



THE ORIENTAL CERAMIC SOCIETY OF HONG KONG LIMITED
香港東方陶瓷學會

Summer Newsletter, July 2008

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Although many members may now be on summer holidays and away from Hong Kong, for those of you in town, please join us for Dr. Maggie Wan's talk *Auspicious Words on Sixteenth Century Official Porcelain and Lacquer Wares* at the Hong Kong Club on July 29.

Please note the following dates for upcoming events: Julian Thompson will discuss later decorated porcelain on October 9. Dr. Jay Xu, Director of the Asian

Art Museum of San Francisco, will deliver the K. S. Lo Memorial Lecture in mid-October and Dr. Simon Kwan will present the Ip Yee Lecture on November 18. The AGM is scheduled for December 3.

The OCS is delighted that such a distinguished group of experts will share their knowledge with us and urge you to attend as many events as possible.

Catherine Maudsley
Newsletter Editor

Save the date:

Julian Thompson
October 9

Ip Yee Memorial
Lecture
November 18

OCS
Annual General
Meeting
December 3

Roxanna M. Brown 1946—2008

With great sadness I report the death, under tragic circumstances, of Dr. Roxanna M. Brown, Director of the Southeast Asian Ceramics Museum, Bangkok, Thailand. Roxanna was a brilliant scholar, pioneering museum director and tireless champion of the art of Southeast Asian ceramics.

She was also a loyal friend of the Oriental Ceramic Society of Hong Kong from the very early days, when she helped with our second exhibition, and

she delivered clear, stylish and original lectures to our members over the ensuing years. Her book *The Ceramics of Southeast Asia: Their Dating and Identification* (Oxford University Press) remains a classic in the field and her *Southeast Asian Ceramics Museum Newsletter* ranks as a scholarly journal in its own right. (Information about the Museum and access to its Newsletters can be found at <http://museum.bu.ac.th>)

I am sure OCS members join me in shock, sorrow and sadness at

the realization Roxanna is no longer with us. Mr. Angus Forsyth, past president of the OCS from 1984 – 1986 and an old friend of Roxanna, has kindly prepared a memorial, which accompanies this newsletter.

Dr. Michael R. Martin
President



Roxanna M. Brown with ceramics discovered near Johor, Malaysia

**Upcoming Events,
July 2008
Past Events,
May 2008**



Porcelains and lacquer with auspicious word designs

Upcoming Events, Dr. Maggie Wan *Auspicious Words on Sixteenth Century Porcelains and Lacquer Wares*, July 29

Dr. Maggie Wan, who obtained her D.Phil. from the University of Oxford and is currently teaching at the Department of Fine Arts, Chinese University of Hong Kong, will discuss decorative designs featuring auspicious words, which gained particular popularity in sixteenth century China.

Official porcelains and lacquer wares of the period exhibit a variety

of auspicious words, such as *fu* (Good fortune), *shou* (Longevity), *yongbao changchun* (Stay young forever), and *wanshou qingping* (Myriad longevity, pure and peaceful).

This lecture will discuss such auspicious word designs through exploring their underlying ideas, cultural significance and relation to the visual culture of the Ming court. In particular, it will focus on an innovative motif (see examples oppo-

site) consisting of an auspicious character in 'organic form', which was invented in the Jiajing reign (1522-66).

It will show how this motif together with other related designs were conceived as visual expressions of Heaven's blessing. Their vogue was closely associated with the Jiajing Emperor's pursuit of immortality and the divination practice of spirit writing.

Past Events, *Christie's guided preview*, May 24

With experts including Rosemary Scott and Pola Antebi, OCS members were given a guided preview of Christie's auction.

Christie's was entrusted with the sale of a collection of fifteen 18th century clocks from the Nezu Museum in Tokyo made for the Chinese market. One of the most significant collections outside the Palace Museum collection in Beijing, this was a rare op-

portunity to see clocks and automata appreciated and treasured by the emperors of China.

A spectacular Mughal piece, thinly carved from translucent jade and inscribed with an Imperial poem by the Emperor Qianlong in its praise was another highlight, as was the early 14th century Ming copper-red decorated ewer, *kendi*. With its body of globular form, the *kendi*

was painted in varied greyish tones of underglaze red with branches of camellia, prunus and bamboo issuing from the petal border at the bottom. The Hongwu emperor, who reigned for thirty years from 1368-98, was said to have been particularly fond of ceramics decorated in copper red, a colour notoriously difficult to fire successfully.

Past Events, *Wuhan and Wudang Mountain Trip*, May 9-14

Under the superb guidance of Professor Jenny So, world-acknowledged Chinese antiquities authority, the OCS visited the new Hubei Provincial Museum in Wuhan and travelled northwest from the city to Wudang Mountain. Professor So received her doctorate from Harvard University and was the Senior Curator for the ancient Chinese collection at the Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery in Washington, D.C, before

returning to Hong Kong in 2001 where she is currently Professor of Fine Arts and Director of the Institute of Chinese Studies at the Chinese University of Hong Kong.

Friday, May 9
Hubei Provincial Museum, Wuhan

After a warm welcome by Wang Jichao of the Hubei Provincial Museum, we began our viewing of the museum's unparalleled exhibi-

tion halls, whose galleries feature over 140,000 cultural relics.

