



40 YEARS
OF BUILDING
THE PACIFIC
ASIA MUSEUM
COLLECTION

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PACIFIC ASIA MUSEUM IS DISTINCTIVE AMONG THE WORLD'S MUSEUMS IN ITS COLLECTING AREA: THE ARTS OF ASIA AND THE PACIFIC ISLANDS. THIS EXHIBITION, IN HONOR OF THE MUSEUM'S 40TH ANNIVERSARY, SHOWCASES THE BREADTH AND DEPTH OF THE MUSEUM'S ART COLLECTIONS, WHICH INCLUDE RARE AND REPRESENTATIVE EXAMPLES OF FINE ART FROM THESE REGIONS AS WELL AS EVERYDAY OBJECTS.



Since the museum's founding in 1971, its collection has been carefully built through a combination of purchases and strategically targeted donations. David Kamansky, Director from 1977 through 2003, was instrumental in acquiring much of the museum's collection of over 15,000 works of art and artifacts from Asia and the Pacific Islands, with full awareness of the diverse communities represented in southern California. Today, the museum boasts significant holdings in East Asian paintings, Chinese ceramics and jades, Japanese woodblock prints, Himalayan and Buddhist arts, Pacific Island objects, Orientalist graphic arts and textiles from across Asia. *40 Years of Building the Pacific Asia Museum Collection*, demonstrating the extraordinary range and quality of the collection, attests to the regions' rich history of art and culture as well as to the passion, generosity and exceptional connoisseurship of the museum's donors.

One of the most significant painting collections at Pacific Asia Museum is of Japanese Edo (1603–1868) and Meiji (1868–1912) paintings and screens formerly from the renowned Harari Collection. A few key works by Katsushika Hokusai (1760–1849), Mori Sosen (1747–1821), Moriyama Sekien (1712–1788) and Sakai Hoitsu (1761–1828) (cover image) from this collection are featured in the exhibition. When the Harari Collection was dispersed in the 1980s, it was much sought after by British and American museums among others, and a group of Pacific Asia Museum's board members and patrons acquired about three hundred works from the Harari Collection to donate to the museum. Also of note are Chinese paintings such as the scroll painting **Landscape after Snowfall** by Yao Yunzai (active 1603–1641) of the Ming Dynasty (1368–1644) and the powerful calligraphy **Shou (Long Life)** by the last Empress Dowager Cixi (1835–1908) of the Qing Dynasty (1644–1911) which was given to the Princess Der Ling. Both of these paintings were purchased for the museum through the generosity of long-time museum benefactors.

One of the centerpieces of the museum's Japanese print collection is **Mount Fuji in Clear Weather** (c.1830) from Hokusai's *Thirty Six Views of Mt. Fuji* series. Also known as 'Red Fuji', it is one of the most powerful renditions of the subject by the artist. It is said that Mt. Fuji takes on a bright red hue around sunset in certain weather conditions. Hokusai successfully conveys this unusual occurrence using a limited color scheme with strong contrast in an extremely simplified and bold composition. Along with a sizable collection

Katsushika Hokusai (1760–1849), *Eagle in a Snowstorm*, (detail), Japan, Edo Period (1603–1868); 1848, Color and gofun on paper, Gift of Mr. and Mrs. George A. Brumder with funds for conservation provided by Dr. Cathleen A. Godzik in memory of her father, 1986.113.4



Mori Sosen (1747–1821), *Monkey Performing the Sanbaso Dance*, Japan, Edo Period (1603–1868), 1800, First day of the Monkey Year, Ink on paper, Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Bruce Ross, 1985.55.4

of Japanese woodblock prints from the Edo period to the twentieth century, the museum also holds excellent examples of Orientalist graphic arts by Western artists including a rare complete collection of woodblock prints by Paul Jacoulet (c.1896–1960). Jacoulet is one of the key figures bridging the Eastern and Western traditions, having mastered the technique and production system of Japanese woodblock printmaking. Yoshiko and Richard Child, aunt and uncle of the noted Jacoulet scholar Richard Miles, donated the works, which added an incomparable research component to the collection and resulted in the museum publications, *The Prints of Paul Jacoulet: A Complete Illustrated Catalog* (1982) and *The Watercolors of Paul Jacoulet* (1989).

