



## THE ORIENTAL CERAMIC SOCIETY OF HONG KONG

Dear Members

May 2005

### **OCS Newsletter - Summer 2005**

This is the second in our new series of Newsletters. The aim is to keep you in touch with the Society and provide a diary of OCS events and other news at home and overseas.

The summer holiday season is fast approaching. This is traditionally a quiet time on the arts front in Hong Kong - participation can be thin due to absence overseas. However, we have a few events before then and others in store for the autumn, with which to whet your appetite.

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I hope you will find the Newsletter of interest. There are doubtless many ways in which it could be improved. Comments and suggestions are welcomed. If we've got it wrong, please let us know.

Sincerely yours

Malcolm Barnett  
President

## OCS NEWSLETTER – SUMMER 2005

### 1. Executive Committee

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### 2. Membership

We rely on membership subscriptions and healthy attendance at OCS events.

If you have any friends who share our interests and are not already members, we would encourage you to *put them in touch with the OCS* and *bring them along to our next event*.

For ease, cost-efficiency and expedition of communication, *please supply an e-address*, if you have not already done so.

### 3. Recent Events

**January 18-31:** **Indian Interlude Tour** – a cultural odyssey including Ajanta and Ellora, led by Helen Anderson and guided by Malathi Ramaswamy.

**February 1:** **“Politics & Porcelain in China”**. Lecture by Rose Kerr, formerly Keeper of Far Eastern Department, Victoria & Albert Museum, London and currently an Honorary Research Fellow with the Needham Research Institute, Cambridge.

**February 5:** **Guided Tour of Central Police Headquarters**, accompanied by Mr. Alexander Hui Yat-chuen, an architect with an interest in conservation and currently a curator with the HKU Museum & Art Gallery.

**February 25:** **The Dr. K. S. Lo Memorial Lecture “The Belitung (‘Tang’) Shipwreck Cargo”** by Mr. John S. Guy, Senior Curator and Acting Head of the Indian & Southeast Asian Department, Victoria & Albert Museum, London. (*See report in Section 9 Highlights below.*)

**March 15:** **“Ordinary Moments: The Modern Moods of Impressionism”**. Lecture by Dr. Greg M. Thomas, Associate Professor, HKU Fine Arts Department,

followed by tour of HKMA exhibition “Impressionism: Treasures from the National Collection of France”. (*See report in Section 9 Highlights below.*)

**March 19:** “**Shimmering Colours: Monochromes from Yuan to Qing**”. An exhibition tour at the CU Art Museum, kindly introduced and led by the owners of the exhibits, Mr. & Mrs. Richard Kan.

**April 16:** “**Heritage Conservation: The Central Police Station**”. Lecture by Mr. Alexander Hui Yat-chuen, an architect with an interest in conservation and currently a curator with the HKU Museum & Art Gallery.

**April 30:** **Sotheby’s Auction Preview and Handling Session**, led by Mr. Nicolas Chow, Sotheby’s Director and Department Head of Chinese Ceramics & Works of Art.

4. **Diary for May 2005**

**May 7:** “**From Eastern Han to High Tang: A Journey of Transculturation**”. An exhibition tour at the HK Heritage Museum, Shatin, led by Ms. Catherine Maudsley. (*See details in Section 9 Highlights below.*)

**May 11:** “**China’s Ancient Culture through Bronze Weapons**”. Lecture by Mr. Stephen Selby at 25/F Wu Chung House, 213 Queen’s Road East, Wanchai. Sponsored by Intellectual Property Department, Government of HKSAR. (*See details in Section 9 Highlights below.*)

**May 20:** “**Tibet’s Ancient Religion: Survey of Cultural Relics of Bön**”. Lecture by Dr. Christoph Baumer in the HKMA Lecture Hall. (*See details in Section 9 Highlights below.*)

**May 28:** **Christie’s Auction Preview and Handling Session** at Convention Hall, HK Convention & Exhibition Centre, led by Ms. Rosemary Scott, Christies’ Senior Academic Consultant for international Asian Art departments.

