

Generous Gifts From Donors Swell Treasures At Phoenix Art Museum

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One aspect of the new Phoenix Art Museum that may well come as a considerable surprise to the Arizona public is that the munificence of two New York art collectors and patrons has made possible the establishment of a Far East Gallery within the museum.

Dr. and Mrs. Arthur Sackler and Mrs. Elsie Sackler, have through their recent generosity, provided the distinguished nucleus of an oriental collection spanning the arts from ancient sculpture from the limestone caves of North China to a magnificent Sung Dynasty painting on silk. These works, together with the Tang and Ching Dynasty porcelains that were presented to the Art Museum by Mr. and Mrs. Richard Gump of San Francisco, and a fine Chinese bronze given by Dr. and Mrs. C. Thomas Read of Scottsdale, will be placed on special exhibition in a second floor gallery at the time of the museum's dedication this fall.

Perhaps the major piece found within the Sackler Collection is the enigmatically smiling head of Buddha which was chiseled from the relief surface of a vast and monumental cave temple dedicated to the life of Buddha, the Enlightened One. It is from the North China cave temple of Yun-kang, dating approximately Fifth Century A.D. Lord Buddha is rendered with the characteristic top knot and long lobed ears that the Chinese associated with his exalted life. The eyes are finely carved giving an impression of deep meditation.

In striking contrast the tan limestone human rendition of Buddha is a Chinese Bronze Wine Vessel known as a "Yu." It has been credited by distinguished scholars of Far Eastern Art to belong to either the Shang or the Chou dynasties (between 1766-256 B.C.). The green patina surface of this large tribute vessel, which was used to offer deference and respect to the primitive or animistic gods, is covered with such

favored oriental decorative motifs as tiger heads, dragons, ghouls, and fantastic other-worldly creatures.

These wonderfully aged vessels, often filled with food and wine, were placed in front of the domestic sacrificial altar of the wealthy Chinese and the members of the conservative minded court of the emperor.

The art of painting on silk is as ancient to the Chinese as fresco painting is to Western civilization. A handsome and historical rendition of "Three Geese amidst Peonies and Lotus Flowers" was done by an anonymous master of the Ming Dynasty of the 16th Century in the style of the celebrated master, Lin Liang.

For the lover of sculpture, there is a pottery statue of a standing palace guard wearing the impressive winter helmet of the typical Tartar Guard of Honor. The facial features of this piece of heroic sculpture reveals its origin from the Turkic race of East-Central Asia. As an important soldier, he clasps a fearsome weapon to his chest. Some evidence of amber enamel are yet to be seen on his high boots and on his pleated skirt. Our Palace Guard dates from the early Tang Dynasty, or approximately the Seventh Century.

The connoisseur of ancient pottery will be happy to know that the Sacklers have presented the Art Museum with several works of considerable importance. The one of these which is particularly appealing to this writer is a high tripod vase made of a greenish-tan tubular body. The legs forming the tripod have been molded

by the highly imaginative ceramist in the form of three solemn, squatting bears. This tripod vase and another large globular jar dating from the ancient Sui Dynasty (589-618 A.D.) are coated on the exterior with a greenish-tan glaze which has acquired an overtone of silver iridescence due to its being buried in an imperial tomb for literally hundreds of years.

To compliment the presentation of this distinguished oriental collection to the public there will be a series of lectures presented at the museum highlighting the arts of the Far East. These talks will endeavor to present the public with a clearer picture of the wealth of civilization found in the ancient East at the time the Western civilization was passing through the Dark Ages and then attempting to evolve a Renaissance.



RECENT GIFTS: CHINESE WINE VESSEL, TARTAR FIGURINE, AND CHINESE HEAD OF BUDDHA

Calendar Of Art Shows

PHOENIX ART CENTER, 45 E. Coronado Rd. Summer schedule: July, Emily Hargraves, oils, John Bernhardt, prints, graphic arts; George Morland, English arts, drawings. August, Clinton Hill, oils and collages; Philip Leavitt, oils. September, Fantasy in Paintings by O.E.L. Graves. Clinton Hill, one-man show, Aug. 4-18, woodcuts. Closed Monday.