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**Collecting Chinese Art in Hong Kong from  
1949 to 1997:  
Collectors, Museums and the Art Market**

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Thesis submitted for the degree of PhD

2021

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# Abstract

This thesis is a study of Chinese art collecting in Hong Kong during the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Through reconstructing the biographies of four representative collectors, who also held other roles as art dealer, adviser, scholar or museum donor, it demonstrates the diversity of collecting practices which thrived in this British colony and characterises how individuals and their networks shaped private and public collections, Chinese art scholarship and developments in the art market.

Four representative collectors are examined to show how the multicultural environment of Hong Kong enabled collecting activities to thrive, and how collectors in turn contributed to enriching the collecting environment in Hong Kong. Firstly, Edward T. Chow's collecting is viewed in relation to the impact of Shanghai dealers and collectors in bringing their expertise and collections to Hong Kong; secondly, Dr Ip Yee's collecting activities epitomise how a new group of Western-educated middle-class professionals built institutional as well as private collections while furthering scholarship on specific categories of Chinese art such as bamboo carving; thirdly, the Singaporean collector Low Chuck-Tiew demonstrates the sense of nationalism, shared by many Cantonese diasporic communities, which motivated him to collect Chinese art and ultimately donate his collection to Hong Kong; lastly, T. T. Tsui's method of sharing art with a global audience through opening a private museum and sponsoring international institutions reveals how collecting in Hong Kong became intertwined with business and diplomacy around the time of the handover of Hong Kong to China. By comparing these four collectors' approaches to collecting and reflecting upon the roles they played in private collecting, museums and the art market from 1949 to 1997 in Hong Kong and beyond, the current research identifies distinctive characteristics of Hong Kong collecting which were unique to this eventful time and place.

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## Chapter One: Introduction

From the early to mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, collectors escaping from political conflict in mainland China brought Chinese art collections, along with their expertise on the subject, to the British colony of Hong Kong. Chinese migrants, in particular a large group of refugees from the Shanghai and Guangdong regions, arrived in Hong Kong where they exchanged different perceptions of Chinese art with locals and expatriates including collectors and dealers from Europe, America, Japan and Taiwan. Individuals and institutions in this multicultural environment built up significant Chinese art collections and actively promoted the study of Chinese art through collectors' societies, museum exhibitions, scholarly publications and the art market between the 1960s and 1990s.

The current thesis investigates the history, context and impact of Chinese art collecting in 20<sup>th</sup> century Hong Kong, thus situating this activity within the wider global history of Chinese art collecting. By demonstrating the diversity of collecting practices which thrived in this location and time period, this thesis characterises how individuals and their networks contributed to the formation of both private and public Chinese art collections and related scholarship in Hong Kong, as well as the establishment of the city's status as a key player in the global Chinese art market.

In mapping the history of collecting Chinese art in Hong Kong, this study contributes to and brings together for the first time two existing fields of research – Hong Kong History and Collecting Studies. It is thus necessary to characterise these existing bodies of research which the current thesis builds upon, before laying down the theoretical and methodological framework of this research.

### **Historiography of Hong Kong: Borrowed City, Borrowed Art?**

In order to reposition the collecting of Chinese art in Hong Kong before the end of British rule, this thesis explores the territorial underpinning of this activity. Although it was only in recent decades that more historians started to pay attention to the writing of Hong Kong history, it is possible to identify different schools of thought in existing literature on the subject. As this area of academic enquiry is still young in the making, select journalistic accounts remain

useful in filling gaps that Hong Kong history books are yet to address. Thus some of these more illuminating and influential journalistic works should be noted alongside scholarly publications.

### **A British Colonial View: Hong Kong the ‘Barren Island’**

In 1968, the Australian journalist Richard Hughes wrote the now classic book on Hong Kong, entitled *Hong Kong: Borrowed Place, Borrowed Time*. The phrase ‘borrowed place, borrowed time’ has since been repeatedly cited to signify the perception that Hong Kong’s success in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was only ephemeral. Although Hughes acknowledges the multiple dimensions of Hong Kong society as ‘an anachronistic mixture of British colonialism and the Chinese way of life’, his conception of Hong Kong has influenced subsequent interpretations of the city as a mere temporary invention of the British empire.<sup>1</sup> Hong Kong is depicted as a passive and pragmatic place for transit with no distinct identity or desire for democratic self-determination. ‘Borrowed place, borrowed time’ was in fact a phrase borrowed from another writer, the Eurasian author known by her pen name Han Suyin 韓素音 (real name Rosalie Matilda Kuanghu Chou 周光瑚) (1916/1917-2012), whose novels and autobiographies revealing the realities of modern China have been adapted for American cinema:<sup>2</sup>

*Squeezed between giant antagonists crunching huge bones of contention, Hong Kong has achieved within its own narrow territories a co-existence which is baffling, infuriating, incomprehensible, and works splendidly – on borrowed time in a borrowed place.*<sup>3</sup>

Han herself had borrowed this phrase from a Shanghai businessman Tom Wu: ‘Prosperous but precarious, energetic on borrowed time in a borrowed place, that is Hong Kong’.<sup>4</sup> This view of Hong Kong stipulated by Wu, Han and Hughes conforms to a wider school of thought on Hong Kong history which is based on the notion that Hong Kong, nothing more than a

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<sup>1</sup> Richard Hughes, *Hong Kong: Borrowed Place, Borrowed Time* (London: Deutsch, 1968), 9.

<sup>2</sup> *Love is a Many-Splendored Thing*, describing the story of an American reporter who fell in love with a Chinese physician in Hong Kong in 1949, was filmed in 1955. This was later made into a soap opera under the same title which aired on American television between 1967 to 1973.

<sup>3</sup> Suyin Han, “Hong Kong’s Ten-Year Miracle,” *Life*, 1959.