5. **Diary for June 2005**

**June 15:** “**Song Ceramics**”. Lecture at HKMA Lecture Hall by Professor Li Gang, Deputy Director of the Zhejiang Provincial Museum, Hangzhou, China, and author of various publications on Song ceramics.

6. **Forthcoming OCS events**

**September 27:** “**Paintings of Luo Han Figures**”. Lecture by Ms. Catherine Maudsley at HKMA Lecture Hall.

**October 29:** “**Biscuit porcelain**”. Exhibition tour at HKU Museum & Art Gallery, kindly introduced and led by the owner of the exhibits, Mr. Tony Miller.

**November 11-19:** **Thai Loy Kratong Tour.** A proposed tour of Thailand to coincide with the Loy Kratong festival in Sukhotai. (*See details in Section 9 Highlights below.*)

**Autumn 2006:** **“Art & Imitation in China”.** OCS Exhibition at HKU Museum & Art Gallery. This provides a special opportunity for Members to open up their treasures to the public. You will be contacted to ascertain what items you wish to have included within the theme and structure of the exhibition.

## 7. News from other societies

### **Friends of Hong Kong Museum of Art**

(Enquiries to Priscilla Lau on 27342196 or hkmafrds@netvigator.com)

May 21: Gallery talk by Hon Chi Fun of his exhibition at the HK Museum of Art at 10.30 am to 12 noon.

May 28: Tour of "From Eastern Han to High Tang" exhibition at HK Heritage Museum, Shatin, including lunch; leaving Queen's Pier at 11.15 am and returning from Museum at 3 pm.

### **Friends of HKU Museum & Art Gallery**

(Enquiries on Tours to Bonnie Huo on 91936565 and on Trip to Linda Chan on tel 90111032)

May 24: Gallery Tour by Alice King of exhibition of Ink Paintings by Jean Degottex, Gao Xingjian and T'ang Haywen from 11.00am to 12.30pm at the University Museum and Art Gallery.

June 16: Lecture and guided tour by Chun Tong Yeung from 6.00pm to 7.30pm at the University Museum and Art Gallery.

June 30: Trip to Nara, Naoshima, Kagawa and Awaji, Japan.

## 8. News from overseas

May 2-5: The China International Gallery Exchange, China World Trade Centre, Beijing.

May 19-22: 4<sup>th</sup> China International Export Antique Furniture & 4<sup>th</sup> China International Antique Decorative Artworks Fair, Shanghai Exchange Centre, Shanghai.

May 21-24: New York Tribal & Textile Arts Show, Seventh Regiment Armory, New York.

June 2-5: Sculptural Objects Functional Art, Seventh Regiment Armory, New York.

June 8-12: Brussels Oriental Art Fair, Sablon, Brussels

June 9-12: The Great Civilisation Art Dealers – Brussels Non-European Art Fair, Sablon, Brussels.

June 9-19: The HALI Fair: Carpets, Textiles & Tribal Art, Olympia, London.

June 9-19: The Olympia Fine Art & Antiques Fair, Olympia, London.

June 16-22: The Grosvenor House Art & Antiques Fair, Grosvenor House Hotel, London.

June 16-24: The London Sculpture Dealers Fair, Mayfair, London.

9. **Highlights**

**“The Belitung (Tang) Shipwreck Cargo”.** The K. S. Lo Memorial Lecture by Mr. John S. Guy on 15 February 2005.

To a packed audience at the Hong Kong Club, Mr. Guy revealed details of the *Belitung* ('Tang ') shipwreck in the Java Sea and explained how its discovery was of prime importance for the history of Southeast Asia and its early relations with China and the international Asian trading world.

With a host of tempting slides, he illustrated items from the cargo. Of the 60,000 artifacts recorded, Chinese glazed ceramics made up the vast majority, representing all the major types of wares in production in early 9<sup>th</sup> century metropolitan China; white wares, Yue wares, green-splashed wares, Changsha wares and Guangdong wares; these included several unique wares, of which the blue and white dishes were the first intact examples ever to be discovered.