The museum's collection of Buddhist and Himalayan arts is wide-ranging, but in 2001 an important gift further enhanced its scope and quality. The arrival of this gift from the Nancy King Estate comprised fifty-eight outstanding objects from the Himalayan and Southeast Asian regions, including the exquisite **Bodhisattva in Yab-yum Embrace** seated on a double-lotus base from the Xuande period (1425–1435) of the Ming Dynasty. This statue, made in the context of the esoteric Tibetan Buddhist tradition, is a visual metaphor of supreme enlightenment achieved through the union of wisdom (female) and compassion (male). The significance of this piece was further confirmed by a CT (computed tomography) scan in 2009 that proved the existence of a sacred scroll



Bodhisattva in Yab-yum Embrace, China (in Tibetan style), Ming Dynasty (1368–1644); Xuande Period (1425–1435), Carved wood with pigments and gold, Gift from the Nancy King Collection, 2001.1.47



Pahari School, *The Goddesses Durga and Kali Fighting the Demon Hordes*, India, c. 1800, Gouache, pigment and gold on paper, Museum Purchase with funds provided by the Collectors' Circle, 2005.46.1

the collection in a particular area or period, thereby forming a valuable legacy at Pacific Asia Museum. For instance, **The Goddesses Durga and Kali Fighting the Demon Hordes** depicting a scene from the *Devi Mahatmya* improved the already prized collection of Indian miniature painting.

Another extraordinary area that the museum's collection represents is the art of the Pacific Islands. The beautifully carved **Canoe Prow** from the Trobriand Islands of New Guinea exemplifies the region's continuing artistic and cultural traditions. Because canoes have been a vital mode of transportation, they became essential objects in the lives of many Pacific Islanders, and were adorned with symbolic details by skilled artists who passed their techniques down from generation to generation.

A centerpiece of the museum's decorative art collection is **A Pair of Earrings with Crab Motif** known to have been owned by the last Empress Dowager Cixi at the end of the Qing Dynasty. Converted into earrings from hair ornaments, this fine Burmese jade, esteemed for its intense green, is embellished with a crab design symbolizing success, prosperity and high status, a motif certainly appropriate for a lady of such rank.



Canoe Prow, New Guinea; Trobriand Islands, early 20th C., Wood, color pigments, Gift of Harlan Givelber, 2001.33.1

and objects encased in an interior cavity in the statue.

While some objects were given to the museum, as was the Nancy King Collection, others were added to the museum's collection through purchases facilitated by the Collectors' Circle. Often, acquisitions by the Collectors' Circle serve to enhance the museum's holdings or to fill gaps in

Pacific Asia Museum holds one of the most important collections of Asian ceramics outside Asia, with objects from the Neolithic period through the twenty-first century. The remarkable heritage of Chinese imperial ceramics is illustrated through the select examples in the exhibition, **Charger with Dragon Motif** from the Yongzheng period (1723–1735) of the Qing Dynasty and **Charger with Qilin Motif** from the second half of the fourteenth century. Hans and Margot Ries, early visionary collectors of Asian art, and the Honorable Jack Lydman, former U.S. Ambassador to Malaysia, were instrumental figures in forming the museum's Southeast Asian ceramics collection, featuring objects such as the extraordinary example of the fifteenth-century **Blue-and-White Charger** from Vietnam. The museum continues to strengthen its ceramics collection, including recent acquisitions in the contemporary area. With a deep understanding of the importance of contemporary practice which often reflects and re-interprets tradition, the museum recently acquired fine examples of Korean contemporary ceramics including **Origins of Life** (2003) by Sung-Min An, inspired by the tradition of white porcelain in the Joseon Dynasty (1392–1910). These acquisitions not only provide historic continuity for the collection but also demonstrate the vital role of Asian traditions in artists' creativity today.



Charger, China, Yuan/Ming Dynasty; 2nd half of the 14th C., Porcelain, cobalt-oxide lead underglaze, Gift of the Hon. and Mrs. Jack Lydman, 1991.47.6



Origins of Life, Korea, 2003, Porcelain clay body, Gift of the artist with assistance by International Arts & Artists, the Korea Foundation, and the E. Rhodes and Leona B. Carpenter Foundation, 2009.14.1AB

The exhibition is organized around five themes that provide context for such a diverse array of works: *Wisdom and Longevity* reveals the continuity of tradition and respect for ancestors; *The Art of Daily Life* brings together objects that were used in everyday environments but were imbued with care and craftsmanship; *Status and Adornment* demonstrates the artistry in personal objects and the function of art as a social signifier; *The Beauty of Nature* reveals the natural world as a source of inspiration to artists and their patrons; and *Religion and Faith* shares the expression of beliefs through the physical manifestation of art. These five themes offer an introduction to the collection for first time visitors and a chance to revisit favorite works for those more familiar with the collection.