<sup>4</sup> Han, “Ten-Year Miracle”.

fishing village with a modest population of several thousand people before the British asserted their control in 1841 during the First Opium War, thrived as a positive result of the British Empire when it became dominated by Western companies such as British merchant houses. When Hong Kong island was seized, then British Foreign Secretary Lord Palmerston had famously described it as a 'barren island' before it was transformed into a modern free port. This interpretation was upheld by Ernest John Eitel's 1895 book which was a pioneering effort in writing Hong Kong history, and has been followed by other Western historians like Geoffrey R. Sayer, Winifred A. Wood, G. B. Endacott, James William Norton-Kyshe and Frank Welsh, who credit the British colonial administration for Hong Kong's growth and progress.<sup>5</sup> Most of these works organise the stages of Hong Kong's development according to the British governor in power at the time, exposing the narrow top-down approach of this interpretation which neglects the perspectives of local Chinese who make up the majority of the Hong Kong population. This 'Colonial School', as defined by researcher Vaudine England, glorifies colonial aggression in the region and presents the Chinese as 'an indistinct homogenous mass with criminal tendencies'.<sup>6</sup> Although early local Chinese authors shed further light on the contribution of Chinese communities in Hong Kong's development, publications in Chinese like Liu Guoying's 1941 book similarly states that in 1841 Hong Kong was a remote island without a trace of human activity, except for pirates who lived in caves along the coastline.<sup>7</sup> Lin Youlan's popular book *Xianggang Shihua*, published in Chinese in 1975, has also been criticised for conforming to the colonial perspective by separating stages of Hong Kong development according to the succession of British governors.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Ernest John Eitel, *Europe in China: The History of Hong Kong from the Beginning to the Year 1882* (London: Luzac & Company, 1895); Geoffrey R. Sayer, *Hong Kong: Birth, Adolescence, and Coming of Age, 1841-1862* (London: Oxford University Press, 1937) and *Hong Kong 1862-1919: Years of Discretion* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1975); Winifred A. Wood, *A Brief History of Hong Kong* (Hong Kong: South China Morning Post, 1940); G. B. Endacott, *A History of Hong Kong* (London: Oxford University Press, 1958) and *Government and People in Hong Kong 1841-1962: A Constitutional History* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1964); James William Norton-Kyshe, *The History of the Laws and Courts of Hong Kong: From the Earliest Period to 1898* (Hong Kong: Vetch and Lee, 1971); Frank Welsh, *A History of Hong Kong* (London: Harper Collins, 1993).

<sup>6</sup> Vaudine England, "Introduction/Historiography To Date," *Hong Kong History Project*, accessed 28 Sept, 2020, <https://www.hkhistory.net/annotated-bibliography-by-vaudine-england/introduction/>.

<sup>7</sup> Liu Guoying 劉國英, *Xianggang Bai Nian* 香港百年 (Hong Kong: Xinyitang chuban, 2018), 7.

<sup>8</sup> Lin Youlan 林友蘭, *Xianggang Shihua* 香港史話 (Hong Kong: Hong Kong Shanghai Bookstore, 1985). For its criticism, see K. C. Fok 霍啟昌, *Bainianlai Gangren Yanjiu Xianggangshi Fangxiang Shuping* 百年來港人研究香港史方向述評, in *Xianggangshi Yanjiu Lunzhu Xuanji* 香港史研究論著選輯, eds. May Bo Ching 程美寶 and Yu Lok Chiu 趙雨樂 (Hong Kong: Open University of Hong Kong Press, 1999), 49.

## Sino-centric School: Chinese ‘Blood and Tears’

On the other end of the spectrum, there is a notable Sino-centric view driven by Chinese nationalism which perceives Hong Kong primarily as Chinese territory that suffered against the backdrop of the humiliating Opium Wars. The shame of losing Hong Kong to Britain, and reluctance to recognise Hong Kong’s commercial success as a positive outcome of capitalism and colonial rule, have been suggested as two of the reasons why Hong Kong history has not been sufficiently acknowledged by Chinese scholars.<sup>9</sup> When Chinese intellectuals Wen Yiduo 聞一多(1899-1946), Lu Xun 魯迅 (1881-1936) and Ba Jin 巴金(1904-2005) visited Hong Kong during the 1920s and 1930s, they perceived the colony as ‘bearing the blood and tears of the Chinese for over a hundred years’, a painful reminder of China’s wounded pride.<sup>10</sup> In the limited number of early Chinese Marxist works that address Hong Kong history, such as Ding You’s publication *Hong Kong’s Early History 1841-1907*, Hong Kong is primarily described through sensationalist language as a victim of evil colonial exploitation.<sup>11</sup> This view is reiterated by later publications such as those by Yuan Bangjian 元邦建, Yu Shengwu 余繩武, Liu Cunkuan 劉存寬 and Liu Shuyong 劉蜀永.<sup>12</sup>

Although this interpretation seems to portray the other side of the coin by condemning rather than glorifying British imperialist aggression in China, this school of thought ironically shares one central theme in common with the Colonial School, which is the perception of Hong Kong as voiceless and indistinct. Each representing a different force to justify or legitimise control over Hong Kong, these two schools feed the political agendas of the British and Chinese authorities respectively, resulting in a one-dimensional view of Hong Kong history.

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<sup>9</sup> John Carroll, *A Concise History of Hong Kong* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007), 2.

<sup>10</sup> Helen F. Siu, *Tracing China: A Forty-Year Ethnographic Journey*, (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2016), 393-394.

<sup>11</sup> Ding You 丁又, *Xiang Gang Chu Qi Shi Hua 1841-1907 (Hong Kong’s Early History 1841-1907)* 香港初期史話, (Beijing: Joint Publishers, 1958).

<sup>12</sup> Yuan Bangjian 元邦建, ed., *Xianggang Shilue* 香港史略 (Hong Kong: Mainstream Publisher, 1987); Yu Shengwu 余繩武 and Liu Cunkuan 劉存寬, eds., *Shijiu Shiji de Xianggang* 十九世紀的香港 (Beijing: China Social Science Press, 1993); Yu Shengwu 余繩武 and Liu Shuyong 劉蜀永, eds., *Ershi Shiji de Xianggang* 二十世紀的香港 (Beijing: China Social Science Press, 1995).

## Hong Kong Perspectives: From Local to Global

In the early to mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, a number of researchers explored the history of pre-colonial Hong Kong, many of whom focused on one particular event in the 13<sup>th</sup> century when two Song Dynasty (960-1279) emperors escaping from Mongol troops sought refuge in Hong Kong.<sup>13</sup> However it was only from the 1980s onwards that a sizeable body of work by Hong Kong-based historians and researchers has emerged, supplemented by initiatives in mostly British, American and Canadian academic institutions, to diversify existing perspectives on Hong Kong history. These revisionist accounts see interpretations of Hong Kong as a 'barren island' to be a gross exaggeration that ignores the existence of settlements prior to British occupation. They place greater focus on the views of locals, taking on board archival sources and oral histories, while also considering the wider context of Cantonese, Southern Chinese, Southeast Asian and global histories. By looking at the local and the global, these informative works break apart conventional narratives previously restricted to a binary framework focused on Britain and China.

