably less important than his visions of the East. Part of this might be due to meeting the champion of Indian art whom I consider to be the greatest writer on any type of art during the 20th century. The American specialist



Sultan Ibrahim 'Adil Shah II in Procession, School of 'Ali Riza 'Abbasi (Indian, active circa 1600-1650), mid-17th century, attributed to India, Deccan, Bijapur, 13.5 x 10.5 cm, Howard Hodgkin Collection, Purchase, Florence and Herbert Irving Acquisitions and funds from various donors, 2022

Stuart Cary Welch went on to become a close friend and occasional rival.

Hodgkin's travels and collecting were almost entirely focused on India. He even promoted contemporary Indian artists of his era. It is intriguing that his reputation could be so esteemed on the other side of the Atlantic when he had comparatively few exhibitions there. Despite this, The Met acquired his collection in 2022 and is now making admirable use of it. The title of the exhibition might suggest we will be looking heavenwards – physically or spiritually. That wouldn't match the breadth of images on display. Skies

appear in quite a few paintings, and there is the occasional glance at religious subject matter, but the contents are really about everything to do with India. Elephants are perhaps the biggest draw, in every sense. Just as Muslim, Hindu, and Sikh rulers admired elephants, Hodgkin seems to have a special empathy for India's most imposing animals. They are not all ceremonial props either. There is everything from the calm, controlled *Elephant and Keeper*, painted for the Mughal court around 1650, to the mayhem of *Enraged Elephant During Training* from Rajasthan about 40 years later. These are very much about the elephants. *Prince Aurangzeb Looks on*

an Enraged Elephant is more about the future emperor who was to do more harm to inter-communal relations than any other Mughal. This painting shows what looks more like a battle scene than an angry animal.

Other fauna are on display too. Birds loom large in the exhibition, occasionally on the wrist of a hawk-loving maharaja but more commonly in a tree. Among the most unusual is a pair of Mughal pigeons from the mid-17th century.

Most of the subject matter consists of people, generally the elite of India's different dynasties. Rulers monopolise the action, whether it's on board an elephant or relaxing with a *bookab*. Regardless of their religion, the pursuits are similar. Poses such as smelling a flower were popular throughout the Subcontinent. The same theme also existed in far-away, primitive England, where a Tudor king such as Edward VI was depicted engaged in the same activity. It must have seemed more manly everywhere then than now.

It is one of the great glories of this exhibition and Hodgkin's wide range of interests – within the confines of India – that so many regions and eras are represented. The Met has not been pinned down to a single dynasty, let alone a single ruler. The curators, John Guy and Navina Najat Haidar, have been able to deploy their considerable expertise to cover a huge amount of ground.

One missing component is imagery of Tipu Sultan of Mysore. Being part of a two-ruler dynasty



Two Pigeons, circa 1650, 22 x 12.5 cm, Howard Hodgkin Collection, Purchase, Florence and Herbert Irving Acquisitions along with funds from various donors, 2022

imposes its own limits, as well as a general lack of paintings from that part of the south when compared to other regions of the Subcontinent. This Muslim ruler of a Hindu-majority state is being erased from Indian textbooks at the moment, which means his memory will be kept alive largely by art lovers. Hodgkin seems not to have been enamoured of Mysore. The only painting from there that I could spot was a much later work than most (1870). It shows Maharaja Krishnaraja Wodeyar III, of a dynasty that was put back in charge by the British after they had despatched Tipu Sultan in 1799. Hodgkin's approach to India could not have been more different; never imposing, always absorbing – and actually paying for his acquisitions rather than looting them.

● Indian Skies: The Howard Hodgkin Collection of Indian Court Painting at The Metropolitan Museum of Art until 9 June

ORIGINAL POSTERS

Calligraphy on posters tends to have less impact than images, as can be seen in an exhibition at Zawyeh Gallery in Dubai. *Posters for Gaza* displays the work of 26 Palestinian and Arab artists aiming to highlight the horrors taking place in the Gaza Strip and the right of Palestinians to live freely on their land with dignity.

Political posters are no novelty in Palestinian culture. They were produced extensively in the 1970s and the 1980s by the Palestinian Liberation Organisation, with the contribution of Palestinian, Arab, and international artists. Posters were vital in supporting the justice of the Palestinian cause and promoting it globally, guided by the freedom, dignity, resilience, and the ongoing aspiration for independence that has been sought for so long by Palestinians.

The participating artists include four from the Gaza Strip. All are names little known in the West. They have been generally ignored, just like their plight was until the recent tragedies. As a record of their efforts, these are



God Make this House Safe (2023) by Bashar Khalaf, collage on paper 75 x 55 cm



Heech by Parviz tanavoli, Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia

calligraphers were not the first on this wave of novelty, nor were they the most hesitant. For centuries, words using the Arabic alphabet have been part of everyday life. They have appeared on commonplace vessels and the walls of mosques. This exhibition explores the fine art of calligraphy rather than the applied.

Alif Lam Ra goes far

beyond the Qur'anic reference of its title to show how calligraphy has continued to be the supreme art form of the Islamic world, albeit in unexpected new ways.

Every corner of the Islamic world has made a contribution, and one region has predominated. Iranian calligraphers are very well represented in the exhibition. The best known is Parviz Tanavoli, a pioneer of three-dimensional work, especially the three Farsi letters that make up the word *Heech*

(‘Nothingness’). As with most of Tanavoli's work, there is a different type of spirituality at play. Many of his compatriots take an

equally non-traditional approach to Islamic piety. The chief glory of the exhibition is how visual something as seemingly limited as letters of the alphabet can be. The message of these works is often more about personal expression, pessimism or sheer exuberance than about taking an orthodox religious approach.

● Alif Lam Ra at the Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia until 30 June



Mariam (2023) by Bashar Althroub, Fine Art archival paper, 310 gsm 75 x 55 cm, edition of 10 (+AP)

the artists trying to make a difference and imploring for a ceasefire: Asad Azi, Aude Abou Nasr, Bashar Althroub, Bashar Khalaf, Bashir Makhoul, Dyalá Moshtaha, Fuad Alyamani, Haneen Nazzal, Hazem Harb, Hassan Manasrah, Hosni Radwan, Issam Alhaj Ibrahim, Jafar Dajani, Khaled El Haber, Mahdi Baraghithi, Majdulín Nasrallah, Mohammed Joha, Nabil Anani, Rana Samara, Reda Alyasari, Saher Nassar, Sliman Mansour, Tayseer Barakat, Vera Tamari, Wadei Khaled and Yazan Abu Salameh.

● Posters for Gaza runs until 21 April at Zawyeh Gallery, Dubai, in partnership with Reel Palestine 2024



Sayed Haider RAZA (1922-2016)

Paysage Agreste, 1961

Oil on canvas

120 × 200 cm

Provenance:

Galerie Lara Vincy, Paris.

Private collection, acquired circa
1965-1966 from the above.

Estimate: € 400,000 - € 600,000

This work will be included in the revised
edition of SH RAZA, Catalogue Raisonné,
Volume I, (1958-1971) by Anne Macklin
for the RAZA Foundation, New Delhi.

**METAYER
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MAISON DE VENTES AUX ENCHERES

**Sayed
Haider
RAZA**

Auction sale
Sunday 17th March 2024 at 2PM

The painting is on view,
by appointment only, in Paris
from 12th February to 10th March.

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