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# APOLLO

THE INTERNATIONAL ART MAGAZINE

Asian Art  
London

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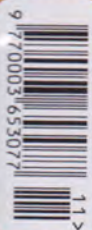
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Jade in China:  
a magical material

## A Glorious Pursuit

Collecting Islamic  
art in Denmark

Cy Twombly  
in Paris

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An interview  
with Do Ho Suh







Asian Art in London  
3 - 12 November 2016

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EAST MEETS WEST

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1. 'Island Pagoda' from *Foochow and the River Min*, c. 1871, John Thomson (1837–1921), carbon print, 20 × 29cm. The Stephan Loewentheil Historical Photography of China Collection

## Early Chinese photography emerges from the shadows

### Stephan Loewentheil on forming a historic collection

Early photographers in China dragged their bulky box cameras, glass plates, and chemicals across continents and oceans in their pursuit of the vanishing vistas and changing cultures of China, and other faraway locations. Despite their heroic efforts, relatively few 19th-century photographs of China survive, and fewer still remain in China. This scarcity is the result of the cultural, political, and economic upheavals in the 20th century; the great photographs documenting 19th-century China are generally unavailable

to the world's scholars and lovers of Chinese culture, history, and art.

An exhibition this month at the China Exchange in London, 'Life in Qing Dynasty Shanghai: The Photographs of William Saunders' (4–12 November), arises from my 35-year-long quest to build a collection of historic photography from China. William Saunders's work is a valuable resource for the study of China before industrialisation changed it forever (Figs. 2 & 3). Saunders, who was born in Britain, moved to China in the 1850s and

opened a photography studio in Shanghai in 1862. Although a handful of photographers had travelled through Shanghai before Saunders, none attempted to document the great commercial city so thoroughly, and none lived there for as long as he did. He was the first major photographer in China to make and sell hand-coloured paper prints, but until now there has never been a solo exhibition of his work.

In the days before the internet, collectors and dealers found their treasures in person at regional fairs and at book and photograph



shops. No dealers specialised in Chinese photography. At the end of my visits to fairs or booksellers, I would ask weary dealers seeking to lighten their loads for their trips home (or to clear their shelves of seemingly unmarketable albums) if they had any photographic orphans from China.

By the mid 1990s, I had many early albums and thousands of important individual photographs, many of them unique. Few reference works were available, so I had to learn about many of the great photographers by studying the works themselves. Among the most important photographers active in 19th-century China were Europeans like Felice Beato, John Thomson, Thomas Child, and William Saunders – all masters of the art. Gradually I also learned about Chinese photographers who had participated in the ‘tourist’ photography trade: masters such as Lai Fong, Liang Shitai, Pun Lin, and Tung Hing. I was determined to obtain fine examples by each of them.

By the late 1990s, the nature of seeking early photographs had changed dramatically. The internet allowed me to analyse my collection in relation to great institutional holdings. Once I had identified gaps in the collection, I could then fill them by searching the burgeoning world of online auction houses. Previously hidden photographs were now universally available to those who could recognise what they saw.

I soon fixed my search upon missing masterworks created in China. Foremost among these was John Thomson’s series *Foochow and the River Min* (1873; Fig. 1), which contains 80 fabulous carbon prints. Only a handful of copies of this album have survived, but I acquired the example that surfaced at Sotheby’s in New York in 2006. Other important acquisitions followed, such as two enormous collections of Beijing photographs by Thomas Child and an album of 80 photographs by Lai Fong in a fair in Hong Kong.

By 2012 I had found all but two of the key lacunae, but these proved elusive – until very recently. Felice Beato, the Anglo-Italian photographer who accompanied the expeditionary forces into Peking in 1860, created a series of large-format views of the city, which are a cornerstone of the field. Miraculously, a superb Beato album surfaced at a Pennsylvania antiques and household goods auction in 2014.