In steering discussion on Hong Kong towards a more multidimensional view, revisionist historians address the complexities of Hong Kong society with reference to questions of class, gender and race in both Chinese and British communities, the importance of Eurasian, South Asian and expatriate groups, and the influence of traditional Chinese family values, rural village organisation, labour unrest, and the ambiguous rule of law.<sup>14</sup> The active roles played by self-initiated local elitist groups, collaborationists and middlemen who interacted with British colonialists to shape Hong Kong society have been offered by the illuminating work of

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<sup>13</sup> Lo Hsiang-lin 羅香林 can be considered as a pioneer in drawing attention to the general pre-colonial history of Hong Kong; see Lo Hsiang-lin, *Hong Kong and Its External Communications Before 1842: the History of Hong Kong Prior to British Arrival 一八四二年以前之香港及其對外交通: 香港前代史* (Hong Kong: Institute of Chinese Culture, 1959). Many of these studies were based on archaeological finds and historic relics such as Sung Wong Toi 宋王臺, which is believed to be a memorial to the child emperors Zhao Shi 趙昞 (1269-1278) and Zhao Bing 趙昺 (1272-1279).

<sup>14</sup> Henry Lethbridge, *Hong Kong, Stability and Change: A Collection of Essays* (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 1978); Wai Kwan Chan, *The Making of Hong Kong Society: Three Studies of Class Formation in Early Hong Kong* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991); Stacilee Ford, *Troubling American Women: Narratives of Gender and Nation in Hong Kong* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2011); David Faure, *The Structure of Chinese Rural Society: Lineage and Village in the Eastern New Territories, Hong Kong* (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 1986); David Faure and Helen F. Siu, eds., *Down to Earth: The Territorial Bond in South China* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1995); Jung-fang Tsai, *Hong Kong in Chinese History: Community and Social Unrest in the British Colony 1842-1913* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993); Christopher Munn, *Anglo-China: Chinese People and British Rule in Hong Kong, 1841-1880* (Richmond: Curzon, 2001).

Elizabeth Sinn, Tsai Jung-fang, Christopher Munn, John Carroll and Kaori Abe.<sup>15</sup> To situate Hong Kong within broader global histories, the significance of the British Colony in Cold War politics has been analysed by Chi-kwan Mark and Peter Hamilton, amongst others.<sup>16</sup>

It has been suggested that the Japanese occupation of Hong Kong from 1941 to 1945 reshaped the relationship between the colonial people of Asia and Western imperial powers, with local Chinese residents emerging from the Second World War no longer tolerant of the racial discrimination previously in place.<sup>17</sup> As the Communist government officially took over China in 1949, the sense of separation between the two places was heightened. In contrast to orthodox interpretations of Hong Kong as a passive, in-between place, revisionist accounts identify the formation of a distinctive Hong Kong cultural identity and acknowledge the uniqueness of the city in being an inspiration for the rest of the world: it provided a successful model of a modern civil society which combined Chinese work ethic with efficient British systems, nurturing important figures like Sun Yat-sen 孫中山 (1866-1925) who had acknowledged Hong Kong's importance in fostering his revolutionary ideas.<sup>18</sup> In 1895, Sun Yat-sen established the headquarters of the Xing Zhong Hui 興中會 (Revive China Society), the forerunner of the Tong Meng Hui 同盟會, in Hong Kong as he gathered support to overthrow the Qing Dynasty. Almost a century later, when Communist China opened up to the world under Deng Xiaoping's 鄧小平 economic and social reforms from 1978 onwards, Hong Kong became a key reference point to China's reentry into the world. While Stephanie Po-yin Chung and Chan Lau Kit-ching have shown how Hong Kong's development was linked to political changes in early 20<sup>th</sup> century China, K. C. Fok, Gary Hamilton and Carroll have emphasised the central role Hong Kong played in the economic development of modern

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<sup>15</sup> Elizabeth Sinn, *Power and Charity: The Early History of the Tung Wah Hospital, Hong Kong* (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 1989); Tsai, *Hong Kong*; Jung-fang Tsai, *Xianggang Ren Zhi Xianggangshi, 1841-1945* 香港人之香港史 (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 2001); Munn, *Anglo-China*; John Carroll, *Edge of Empires: Chinese Elites and British Colonials in Hong Kong* (London: Harvard University Press, 2005); Kaori Abe, *Chinese Middlemen in Hong Kong's Colonial Economy, 1830-1890* (London: Routledge, 2017).

<sup>16</sup> Chi-kwan Mark, "Vietnam War Tourists: US Naval Visits to Hong Kong and British-American-Chinese relations, 1965-1968," *Cold War History* 10, no. 1 (February 2010): 1-28; Chi-kwan Mark, *The Everyday Cold War: Britain and China 1950-1972* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2017); Peter E. Hamilton, "A Haven for Tortured Souls: Hong Kong in the Vietnam War," *The International History Review* 37, no. 3 (2015): 565-581; Priscilla Roberts and John M. Carroll, eds., *Hong Kong in the Cold War* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2016); Peter E. Hamilton, *Made in Hong Kong: Transpacific Networks and a New History of Globalisation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2020).

<sup>17</sup> Steve Tsang, "Modern Hong Kong," in *Oxford Research Encyclopaedia of Asian History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 7, accessed 20 April 2020, <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190277727.013.280>.

<sup>18</sup> Siu, "Cultural Kaleidoscope," 393.

China.<sup>19</sup> More recent publications have also benefitted from taking into account the emergence of a distinctive modern Hong Kong identity and calls for democracy from the 1990s onwards, as increased Beijing influence on Hong Kong governance has been met with resistance. Other publications which have explored the fluidity of Hong Kong identity and Chinese nationalism as well as the delicate balance of power between British and Chinese forces, include those by Wang Gungwu, Elizabeth Sinn, Steve Tsang, David Faure, Lee Pui-tak and Law Wing Sang.<sup>20</sup>

Apart from these significant works which have provided more multidimensional perspectives on Hong Kong history and outlined the city's unique geographical location and political circumstances which enabled Chinese art collecting to thrive in the region, recent publications (including journalistic collections of oral histories or essays) related to Hong Kong Art History, Museum Studies and Cultural Studies also greatly contribute to our understanding of the wider environment for art collecting in the city, which have been useful for this thesis. It is generally agreed that Hong Kong artists progressed from continuing traditional Chinese styles to absorbing Western elements before creating innovative styles which came to represent a new Hong Kong cultural identity. This has been instigated by academics as well as veteran practitioners in art and cultural institutions, including David Clarke, Frank Vigneron, Ming Hoi Victor Lai 黎明海, Kitwah Eva Man 文潔華 and Cheung Wai-ye 張惠儀.<sup>21</sup> Discussions on

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<sup>19</sup> Stephanie Po-yin Chung, *Chinese Business Groups in Hong Kong and Political Change in South China, 1900-25* (Basingstoke, Eng.: Macmillan, 1998); Chan Lau Kit-ching, *China, Britain and Hong Kong, 1895-1945* (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 1990); K. C. Fok, *Lectures on Hong Kong History: Hong Kong's Role in Modern Chinese History* (Hong Kong: Commercial Press, 1990) and *Xianggang Yu Jindai Zhongguo 香港與近代中國* (Taipei: Shangwu, 1993); Gary G. Hamilton, "Hong Kong and the Rise of Capitalism in Asia," in *Commerce and Capitalism in Chinese Societies* (London: Routledge, 2006), 129-145; Carroll, *Concise History*, 3.