In addition, the cargo contained a group of gold, silver and gilt-silver objects of imperial quality, which rival, if not surpass, the few comparable gold vessels found in China over the past thirty years. The octagonal stem-cup ranks with the finest examples seen to date. The chased gold dishes and the ring-punched and engraved gilt-silver boxes are among the best preserved examples of late Tang metal working known to us.

The significance of this find was magnified by the discovery of a Changsha bowl engraved with a reign date equivalent to 826 AD. This date, together with corroborating evidence from the radio-carbon (RC-14) dating of timbers and spices found on board, securely places the shipwreck and its cargo in the second quarter of the 9<sup>th</sup> century, and probably very close to the year 826.

John Guy is Senior Curator and Head of the Indian and Southeast Asian Department of the Victoria & Albert Museum, London. Prior to joining the Museum in 1985, he was the Curator of Indian and Southeast Asian Art at the National Gallery of Victoria in Melbourne, Australia.

**“Ordinary Moments: The Modern Moods of Impressionism”.** Lecture by Dr. Greg M. Thomas, followed by visit to HKMA exhibition on 15 March 2005.

The masterpieces of impressionist art included in the HKMA exhibition, “Impressionism: Treasures from the National Collection of France” were selected from the Musée d’Orsay and other major French museums.

Focusing on paintings from the exhibition, Dr. Thomas discussed three general ways in which the Impressionists produced new effects of realism in their work. The first was to discard fictional subjects and instead paint ordinary scenes from the modern urban lifestyle of late 19<sup>th</sup> century Paris, especially the city’s many new forms of middle-class leisure. A second tendency was to accent people’s subjective experience of the world; by carefully arranging space and light, and by developing new techniques of brushwork and coloring, the Impressionists captured the effect of walking around the city or countryside and watching the world constantly changing and moving before one’s eyes. This emphasis on subjectivity, finally, led to a shift in emphasis from the outer world to the inner mind; Impressionism increasingly drew attention to the viewer’s own inner experience of seeing the world and reflecting on it, setting a foundation for the later development of abstract art.

Greg Thomas earned his Ph.D. in art history from Harvard University in 1995 and joined the University of Hong Kong in 1999, where he is an Associate Professor in the Department of Fine Arts. A specialist in 19<sup>th</sup> century French art, he has published a book on the Barbizon landscape painting entitled “Art and Ecology in Nineteenth Century France” and is currently writing a book on the representation of childhood and the family in Impressionism.

**May 7: “From Eastern Han to High Tang: A Journey of Transculturation”.** A tour of the HK Heritage Museum, Shatin exhibition, led by Ms. Catherine Maudsley.

This exhibition explores artistic and cultural exchanges in China through some 300 cultural relics, many of which are important national treasures. Buddhist sculptures, pottery and wood burial figures, gold and silverware, wall paintings and textiles display a fascinating diversity of cultural influences and themes set against political upheavals, religious changes and the influx of various ethnic groups. These items were displayed last year at a similar exhibition mounted at the Metropolitan Museum New York under the title “China: Dawn of a Golden Age, 200-750 AD.”

For background reading, see the three articles published in **Orientations** October 2004 entitled “From Han to Tang: The Acculturation of Buddhist Images in China” by Angela F. Howard, “The Making of Tang Civilisation” by Zhixin Sun, and “The Sarcophagus of Sabao Yu Hong, a Head of the Foreign Merchants” by Boris I. Marshak.

**May 11: “China’s Ancient Culture through Bronze Weapons”.** Lecture by Mr. Stephen Selby at 25/F Wu Chung House, 213 Queen’s Road East, Wanchai.

Weapons in China’s ancient history had many uses: attack and defence, props in court rituals, currency and symbols of rank and wealth in life and death. The lecture will overview the types of weapons produced and the technology of weapons production, as well as the artistry of the decoration in engravings and precious metal inlays. A handling session will be included.

Stephen Selby, author of the publication “Chinese Archery” is well-known for his research into Chinese archery and involvement in its practical skills. He is a graduate of the University of Edinburgh in Chinese language. He is currently an Honorary Adviser to the Hong Kong Museum of History and is planning an exhibition of ancient Chinese weapons to be held at the Museum of Coastal Defence in early 2006.