IN PREPARATION FOR **40 YEARS OF BUILDING THE PACIFIC ASIA MUSEUM COLLECTION**, CURATOR BRIDGET BRAY INTERVIEWED DAVID KAMANSKY, DIRECTOR EMERITUS, ABOUT HIS EXPERIENCES AT THE MUSEUM FROM THE 1970s UNTIL HIS RETIREMENT IN 2005.

BB: What was the museum like when you came on board?

DK: You have to remember that the museum began as an all-volunteer organization and when I joined the board in the mid-1970s during Dr. Jae Carmichael's tenure, everyone was expected to lend a hand, preferably one with a broom in it. Literally! We were sweeping the last bits of installation dust out the back gallery doors as guests came in the front door for the opening of *The Great Oiseau* exhibition in 1975.



Paul Jacoulet (c. 1896–1960), *Le Genie San Noms. Corée*, (detail), Japan, 15 January 1953, Woodblock print on paper, Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Richard W. Child, 1983.42.16

BB: What made you decide to take the leap from board member to director in 1977, knowing all the challenges that a director of a small institution would face?

DK: I saw and understood what kind of an impact Pacific Asia Museum could have in the community, acting as a cultural resource both for those with little knowledge of Asian and Pacific Island art, but also for those with a cultural connection. We could reflect the community around us and help them better appreciate their own heritage. After the Pasadena Art Museum was located here, it looked as if the building would be torn down and turned into a barber college. Early leaders like Sofia Adamson, Peg Palmer and Lennox Tierney saw a greater potential and intervened. So when museum founder Peg Palmer asked me 'what are you doing for the next 30 years?', I gamely said yes and joined as Director.

BB: What is the museum's role in the community?

DK: The educational role of the museum cannot be overstated. Showing such objects as we have in the permanent collection to children, they learn about the who, why and how of the artworks, which triggers a curiosity about other cultures, possibly outside their own. When they see works of such beauty and craftsmanship, they can't help but respect the people who made them. That gets to the heart of the mission statement: to further intercultural understanding through the arts of Asia and the Pacific Islands.

BB: In your early years here, what was your priority?

DK: The museum really started as an idea. Being such a young institution, it didn't have a vast record of exhibitions, no permanent collection to draw upon. While some viewed that as an impediment, I viewed it as an opportunity to try different things and think creatively. We focused on groundbreaking exhibitions that put us on the cultural map. A prime example of that was our *Han and Tang Wall Murals* exhibition in 1977. It took up every gallery in the museum but allowed us to be part of a tour that included stops at the Art Institute of Chicago and the Museum of Fine Arts Boston, among others. We were criticized for being involved with the Chinese Communist government, but when the Chinese Ambassador came to see the exhibition and said "here I am in the United States, but [from Pacific Asia Museum], I look out and see China," I knew we had done the right thing in bringing these works to the public. Other major exhibitions, *The Arts of Indian Asia: the Joy of Artistic Expression* in 1978 and *Japan Day by Day* in '79–80, shared the vast wealth of artistic beauty in Asia with the southern California community by allowing visitors to look closely at some of the finest examples of creative expression from these regions.

BB: The collection has grown to include roughly 15,000 objects and when you and I talk about them, I get the sense that you're carrying around an encyclopedic reference to almost every one. How did you bring objects into the permanent collection?

DK: I traveled widely and was always looking for objects that could help us execute our mission. I visited with collectors, dealers, colleagues at other museums and at auction houses. Also, you have to understand that it took endless cultivation. For people who loved the work in their own collections, they really had to believe in what the museum was doing to consider parting with an object, and donating it to the museum. They were willing to do this because they saw the impact the permanent collection had on visitors. The galleries had objects that reflected our community. Visitors saw their own heritage in the galleries and could teach their children from those examples, explaining the diversity that we enjoy here in southern California. The objects in the collection allowed us to discuss material culture with visitors, presenting, for instance, side-by-side examples of fine imperial ceramics and basic kitchenware. This allowed us to teach connoisseurship through comparison.

BB: Pacific Asia Museum has become known for pioneering exhibitions of contemporary Asian art. Why did you choose to include this art at a time when so few other museums were looking at it?

DK: Culture is a continuum. I was very conscientious about not presenting Asian and Pacific Island art as an artifact, sealed in the past, bound by tradition. Instead, I wanted to share with our visitors the idea that tradition informed contemporary practice and I sought to develop exhibitions that could demonstrate that. *Beyond the Open Door* (1987) and *I Don't Want to Play Cards with Cézanne* (1991) were among the very first exhibitions of contemporary Chinese art in the United States. In addition, we exhibited groundbreaking artists from Australia, Pakistan, Malaysia and India just to name a few, and pushed the envelope of our visitors' understanding of the art of this region.