<sup>20</sup> Wang Gungwu 王賡武, ed., *Hong Kong History: New Perspectives 香港史新編*, 上下冊 (Hong Kong: Joint Publishing, 2017); Elizabeth Sinn, Siu-lun Wong, and Wing-hoi Chan, eds., *Rethinking Hong Kong: New Paradigms, New Perspectives* (Hong Kong: Centre of Asian Studies, University of Hong Kong, 2009); Steve Tsang, *A Modern History of Hong Kong* (London; New York: I.B. Tauris, 2004); Steve Tsang, ed., *A Documentary History of Hong Kong: Government and Politics* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1995); David Faure, ed., *A Documentary History of Hong Kong: Society* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1997); David Faure, *Colonialism and the Hong Kong Mentality* (Hong Kong: Centre of Asia Studies, Hong Kong University Press, 2003); David Faure and Lee Pui-tak, eds., *A Documentary History of Hong Kong: Economy* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2004); Lee Pui-tak 李培德, ed., *An Annotated Bibliography of Hong Kong History 香港史研究書目題解* (Hong Kong: Joint Publishing Hong Kong, 2001); Law Wing Sang, *Collaborative Colonial Power: The Making of the Hong Kong Chinese* (Hong Kong : London: Hong Kong University Press; Eurospan, 2009).

<sup>21</sup> David Clarke, *Hong Kong Art: Culture and Decolonization* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2001); David Clarke, *Art and Place: Essays on Art from a Hong Kong Perspective* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1996); Frank Vigneron, "Two Competing Habitus among Hong Kong Art Practitioners," *Visual Anthropology* 26, no. 2, (February 2013): 132-146; Frank Vigneron, *I Like Hong Kong: Art and*

Hong Kong Art have also been linked with discussions on Hong Kong fashion, architecture and film to enable a wider reading of local culture.<sup>22</sup> Among these, the heavily cited work of Ackbar Abbas published in 1997 have offered an innovative interpretation of the rise of Hong Kong culture in the 1980s as a response to its imminent ‘disappearance’ when Hong Kong would be handed over to China.<sup>23</sup> By acknowledging the emergence of a distinct cultural identity in Hong Kong, albeit with a slight tendency to over-celebrate Hong Kong Art in their efforts to promote the field, many art historical accounts can be perceived to follow the Hong Kong School interpretation of Hong Kong history.

Just as art and culture in Hong Kong developed a distinctive local identity, the collecting of Chinese art in Hong Kong during the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century also developed unique localised characteristics. This thesis thus contributes to the writing of a more comprehensive and diversified history of Hong Kong by presenting the hitherto unrecorded stories of Chinese art collecting. It explores how Hong Kong collectors inherited and appropriated both Chinese and Western, mostly British, ways of collecting, developing cross-cultural collecting methods specific to Hong Kong and associated with the shaping of its local identity.

## Studying Collecting

Apart from Hong Kong History, the present thesis draws reference from existing studies on collecting which have emerged in recent decades from a broad range of disciplines including Art History, Psychology, Anthropology, Sociology, Museum Studies, Postcolonial Theory,

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*Deterritorialization* (Hong Kong: Chinese University of Hong Kong Press, 2010); Frank Vigneron, “What Art History for Hong Kong? 該如何為香港藝術撰史?,” in *Hong Kong Experience Hong Kong Experiment* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong Museum of Art, 2019); Frank Vigneron, “Nice Painting et al. – Different Kinds of Painting and Related Practices in Hong Kong,” *Yishu: Journal of Contemporary Chinese Art* 11, no. 6, (November/December 2012): 15-33; Frank Vigneron, “‘Conservative nativist’ Chinese art in Hong Kong and Mainland China,” *Journal of Contemporary Chinese Art* 1, no. 1., ed. Paul Gladston (Bristol and Willington: Intellect Ltd., 2014), 25-43; Ming Hoi Victor Lai 黎明海 and Kit Wah Eva Man 文潔華, *Yu Xiang Gang Yi Shu Dui Hua 1980-2014 (Conversation with Hong Kong Art 1980-2014) 與香港藝術對話 1980-2014*, (Hong Kong: Joint Publishing (Hong Kong) Company Limited, 2015); Cheung Wai-yee 張惠儀, *Xiang Gang Shu Hua Tuan Ti Yan Jiu (A Study on Painting and Calligraphy Societies in Hong Kong) 香港書畫團體研究*. (Hong Kong: The Chinese University of Hong Kong, 1999), 12-14.

<sup>22</sup> Kinkeung Edwin Lai, *Visual Colours: Essays on the History of Hong Kong Visual Culture* (Hong Kong: Joint Publishing (Hong Kong) Company Limited, 2002).

<sup>23</sup> Ackbar Abbas, *Hong Kong: Culture and the Politics of Disappearance* (Minneapolis (USA): University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 7.

Cultural Studies, Art Market Studies and Material Culture Studies. These have significantly expanded our critical understanding of collecting in different ways.

The field of Museum Studies has developed in recent years alongside changing approaches to museum curatorial practice. In broader discussions on Collecting History in relation to museum practice, those like Anthony Shelton propose that the narratives in which museum collections were built up by private collectors should be addressed to better understand the contexts in which they were collected.<sup>24</sup> Regarding Chinese art specifically, a significant group of studies have investigated how collectors and their tastes have shaped both private and museum collections. Among them are several frequently cited edited volumes containing essays that examine the development of collections mostly located in Europe and North America, including those in the British Museum, the Victoria and Albert Museum, the Musée Guimet, and the Freer Gallery of Art.<sup>25</sup>

While these studies have unearthed stories of private collecting which were previously overshadowed by grander museum narratives, much work remains to be done on exploring exactly how the private informed the institutional and vice versa. Considering this, the work of three individuals have provided particularly illuminating reference points for the central themes of the present thesis – Judith Green, Carol Duncan and Sharon Macdonald. With reference to Chinese objects, Green challenges ‘a widespread view of the museum as an ultimately controlling space’ and argues that ‘private collecting played an important, and often leading role, in the formation of categories for Chinese objects’, suggesting that ‘the centrality of the museum in determining other collecting categories may have been overstated’.<sup>26</sup> Duncan reveals how private interests unfolded in public spaces, enabling us to understand not just reasons why collectors collect for themselves, but also why they offer financial sponsorship and donations to museums, effectively helping museums to collect

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<sup>24</sup> Anthony Shelton, ed., *Collectors: Individuals and Institutions* (London: Horniman Museum and Gardens; Coimbra, Museu Antropológico da Universidade de Coimbra, 2001), 19.