The museum's many galleries include those focusing on: Qujialing— Prehistoric culture in the Middle reaches of the Yangtze River; the Panlongcheng site in Huangpi with its bronze civilization; Bamboo Slips of the Warring States Period, the Qin Dynasty and the Han Dynasty; Lacquered Articles in the Qin and Han Dynasties; Jiuliandun—a large tomb of a Chu Noble



Lacquer armour, Hubei Provincial Museum gallery

Wuhan and Wudang Mountain Trip (continued)

with bronze vessels as well as jade and lacquer ware used in ritual burials; the Tomb of Marquis Yi of Zeng with its bronze ritual vessels, musical instruments, wooden lacquered articles, gold and jade wares and bronze weapons; and the Tomb of Prince Liang Zhuangwang with its gold and silver, jade, porcelain, ornamental wares and treasures from the era of maritime explorer Zheng He.

Of these, the finds from the tomb of the Marquis Yi of Zeng were perhaps best known by participants and seeing the many treasures from the tomb so beautifully displayed in the state-of-the-art galleries was a treat. In 1977, the remarkably rich and undisturbed tomb was excavated. Dated to about 433 BCE, its stunning finds included over 15,000 objects including bronze ritual vessels, bronze bells, stone musical chimes, jades, and lacquer. The galleries provide ample room to display these objects, the centre piece of which is the set of bells (see opposite top).

The Ming dynasty tomb of Prince Liang Zhuangwang (d. 1441) is located outside Zhongxiang city in Hubei province. The prince was the last ruler over the state of Liang, of which Zhongxiang was a part. In 2001, the tomb was excavated, revealing over 1,400 artifacts. The OCS group was treated to a private, unhurried viewing of the gallery. We marvelled at outstanding gems, objects in gold and silver, jades, blue-and-white porcelains, ornamental wares and Tantric

Buddhist ritual implements.

Saturday, May 10
Hubei Provincial Museum, Wuhan; Wuhan to Xiangfan

After a return visit to the provincial museum, we set off from Wuhan to Xiangfan by bus, approximately a five-hour drive on a well paved highway.

Sunday, May 11
Xiangfan to Wudang Mountain

Our journey to Wudang Mountain, the centre of ancient Daoist culture, started off by bus, then by eco-bus and cable car up the mountain. The final leg to the mountain pinnacle (see opposite) and its fabled "Golden Hall" was by foot. The steep mountain path had been well worn by many pilgrims in the past and is clearly still a site of pilgrimage. We saw many demonstrations of contemporary piety, including prostrations before the bronze statue of Zhenwu, titular deity of Wudang, and a small and emotional group of worshippers who made an offering of a large, rare fungus.

The monasteries and temples of the sacred Daoist Wudang Mountain were made a UNESCO world heritage site in 1994. During the Ming dynasty, the Emperor sent 300,000 soldiers and craftsmen to build temples, pavilions and other structures. Given the steep climb to the pinnacle, the existence of the "Golden Hall" at the top seems all the more remarkable. Today there are 36 halls, constituting the largest

existing Daoist complex, rich in architecture, sculptures, scriptures and more.

Our day trip provided a fascinating glimpse of the area, leaving many of us wishing to return one day to stay in the simple Daoist guest houses located deep in the forest environment. As a national park area, the mountain has a flourishing plant life and impressive landscapes. There are a number of resident martial arts experts and schools imparting the Wudang tradition. After our journey down the mountain, we watched a demonstration of this supple and agile form of martial arts (see opposite bottom).

Monday, May 12
Xiangfan to Suizhou to Wuhan

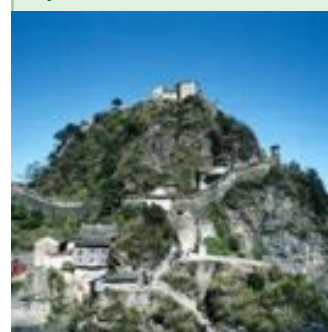
On our way back to Wuhan, we stopped at the picturesque homestead of the third century tactician and administrator Zhuge Liang and also visited the charming Mi Fu Memorial Temple and Garden, commemorating the famed Southern Song scholar and calligrapher.

Tuesday, May 13
Hubei Provincial Museum, Wuhan

Our last morning in Wuhan was made very special by visits to the museum's Conservation and Storage Areas, facilitated by Professor So. In the afternoon some of us returned to the museum for a final visit, while others ventured into colonial-era Hankou, before returning to Hong Kong the following day.



Marquis Yi of Zeng bells installed in the new gallery; Professor Jenny So giving an impromptu "music" lesson on replica bells



The pinnacle of Wudang Mountain, where the "Golden Hall" is located; martial arts demonstration

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The Oriental Ceramic Society of Hong Kong Limited (OCS) is devoted to the study and appreciation of all forms of oriental art and culture.

It is the OCS mission to gather together members whose interest in oriental art and culture is their main enthusiasm, to provide a forum for the lively exchange of ideas and information, to issue educational publications, to present stimulating lectures from distinguished speakers, to organise study sessions and travel programmes, and to encourage collector members to open up their treasures to other members

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OCS 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, please **bring them along** to our next event.

Postal communications are being phased out.

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

OCS Library

The **OCS Library**, comprising the Society's collection of over 400 books, catalogues, journals and papers on oriental art and culture is available to members at the Art Section on the tenth floor of the Central Library in Causeway Bay.

The OCS thanks Helen Anderson for donating *Paintings of Wu Ch'ang Shou and Ch'i Pai Shih* and Mark Lam for a copy of *Dream Quest: The Mark Lam Collection of Chinese Ceramic Pillows*.

Material from the **OCS Library** is available for lending to OCS Members on presentation of their OCS Membership card and library card and to other Central Library members for browsing only.