The final desideratum was William Saunders’ *Portfolio of Sketches of Chinese Life and Character* (1871). In 2012, I spotted a unique copy of Saunders’s great work at auction in Sweden. While all the known complete copies of the album had 50 images, this newly discovered copy in Sweden contained more than 70 photographs. Stacey Lambrow, my China photographic assistant, travelled to Sweden to make sure we secured the missing volume. By a remarkable coincidence, in subsequent

months a fine group of hand-coloured Saunders prints was found at a book fair in New York. These fortuitous events led to the exhibition at the China Exchange. An important goal of this exhibition is to present the genius of Saunders as a photographer. The best of his photographs stand independently as art; his eye is acute, his technique is among the finest of the early photographers of China, and his hand-colouring is revolutionary.

My ultimate aim has been to create a comprehensive repository of the early photographic history of a great people and nation. Photographs have the power to transport us through time and space and they can also transcend the boundaries of language and culture to give us a unique view of an otherwise inaccessible world. I intend to stage a series of international exhibitions to bring the great photographers and photographs of China from this golden age, saved from the obscurity to which they were previously relegated, into public view. **A**

**Stephan Loewentheil is the founder and president of the 19th-Century Rare Book and Photograph Shop, New York.**

**‘Life in Qing Dynasty Shanghai: The Photographs of William Saunders’ is at China Exchange, London, from 4–12 November. For more details, go to [www.chinaexchange.uk](http://www.chinaexchange.uk).**



2. *Brush Seller*, c. 1870s, William Saunders (1832–92), albumen silver print, 28 × 21cm. The Stephan Loewentheil Historical Photography of China Collection



3. *Shanghai Waterfront*, c. 1870s, William Saunders, albumen silver print, 21 × 28cm. The Stephan Loewentheil Historical Photography of China Collection



# Asian Art in London

Emma Crichton-Miller selects her highlights of the event



1. Krishna saves the Vraja forest from fire, c. 1520–30, Delhi/Agra region, India, leaf from the 'Palam' *Bhagavata Purana*, opaque watercolour on paper, 17.5 × 23.5cm. Prahlad Bubbar (£85,000)

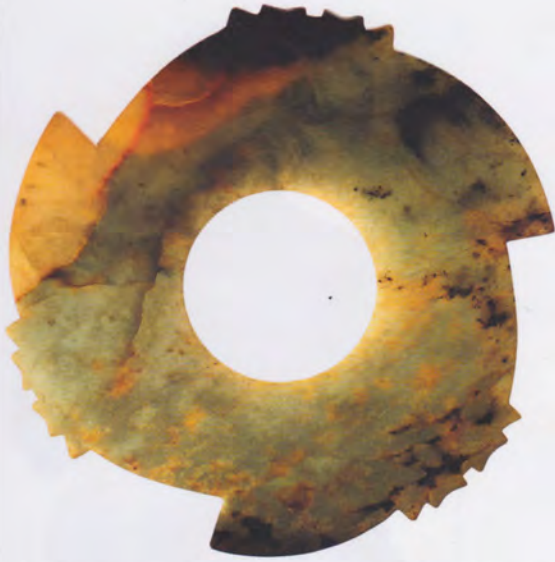
Asian Art in London (AAL; 3–12 November) was founded in 1997, and its role since its inception has been to shine a light on the quality and variety of Asian art on view in the capital – whether in the city's museums, commercial galleries or salerooms. London dealers save their best acquisitions for the event; foreign dealers fly in with treasures; the auction houses muster tempting offerings; symposia, lectures and seminars celebrate the expertise and enthusiasm to be found at the fair. This year there are lectures on shadow puppet theatre from Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand; on early Indian sculpture and its international legacy; on Islamic art and the supernatural; and the custodianship of 19th-century photography. Other highlights include young artist Xue Geng's affecting 'porcelain film' *Mr Sea* at the China Exchange; and *Arjuna's Meditation*, a performance derived from the *Mahabharata* where

the story is told using traditional Indonesian shadow puppets (British Museum).