<sup>25</sup> Jason Steuber and Guolong Lai, eds., *Collectors, Collections and Collecting the Arts of China: Histories and Challenges*. (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2014); Vimalin Rujivacharakul, ed., *Collecting China: The World, China, and a Short History of Collecting* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2011); Stacey Pierson, ed., *Collecting Chinese Art: Interpretation and Display, Colloquies on Art & Archaeology in Asia No. 20* (London: University of London, Percival David Foundation of Chinese Art, School of Oriental and African Studies, 2000).

<sup>26</sup> Judith Tybil Green, “Britain's Chinese Collections, 1842-1943: Private Collecting and the Invention of Chinese Art” (PhD diss., University of Sussex, 2002), 3.

too.<sup>27</sup> Macdonald points out the ‘mutually entangled’ relationship between museum and individual collecting, not just in terms of individual collections entering museum collections but also the ‘more subtle and ramifying ways’:

*Museums have promoted and legitimized individual collecting practices and have provided exemplars for them. Moreover, they have helped to define the potential value of objects and their salience for identity work, and have established a cultural model in which collected material performs individual distinctiveness.*<sup>28</sup>

It is interesting to note that while Green and Macdonald might appear to offer directly opposing views – Green attempts to place more emphasis on the importance of individuals in forming collecting categories while Macdonald conceives individual collecting as heavily defined by museum practice – they similarly emphasise the close relationship between the two sides and how they work toward a shared goal of shaping and promoting art categories.

Western scholarship on Chinese art collecting has largely focused on collections formed in Europe and America during the 19<sup>th</sup> to early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, mostly adopting a broadly biographical approach in their analyses. Examples include studies on Henri Cernuschi (1821-1896), Émile Guimet (1836-1918), Edmond de Goncourt (1822-1896), Sir Percival David (1892-1964) and George Eumorfopoulos (1863-1939).<sup>29</sup> It is regrettable that many of these studies fail to inspect carefully the sources in China from which these individuals acquired their objects, thus downplaying the significance of Chinese collectors, dealers and advisers in the formation of these Western collections. This is partly owed to the lack of source material and accurate translations for non-Chinese-speaking researchers, and also reflects a generally colonial perspective towards collecting, with the starting point of research being Western collecting of China rather than Chinese collecting of China.<sup>30</sup> However, this is not to say that scholars have not increasingly challenged the colonial perspectives of the Western collectors they study; discussions on their collecting often relate to problematising Western colonial,

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<sup>27</sup> Carol Duncan, *Civilizing Rituals: Inside Public Art Museums*, (London: Routledge, 1995).

<sup>28</sup> Sharon Macdonald, “Collecting Practices,” in *A Companion to Museum Studies*, (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell Pub., 2006), 95.

<sup>29</sup> Ting Chang, *Travel, Collecting, and Museums of Asian Art in Nineteenth-Century Paris* (Surrey: Ashgate, 2013); Stacey Pierson, *Collectors, Collections and Museums: The Field of Chinese Ceramics in Britain, 1560-1960* (Oxford; New York: P. Lang, 2007); Green, “Britain’s Chinese Collections”.

<sup>30</sup> Stacey Pierson, “Collecting China at Home and Abroad: a Comparative Study of Approaches to Art Collecting and its Interpretation in China and Europe, 1500-1900,” in *Centering the Periphery: Collecting East Asian Objects in Comparative Perspective*, ed., Nataša Vampelj Suhadolnik, (Leiden: Brill, forthcoming).

imperialist collecting of non-Western ethnographical objects and their implications.<sup>31</sup> The origins of these efforts can be traced back to Edward Said's seminal 1978 work *Orientalism* which significantly opened up discussion on colonial culture.<sup>32</sup> Postcolonial scholarship has since attempted to place more emphasis on the agency of the colonised peoples in collecting practices, subverting simplistic interpretations of power relations propagated by imperial historiographies through stressing 'the two-way nature of the traffic in ideas and influences' across both metropole and colony.<sup>33</sup>

Amongst the comparatively small body of research on *Chinese* collecting Chinese art *in China*, studies on antiquarianism and *jinshi xue* 金石學 (epigraphical studies, a major form of scholarly practice since the Northern Song Dynasty) have greatly contributed to mapping the wider context for the tradition of Chinese art collecting as a scholarly pursuit, as examined by Wu Hung, Lothar von Falkenhausen, Yun-Chiahn C. Sena, Qianshen Bai, Craig Clunas and Shana J. Brown.<sup>34</sup> Other than this, fascination with the collections of the imperial court and the modern history of the two Palace Museums in Beijing and Taipei consistently dominate discussion on collecting in China, with a particular focus on the celebrated art patrons Emperors Huizong 宋徽宗 (r. 1100-1126) and Qianlong 乾隆 (r. 1736-1795).<sup>35</sup> Fortunately,

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<sup>31</sup> For example, the different notions of 'art' and 'ethnography', 'curiosity' and 'specimen' are discussed by Judith Green, "'Curiosity' 'Art' and 'Ethnography,'" in *Collectors: Individuals and Institutions*, ed. Anthony Shelton (London: The Horniman Museum and Gardens; Coimbra: Museu Antropológico da Universidade, 2001), 111-128.

<sup>32</sup> Edward W. Said, *Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient* (London: Penguin, 1995).

<sup>33</sup> Claire Wintle, *Colonial Collecting and Display: Encounters with Material Culture from the Andaman and Nicobar Islands* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2013), 2.

<sup>34</sup> Lothar von Falkenhausen, "Antiquarianism in East Asia: A Preliminary Overview", in *World Antiquarianism: Comparative Perspectives*, ed. Alain Schnapp (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2013), 35-66; Yun-Chiahn C. Sena, "Ouyang Xiu's Conceptual Collection of Antiquity", in *World Antiquarianism: Comparative Perspectives*, ed. Alain Schnapp (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2013), 212-229; Qianshen Bai, "Antiquarianism in a Time of Crisis: On Collecting Practices of Late-Qing Government Officials, 1861-1911, in *World Antiquarianism: Comparative Perspectives*, ed. Alain Schnapp (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2013), 386-403; Wu Hung, ed., *Reinventing the Past: Archaism and Antiquarianism in Chinese Art and Visual Culture* (Chicago, IL: Center for the Art of East Asia, Dept. of Art History, University of Chicago: Art Media Resources, 2010); Shana J Brown, *Pastimes: From Art and Antiquarianism to Modern Chinese Historiography* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2011).

