



THE ORIENTAL CERAMIC SOCIETY OF HONG KONG LIMITED

“A YEAR IN THE LIFE OF CHINESE ART: IMAGES CREATED FOR FESTIVALS”

BY JAN STUART
KEEPER OF ASIA, THE BRITISH MUSEUM

Date: Friday, 28 May 2010
Venue: Lecture: Main Building, Room M7, Ground Floor, University of Hong Kong
Time: 6:30 p.m. registration; 6:45 p.m. Presentation
Cost: Lecture free for OCS members, HK\$100 for non members

Displayed in museums, and often for extensive periods of time, Chinese scrolls, porcelains, and other art objects either seem unrelated to the passage of time, or to defy its natural course. For the artists and original viewers, however, time was an essential element of how these objects were experienced and often provided the motivation for their creation. *When* a scroll painting or decorated vessel was placed on view was a part of its meaning and informed the interpretation of the imagery on its surface. This was especially true of floral motifs, as well of many other subjects. Recent scholarship has rightly focused on analyzing images in order to decode their role in forming auspicious rebuses. However, images' special significance in marking festivals and annual or monthly rituals that charted the calendrical cycle and invited the good will of the spirit world has not received sufficient attention. For example, works created for a celebration such as the Flower Festival 花朝 are often today considered without recognition of their original purpose. By trying to recover the specific role of imagery, we become more sensitive to the modern misunderstanding that most Chinese art objects are meant for casual or timeless display. Attending to the seasonal functions of these objects, used by many levels of society, helps us understand how the visual arts were folded into the abiding rhythms of nature and human culture in China.

Jan Stuart has been the Keeper, or Head, of the Department of Asia at the British Museum since October 2006 and previously was a curator of Chinese art at the Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, which together constitute the national museum of Asian art in the United States. Recent projects at the British Museum include heading the team that designed and installed the new permanent gallery for the Sir Percival David Collection of Chinese ceramics which is the heart of the Sir Joseph Hotung Centre for Ceramic Studies. She has been working on expanding British Museum engagement in China, Korea, and India, including through staff exchanges and exhibitions. Publications include *Worshipping the Ancestors: Chinese Commemorative Portraits*; contributions to the *Three Emperors*, and a recent article on the digital prints by the Shanghai contemporary artist, Yang Yongliang, acquired by the British Museum

Reply Slip

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*The event will be cancelled or postponed to a later date if Typhoon Signal no.8 or above is hoisted or if Black Rainstorm Warning is in force **one hour** before the event.*