The roll call of exhibitors reflects how radically the Asian art market has shifted over the past two decades. At that time, the London market was focused almost exclusively on the traditional collecting fields: antique Chinese porcelain, jade and bronze; Indian paintings and ancient sculpture; Japanese netsuke and inrō; Islamic ceramics and metalwork. The event's context has since shifted dramatically with the proliferation of 20th-century and contemporary Asian art in the galleries and salerooms – now, blue-chip galleries vie to sign up Korean Dansaekhwa masters, the estates of Gutai artists, and rising stars from Japan, China, India, Southeast Asia and beyond. Moreover, European and American connoisseurs compete with Chinese, Indian, Japanese and Korean collectors to find prize pieces.

In response to this shift, the event increasingly offers a platform for modern and contemporary Asian art. Grosvenor Gallery's 'Indian Modernist Landscapes 1950–1970' showcases F.N. Souza, Sadanand Bakre and Lancelot Ribeiro (the latter is also explored in a lecture by Nicholas Treadwell at the British Museum). Gregg Baker, a leading dealer in antique Japanese screens, stages an exhibition of paintings by the Japanese post-war avant-garde artist, Suda Kokuta. Richard Saltoun is running a retrospective of work by the Taiwanese artist, Li Yuan-chia. Intriguingly, this rebellious pioneer of conceptual and abstract work, grounded in Chinese culture and philosophy, lived in Cumbria for the last 20 years of his life. Aktis Gallery, specialists in émigré artists living in post-war Paris, shows ink paintings by the renowned Chinese-French painter Zao Wou-Ki, now highly sought after at auction, alongside the abstracted





2. Notched disc, late Neolithic, Shang period (2000–1500 BC), jade, diam. 33cm. Eskenazi (\$800,000)



3. Punch bowl, c. 1790, China, Qing dynasty, Qianlong period (1736–95), porcelain decorated in overglaze polychrome enamels and gold, ht 16.5cm. Jorge Welsh (price on application)

4. *Untitled (From the Otherland Series)*, 2015–16, Ali Kazim (b. 1971), watercolour pigments on paper, 152 × 457cm. Jhaveri Contemporary (£45,000)



wooden sculptures of Wang Keping, who emigrated to France in 1984. Raquelle Azran, a New York collector and curator specialising in Vietnamese contemporary work, is bringing lacquer paintings by 20th-century artist Hoang Tich Chu.

Among living artists, the work on show emphasises the dialogue between the East and West, between tradition and modernity. Amrita Jhaveri of Mumbai-based Jhaveri Contemporary presents the mysterious work of Pakistani artist Ali Kazim (Fig. 4), whose series of watercolours was inspired by a visit to an ancient Indus Valley Civilisation site on the banks of the Ravi River. Jhaveri describes them as 'classically beautiful works, using the techniques of miniature painting, but on a larger, contemporary scale'. Eskenazi, renowned dealers in early Chinese bronzes, ceramics, sculpture, porcelain and Chinese furniture, offers 24 outstanding early Chinese

works from private collections, including a wine vessel (*zun*) from the early Western Zhou period (1046–771 BC). This rare piece was shown at the celebrated exhibition of Chinese art at the Palazzo Ducale in Venice in 1954. An archaic jade notched disc from the late Neolithic Shang period (2000–1500 BC; Fig. 2) is another highlight. Alongside these antiquities, the dealer is mounting the first European exhibition of the exquisite ink paintings of Zeng Xiaojun, himself a major collector of antique Chinese furniture. Chen Jiang-Hong, exhibiting with Elena Shchukina Gallery, combines Indian ink with unusual raw materials, such as sawdust, to create atmospheric paintings based on the traditional Chinese vocabulary of bamboos and lotus flowers. London dealer Simon Pilling offers Ando Saeko's extraordinary abstract compositions constructed from layers of coloured lacquer, while Mayor Gallery presents the

cloudy abstract paintings of Chinese artist Jiang Dahai.