<sup>35</sup> For example, see Jeannette Shambaugh Elliott and David Shambaugh, *The Odyssey of China's Imperial Art Treasures* (Seattle; London: University of Washington Press, 2007); Patricia Buckley Ebrey, *Accumulating Culture: The Collections of Emperor Huizong* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2008) and Nicole T.C. Chiang, *Emperor Qianlong's Hidden Treasures: Reconsidering the Collection of the Qing Imperial Household* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2019). A rare examination of female collecting in the imperial court is provided by Shen C. Y. Fu, "Princess Sengge Ragi: Collector of Painting and Calligraphy," in *Flowering in the Shadows: Women in the History of Chinese and Japanese Painting*, ed. Marsha Weidner (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1990), 55-80.

recent research has shed further light on the activities of collectors outside the court, such as merchant-collectors Xiang Yuanbian 項元汴 (1525-1590) and Pang Yuanji 龐元濟 (1864-1949).<sup>36</sup> Limited studies on female collectors, often associated with discussion on women artists, female literacy and their relationship with other collectors in their families, have been offered by those like Brown who analyses the collecting practices of Li Qingzhao 李清照 (1084-1151?) and Xue Shaohui 薛紹徽 (1866-1911).<sup>37</sup>

Many of these enlightening works in fact derive much of their material from slightly earlier research published in Chinese. Discussions on Xiang Yuanbian, for example, have benefitted from the works of Li Wankang 李萬康, Yang Lili 楊麗麗, Shen Yongmei 沈紅梅 and Feng Zhiguo 封治國.<sup>38</sup> Apart from these publications on Ming collecting, Chinese researchers based in institutions in the West have drawn our attention to late Qing and Republican collecting – Bai Qianshen researched the collecting activities of late Qing officials, focusing on Wu Dacheng 吳大澂 (1835-1902) whose work on *jinshi xue* has been highly influential, while Lin Yi-Hsin examined the Pan family's collection in Suzhou.<sup>39</sup> Compared to publications on Ming, late Qing and Republican collecting, works on later 20<sup>th</sup> century Chinese collecting are even scarcer. Diyin Lu and Denise Ho's informative works on Shanghai collections and the

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<sup>36</sup> Scarlett Jang, "The Culture of Art Collecting in Imperial China," in *A Companion to Chinese Art*, eds. Martin J. Powers and Katherine R. Tsiang (Chichester, West Sussex, UK: John Wiley & Sons Inc., 2016), 47-72; Amy C. Riggs, "Imperial Treasures in the Hands of a Ming Merchant: Xiang Yuanbian's collection," in *Early Modern Merchants as Collectors*, ed. Christina M. Anderson (London: Routledge, 2019), 83-99; Katharine P. Burnett, *Shaping Chinese Art History: Pang Yuanji and His Painting Collection* (Amherst: Cambria Press, 2020).

<sup>37</sup> Shana J. Brown, "The Women of Liulichang: Female Collectors and Bibliophiles in the Late Qing," in *Material Women, 1750-1950: Consuming Desires and Collecting Practices*, eds. Maureen Daly Goggin and Beth Fowkes Tobin (New York: Routledge, 2016): 279-294.

<sup>38</sup> Li Wankang 李萬康, *Bian Hao Yu Jia Ge: Xiang Yuanbian Jiu Cang Shu Hua Er Shi* 編號與價格: 項元汴舊藏書畫二釋 (Nanjing: Nanjing Da Xue Chubanshe, 2012); Yang Lili 楊麗麗, *Tian Lai Chuan Han: Ming Dai Jia Xing Xiang Yuanbian Jia Zu De Jian Cang Yu Yi Shu* 天籟傳翰: 明代嘉興項元汴家族的鑒藏與藝術 (Taipei: Rock Publishing, 2012); Shen Hongmei 沈紅梅, *Xiang Yuanbian Shu Hua Dian Ji Shou Cang Yan Jiu* 項元汴書畫典籍收藏研究 (Beijing: National Library of China Publishing House, 2012); Feng Zhiguo 封治國, *Yu Gu Tong You: Xiang Yuanbian Shu Hua Jian Cang Yan Jiu* 與古同遊: 項元汴書畫鑒藏研究 (Hangzhou: Zhongguo Meishu Xueyuan Chubanshe, 2013).

<sup>39</sup> Bai Qianshen 白謙慎, *Wan Qing Guan Yuan Shou Cang Huo Dong Yan Jiu: Yi Wu Dacheng Ji Qi You Ren Wei Zhong Xin* 晚清官員收藏活動研究: 以吳大澂及其友人為中心 (Hong Kong: Chung Hwa Book Co., 2020); Lin Yi-Hsin, "The Cultures of Collecting in Late Imperial and Early Republican China: The Pan Family Collection in Suzhou" (PhD diss., SOAS, University of London, 2012).

development of the Shanghai Museum during the tumultuous decades of Maoist reform represent valuable sources on the subject.<sup>40</sup>

In Shanghai, general interest in Chinese art collecting has gained momentum over the past few years, evidenced by the surface of journalistic publications containing short biographical articles on 20<sup>th</sup> century collectors and dealers.<sup>41</sup> The World Chinese Collectors Convention Shanghai, made up of representatives from mostly Shanghai museums and cultural organisations, has arranged several conferences since 2008 to encourage Chinese and overseas collectors, dealers, curators and scholars to discuss topics ranging from historic collections to contemporary collecting practices. Publications associated with these conferences document the biographies of respected collectors and dealers, including 20<sup>th</sup> century Hong Kong collectors and dealers.<sup>42</sup> Although such publications often adopt an anecdotal approach and can be somewhat cavalier when it comes to factual accuracy, they nonetheless provide useful first-hand material such as interviews with collectors and references to archival sources in China which are not always publicly accessible.<sup>43</sup>

A rare methodical investigation into 20<sup>th</sup> century Hong Kong collecting has been offered by the Hong Kong-based art historian Eric Otto Wear. He examined Chinese art collecting and connoisseurship in Hong Kong and Taiwan as contemporary practice at the time of his

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<sup>40</sup> Di Yin Lu, "Seizing Civilization: Antiquities in Shanghai's Custody, 1949-1996" (PhD diss., Harvard University, 2012); Denise Y. Ho, "Reforming Connoisseurship: State and Collectors in Shanghai in the 1950s and 1960s," *Frontiers of History in China* 7, issue 4 (2012): 608-637; Denise Y. Ho, *Curating Revolution: Politics on Display in Mao's China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 211-247.