BB: In our research for exhibitions and the collection, we frequently go back to the roster of catalogues that the museum has published. Most museums of this size don't have such extensive publications. Can you talk a little about that process?

DK: As a smaller institution, we had flexibility in selecting subjects to consider and scholars that we might like to work with. In many cases, no real research yet existed and we felt it was essential to add the scholarship that was done through the exhibitions to the permanent record. The tradeoff for that flexibility is the

struggle to raise the resources to create publications, but it was worth the effort. The two Paul Jacoulet catalogs are prime examples.

BB: This is another area where the museum stands apart. We have art in the permanent collection created by Western artists who lived and worked in Asia, Paul Jacoulet, Elizabeth Keith, Lilian Miller and others. What interested you about these artists?

DK: The museum has a rare, complete set of the works of Paul Jacoulet and many strong examples from other artists of the era. They seemed to me to perfectly embody the museum's mission, creating a dialogue between East and West, and profoundly engaging with the artistic traditions of Asia.

BB: You and I share a deep interest in Tibetan art, and I had first had the pleasure of working with you on the Tibetan furniture exhibition, *Wooden Wonders: Tibetan Furniture in Secular and Religious Life* (2004–05). Your extensive travels in the region have given you a special perspective. Can you share your insights on that?

DK: The place informs the art. Architecture in such a challenging and harsh environment necessarily reflects those aspects. The architecture seems to grow out of the landscape in crystalline form and fits in beautifully. The dark interiors, prior to electric power, were filled with flickering candle light that seemed to animate the sculptures and paintings. The furniture was used to position religious objects and hold offerings, and was decorated in ways that reflected their settings in temples and homes. The mineral pigments used on the paintings and furniture are taken from the surrounding environment, and give a very strong sense of place.

BB: The exhibition focuses on the museum's collection. Knowing it as well as you do, and having studied it so closely, what would you say are its most important attributes?

DK: There are three central things to consider about the collection. First, I wanted to bring objects of great beauty together so that people could spend time with and appreciate masterpieces, pinnacles of technique and form. Second, I wanted to present objects in groups that allowed visitors to learn how to distinguish differences in style and materials and create a better understanding of artistic practice. Third and perhaps most importantly, I paid close attention to pursuing objects for the collection that reflected our community so that visitors would see familiar objects from their childhoods and experiences overseas, and as a result feel a special connection to Pacific Asia Museum.

A SELECTED LIST OF PACIFIC ASIA MUSEUM PUBLICATIONS:

The Prints of Paul Jacoulet: A Complete Illustrated Catalog

Richard Miles, 1982

Chinese Jade: The Image from Within

Suzanne Haney Foster and Richard E. Strassberg, 1986

Beyond the Open Door: Contemporary Paintings from the People's Republic of China

Waldemar A. Nielsen and Richard E. Strassberg, 1987

Contemporary Paintings of Malaysia

Syed Ahmad Jamal, 1988

Watercolors of Paul Jacoulet

Richard Miles, 1989

Images of Faith: Religious Ivory Carvings from the Philippines

Regalado Trota Jose, 1990

Elizabeth Keith: The Printed Works

Richard Miles, 1991

"I Don't Want to Play Cards with Cézanne" and Other Works: Selections from the Chinese "New Wave" and "Avant-Garde" Art of the Eighties

Richard E. Strassberg, ed., 1991

Woven Jewels: Tibetan Rugs from Southern California Collections

Tom Rutherford et al., 1992

Theodore Wores: An American Artist in Meiji Japan

William H. Gerdts et al., 1993

A Selection of Contemporary Paintings from Pakistan

Marcella Nesom Sirhandi, 1994

A Gathering Place: Artmaking by Asian/Pacific Women in Traditional and Contemporary Directions

Sharon K. Emanuelli, ed., 1995

Between Two Worlds: The Life and Art of Lilian May Miller

Kendall H. Brown, 1998

Gods and Goblins: Japanese Folk Paintings from Otsu

Meher McArthur, 1999

Turiang: A Fourteenth Century Wreck in Southeast Asian Waters

Roxanna Brown, and Sten Sjostrand, 2000

Wooden Wonders: Tibetan Furniture in Secular and Religious Life

David Kamansky, ed., 2004

The exhibition is generously sponsored by the Los Angeles County Arts Commission and Grace Tsao.

FRONT COVER: Sakai Hoitsu (1761–1828), *Persimmon and Pine Trees by a Stream*, (detail), Japan, Edo period (1603–1868); c. 1810, Ink, color, gofun on paper, Gift of Mary Brumder, 1994.8.1



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