The contemporary work on display emphasises the enduring significance of historic Asian art. At Rossi & Rossi, Nepalese artist Tsherin Sherpa's exuberant paintings on cotton – sometimes incorporating gold or platinum leaf – hang alongside such beautiful Tibetan works as *Shākya*'s *Miracles*, a 14th-century distemper on cotton (Fig. 5). Mayfair dealer Prahlad Bubbar offers South Asian treasures such as a Mughal painting of Emperor Akbar receiving the keys to Mankot fort from Sikandar Shah Suri. The leaf, from the third *Akbarnama* of around 1590, represents a high point of manuscript illustration in India. There is also an exceptional folio from the 'Palam' *Bhagavata Purana* of 1520 here (Fig. 1), and a group of Bhuta bronzes from a private collection that draws attention to the less familiar field of tribal Indian art.





5. *Shākyamuni's Miracles* (detail), 14th century, Eastern Tibet, distemper on cotton, 172×241cm. Rossi & Rossi (\$250,000)

Miniature painting is well represented at Francesca Galloway, which offers an exhibition of Pahari paintings from the renowned Eva and Konrad Seitz collection. At Sam Fogg you can see a whole library of manuscripts from India, including a 10m-long, 19th-century scroll illustrating the story of Bhavana Rishi. Originating in the Deccan, it would have been used to support a live performance. Jonathan Tucker and Antonia Tozer have gathered sculptures and other works of art from Gandhara, India and Southeast Asia in stone, bronze, stucco, wood and gold, including a striking Gandharan bronze buddha from the 5th century and a large schist figure of Atlas (2nd–3rd century; Fig. 6). Specialising in Indian and Islamic art, Simon Ray fields beautiful Iznik and Iranian pottery, but also a magnificent Khmer carved grey sandstone sculpture of a male deity, probably Shiva, from the 11th century. Elsewhere, Sydney L. Moss shows rare Japanese stag-antler

carvings alongside intricate netsuke, inrō and pipe cases by the late 19th-century master, Ozaki Kokusai.

Chinese ceramics can be found at Berwald Oriental Art, Marchant, Priestley & Ferraro and Littleton & Hennessy Asian Art – as well as in the special exhibition 'Four Hundred Years of Japanese Porcelain', mounted by Italian dealership Genrokuart. David Baker Oriental Art offers a rare Japanese Kakiemon vase from the Arita kilns of around 1660, decorated in polychrome enamels with a pair of exotic birds in fruiting branches, alongside other early Japanese porcelains. Meanwhile, Chinese objects appealing to the traditional scholar's taste feature in exhibitions at Ben Janssens Oriental Art, Roger Keverne and Marcus Flacks – with Ben Janssens offering expertly carved miniature furniture and a highly decorative Ming bronze incense burner in the form of an elephant from the 16th or 17th century.



6. Figure of Atlas, 2nd–3rd century, Gandhara, schist, ht 48cm. Jonathan Tucker and Antonia Tozer (£45,000)

Finally, Jorge Welsh is celebrating 30 years in business with an exhibition of objects made in China for the export market. These fascinating pieces are decorated with illustrations of famous European buildings and landscapes and date from the late 17th century. Items range from individual plates, dinner services, tea sets, punch bowls (Fig. 3), mugs, snuff boxes, urns, cisterns, vases and plaques made in porcelain, to folding fans and painted ivory plaques. Welsh describes them rather fittingly as 'hybrid objects, which are both Chinese and European, becoming historical testimonies of artistic interactions between the two cultures.' **A**

**Emma Crichton-Miller is a freelance journalist and an *Apollo* columnist.**

**Asian Art in London takes place at various venues from 3–12 November ([www.asianartinlondon.com](http://www.asianartinlondon.com)).**