<sup>41</sup> Zheng Zhong 鄭重, *Hai Shang Shou Cang Shi Jia* 海上收藏世家 (Shanghai: Shanghai Shudian Chubanshe, 2003); Zheng Zhong 鄭重, *Shou Cang Da Jia* 收藏大家 (Shanghai: Shanghai Shudian Chubanshe, 2007); Chen Zhongyuan 陳重遠, *Liulichang Laozhanggui* 琉璃廠老掌櫃 (Beijing: Beijing Chubanshe, 2015).

<sup>42</sup> Publications which document more useful information on Hong Kong collecting include: *The Fourth World Congress of Chinese Collectors Conference Publications 3: Zhonghua Shoucangjia Minglu (Jinxiandai Pian) vol. 1* 第四屆世界華人收藏家大會文獻之三: 中華收藏家名錄(近現代篇)上冊, November 2014 (Shanghai: the World Chinese Collectors Convention Shanghai, 2014); the World Chinese Collectors Convention Shanghai 上海世界華人收藏家大會組委會, ed., *Ming Jia Tan Shou Cang - Wen Hua Pian (Shang)* 名家談收藏 - 文化篇(上) (Shanghai: Dongfang Publishing, 2009); and the World Chinese Collectors Convention Shanghai 上海世界華人收藏家大會組委會, ed., *Ming Jia Tan Shou Cang - Jing Yan Pian (Shang)* 名家談收藏 - 經驗篇(上) (Shanghai: Dongfang Publishing, 2009).

<sup>43</sup> These publications are somewhat riddled with inaccuracies. For example, it was stated by one contributor to the series that E. T. Chow passed away in the mid-1990s, when he had in fact died in 1980; see Shunyuuan Jiang 姜舜源, "Xiang Gang Di Qu Min Jian Shou Cang Jian Lun 香港地區民間收藏簡論", in *Ming Jia Tan Shou Cang - Wen Hua Pian (Shang)* 名家談收藏 - 文化篇(上), (Shanghai: Dongfang Publishing, 2009), 292.

research in the 1990s.<sup>44</sup> He observed patterns of collecting in psychoanalytical and sociological terms, specifically those relating to object relations theory (Christopher Bollas) and situational sociology (Pierre Bourdieu and Loic J. D. Waquant).<sup>45</sup> A succinct version of his findings on Hong Kong collectors, based on personal encounters and interviews with around 30 Hong Kong individuals, was later published as a chapter in an ethnographic study of consumption in Hong Kong.<sup>46</sup> Wear devoted much of his research to unravelling the complex meanings of an imagined 'Chineseness' in Hong Kong collecting, as a way of understanding how collecting was shaped by a concern for local identity and the desire to create 'an indigenous high culture'.<sup>47</sup> The psychoanalytical and sociological methods employed by Wear stem from a large body of existing research related to theories on collecting.

A multiplicity of literatures investigates the history of collecting and examines collecting motivations. These include works by Jean Baudrillard, Werner Muensterberger, Susan Pearce, Susan Stewart, Marjorie Akin, John Forrester and Paul Martin.<sup>48</sup> For example, Pearce's analysis of three modes of collecting – souvenir, fetishistic and systematic collecting – is useful in contextualising the different ways in which collectors approached collecting.<sup>49</sup> For those like Baudrillard and Muensterberger, psychoanalytic perspectives have been adopted to

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<sup>44</sup> Eric Otto Wear, "Patterns in the Collecting and Connoisseurship of Chinese Art in Hong Kong and Taiwan" (DPhil diss., University of Hong Kong, 2000).

<sup>45</sup> Eric Otto Wear, "The Sense of Things: Chinese Art in the Lives of Hong Kong Collectors and Connoisseurs," in *Consuming Hong Kong*, eds. Gordon Mathews and Tai-Lok Lui, (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2001), 174; Christopher Bollas, *The Shadow of the Object* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987); Christopher Bollas, *Being a Character* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1992); Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984); Pierre Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990); Pierre Bourdieu and Loic J. D. Waquant, *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

<sup>46</sup> Wear, "Sense," 173-204.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 173-5.

<sup>48</sup> Jean Baudrillard, "The System of Collecting" in *The Cultures of Collecting*, eds., John Elsner and Roger Cardinal (London: Reaktion Books Limited, 2004); Werner Muensterberger, *Collecting: An Unruly Passion: Psychological Perspectives* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994); Susan Pearce, *Museums, Objects and Collections: A Cultural Study* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1992); Susan Pearce, *Interpreting Objects and Collections* (London; New York: Routledge, 1994); Susan Stewart, "Death and Life, in that order, in the Works of Charles Willson Peale," in *The Cultures of Collecting*, eds., John Elsner and Roger Cardinal (London: Reaktion Books Limited, 2004), 204-223; Marjorie Akin, "Passionate Possession: the Formation of Private Collections" in *Learning from Things: Method and Theory of Material Culture Studies*, ed. David Kingery (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1996), 102-128; John Forrester, "Mille e tre': Freud and Collecting," in *The Cultures of Collecting*, eds., John Elsner and Roger Cardinal (London: Reaktion Books Limited, 2004), 230-232; Paul Martin, *Popular Collecting and the Everyday Self: The Reinvention of Museums?* (London; New York: Leicester University Press, 1999).

<sup>49</sup> Susan Pearce, "Collecting: Shaping the World" in *Museums, Objects and Collections: A Cultural Study* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1992) 68-88.

champion the notion of collecting as a response to 'loss'. However, some scholars have warned against the dangers of psychologism in psychoanalytic approaches to the subject of collecting, as they may ignore social and historical forces when overemphasising the effects of personal pathology.<sup>50</sup>

In addressing wider social forces that affect collecting, Pierre Bourdieu's analysis of art and cultural consumption as a form of cultural capital and social distinction has been highly influential in sociological studies.<sup>51</sup> According to him, taste can be conceived as a form of 'social orientation', 'a sense of one's place', which directs one towards 'the practices or goods' which befit one's social position.<sup>52</sup> Although Bourdieu's understanding of institutions and symbolic activities as expressions of deeper circulations of power, influence and strategy has been condemned for reducing individuals to types, treating them as 'mere carriers of social forces largely beyond their comprehension', his theories remain widely referenced by art historians as it offers a sound framework for understanding social structures that inform art collecting.<sup>53</sup> In response to Bourdieu's conception of a 'field', defined as a network of objective relations between positions which are each objectively defined by its objective relationship with other positions, Arthur Danto praises Bourdieu for putting into place a 'historical science of cultural fields' which enables us to understand questions like 'What is art?'.<sup>54</sup> Danto, whose controversial conception of the 'artworld' has been influential in aesthetic philosophy, believes that since fields are constantly subject to historical change, 'the intentions which can be formed at one stage in their evolution cannot be formed at earlier or later stages', and further states that it is still possible to appreciate the 'greatness' of an artwork independent of its context – there are 'autonomous experiences with art, which does not entail that art itself is autonomous.'<sup>55</sup> Apart from Wear's research which heavily references Bourdieu, broader studies on consumption in Hong Kong have also drawn upon Bourdieu's theories. For example, Annie Hau-nung Chan applies Bourdieu's theories to her investigation of the Hong Kong 'new rich' which emerged as the winners of economic growth

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<sup>50</sup> Ting Chang, "Models of Collecting," *Oxford Art Journal*, 19, no. 2 (1996), 95-97.