**May 20: “Tibet’s Ancient Religion: Survey of Cultural Relics of Bön”.** Lecture by Dr. Christoph Baumer in the HKMA Lecture Hall.

Dr. Christoph Baumer, explorer, archaeologist, author and commentator, will be giving several lectures in Hong Kong during May. For the Society, Dr Baumer will lecture on the subject of Bön, the ancient, pre-Buddhist religion of Tibet which he has been exploring since 1987. In discussing the essence and beliefs of Bön, Dr Baumer will contrast it with Buddhism and show highlights of extant Bön art in the major Bönpo monasteries.

Dr. Baumer has recently authored a book, “Tibet’s Ancient Religion: Bön” and is credited with rediscovering the oldest extant Bönpo murals from the early 15<sup>th</sup> century and Buddhist murals dating to the late 12<sup>th</sup> century. He has directed three international expeditions into China’s Taklamakan desert where he excavated unknown Buddhist shrines and murals and unearthed manuscripts which contribute to the understanding of the spread of Mahayana Buddhism along the southern Silk Road and the history of the Kingdom of Shan Shan.

Dr Baumer is a Fellow of the Royal Asiatic Society, London and the Royal Geographical Society, London, the Explorer's Club, New York and President of The Society for the Exploration of EurAsia. In addition to publications about the Southern Silk Road and Eastern Tibet, his forthcoming publication is entitled "Early Christianity between the rivers Euphrates and Yangtze".

### **November 11-19: Thai Loy Kratong Tour.**

Any visit to Thailand is a pleasure but visiting during the festival of *Loy Kratong* is pure magic. Rivers, lakes and pools everywhere are filled with small floats (*'kratongs'*), traditionally made from the buoyant section of the banana tree and beautifully decorated with flowers and candles. The festival honours the goddess of water and is enthusiastically celebrated by all Thais and any foreigners who are fortunate enough to be in country.

The OCS is pleased to announce a proposed tour to Thailand to coincide with the festival of *Loy Kratong*, which will this year be celebrated in Sukhothai on the evening of November 16, the night of the full moon.

Dawn Rooney, a noted art historian who resides in Thailand, is planning the visit and the Siam Society is making arrangements in Thailand. Helen Anderson, will coordinate the event in Hong Kong and Barbara Park and Khun Euyaporn Cherdchouay of the Siam Society will lead the tour in Thailand.

A varied itinerary is proposed, with a number of museum visits as well as viewings of private collections. Highlights in addition to the *Loy Kkratong* festival include:

- ❖ a welcoming reception at the Siam Society with a lecture by Dr. William J. Klausner;
- ❖ a visit to the Southeast Asian Ceramics Museum at Bangkok University hosted by its director/curator Dr. Roxanna Brown, who presented an enjoyable lecture for the OCS last year;
- ❖ a visit to the home museum of a famous collector of Southeast Asian ceramics with a lecture by the host in Chiang Mai;
- ❖ a tour of the Underwater Archaeology Museum in Chantaburi;
- ❖ as well as excursions to the kiln sites of Sawankaloke, and the Khmer sites of Phnom Rung, Muang Tam and Phimai.

Shopping will not be forgotten. On the final day, Dawn Rooney will herself accompany the group to the Chatuchak (Weekend) Market, which is undoubtedly one of the great markets of the world.

There is much more. Helen Anderson, who lived in Thailand for several years, will provide an update on other interesting offerings on the tour at a pre-departure orientation meeting. Please call her for more information about the trip (Telephone 25251972). Reservations will be taken after the tour has been costed and further details will be announced at that time.

### 10. **Enquiries**

Enquiries to: **The Oriental Ceramic Society of Hong Kong Limited**, GPO Box 6202, Hong Kong Telephone 25270696, Fax 25270271, E-mail [ocs@orientalceramics.org.hk](mailto:ocs@orientalceramics.org.hk)