<sup>51</sup> Bourdieu, *Distinction*, 6.

<sup>52</sup> Bourdieu, *Distinction*, 466.

<sup>53</sup> Wear, "Patterns," 22; Jang, "Culture," 53.

<sup>54</sup> Arthur C. Danto, "Bourdieu on Art: Field and Individual," in *Bourdieu: A Critical Reader*, ed. Richard Shusterman (Oxford ; Malden, Mass.: Blackwell Publishers, 1999), 216.

<sup>55</sup> Danto, "Bourdieu," 216-7. Also see Arthur C. Danto, "The Artworld," *Journal of Philosophy* LXI (1964): 571-584.

in the postwar period, examining the relationship between class and consumption.<sup>56</sup> Although Chan's limited study only examines a small fraction of the Hong Kong middle class, her findings nonetheless suggest that systematic patterns of consumption can be identified along lines of respondents' social origins and occupational sectors.<sup>57</sup>

In his widely cited book *Superfluous Things: Material Culture and Social Status in Early Modern China*, Clunas considers factors that preconditioned the consumption choices of the Ming elite, and cites Bourdieu in emphasising 'the importance of paying close attention to the precise forms of cultural practice within a given situation'.<sup>58</sup> He further quotes Arjun Appadurai's argument that 'consumption is social, relational and active, rather than private, atomic and passive'.<sup>59</sup> When problematising how British museums have historically framed the subject of Chinese art, Clunas also observes that art is 'a way of categorising, a manner of making knowledge which has been applied to a wider and wider set of manifestations of material culture, paralleling the constant expansion of an "art market" applied to a wider and wider range of commodities. It remains a site of conflicting interpretations, fissured on class and gender lines, among others, and the right to define something as "art" is typically seen as an important attribute of those dominant in society at a given moment'.<sup>60</sup>

Indeed, the expansion of the art market has increasingly become an area of interest in its own right for researchers of collecting, and a review of the current state of research on Chinese art collecting would be incomplete without mentioning studies that survey how the art market and its main players – dealers, auctioneers and collectors – drive and reflect developments in collecting, such as shifting trends and tastes. As mentioned by Mark Wilfred Westgarth in his research on 19<sup>th</sup> century furniture dealers, serious writings on dealers have only appeared infrequently over the past few decades.<sup>61</sup> Publications like *Early Modern Merchants as Collectors* demonstrate recent efforts to consider dealers and merchants in

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<sup>56</sup> Annie Hau-nung Chan, "Middle-class formation and consumption in Hong Kong," in *Consumption in Asia: Lifestyles and identities*, ed. Beng Huat Chua, (London: Routledge, 2000), 98-134.

<sup>57</sup> Chan, "Middle-class," 105 & 127-128.

<sup>58</sup> Craig Clunas, *Superfluous Things: Material Culture and Social Status in Early Modern China* (Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 1991), 2.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 169.

<sup>60</sup> Craig Clunas, "China in Britain: The Imperial Collections," in *Colonialism and the Object: Empire, Material Culture and the Museum*, eds. Tim Barringer and Tom Flynn (London, Routledge, 1998), 44.

<sup>61</sup> Mark Wilfred Westgarth, "The Emergence of the Antique and Curiosity Dealer 1815-c. 1850: The Commodification of Historical Objects," (PhD diss., University of Southampton, 2006), 13.

different cultures as innovators of taste, and as collectors in their own right in addition to being important agents in the trade.<sup>62</sup> Apart from aforementioned studies on the merchant Xiang Yuanbian, accounts such as those offered by Ching-Yi Huang, Peng Ying-chen, Masako Yamamoto Maezaki, Yuriko Kuchiki, Najiba Choudhury and Estelle Niklès van Osselt have enriched our understanding of the role of British, American, Japanese and European dealers in the global collecting of Chinese art in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>63</sup> However, apart from some exceptions such as research on C. T. Loo 盧芹齋 (1880-1957), the importance of Chinese dealers in private and museum collecting both in and outside of China remains little studied, particularly those of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>64</sup>

Provenance Research in relation to Art Market Studies has shed light on the agency of both collectors and dealers in shaping collections. Johannes Gramlich outlines how provenance research developed during the National Socialist period in Europe and the United States, and is now becoming increasingly institutionalised as an area of research focus in academia, particularly in Germany and Switzerland.<sup>65</sup> The research initiative Chinese Art Research into

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<sup>62</sup> In particular, Jang mentions the early emergence of an art market and the rise of art dealers in China from the Tang Dynasty onwards; Jang, "Culture," 60-63.

<sup>63</sup> Ching-Yi Huang, "John Sparks, the Art Dealer and Chinese Art in England, 1902-1936" (PhD diss., SOAS, University of London, 2012); Ying-chen Peng, "Samuel P. Avery (1822-1904) and the Collecting of Asian Ceramics in the Nineteenth-Century United States," in *Acquiring Cultures: Histories of World Art on Western Markets*, eds. Benedicte Savoy, Charlotte Guichard and Christine Howald (Boston; Berlin: De Gruyter, 2018), 73-98; Masako Yamamoto Maezaki, translated by Eddy T. L. Chang, "Innovative Trading Strategies for Japanese Art: Ikeda Seisuke, Yamanaka & Co. and their Overseas Branches (1870s-1930s)," in *Acquiring Cultures: Histories of World Art on Western Markets*, eds. Benedicte Savoy, Charlotte Guichard and Christine Howald (Boston; Berlin: De Gruyter, 2018), 293-313; Yuriko Kuchiki, "The Enemy Trader: The United States and the End of Yamanaka," *Impressions* 34 (2013): 33-53; Najiba Choudhury, "Seizures and Liquidation Sales in the United States during World War II: Tracking the Fate of Japanese Art Dealership, Yamanaka & Company, Inc.," *Journal for Art Market Studies* 4, no. 2 (2020), <https://doi.org/10.23690/jams.v4i2.125>; Estelle Niklès van Osselt and Christiane Perregaux-Loup, *L'aventure Chinoise: Une Famille Suisse à la Conquête du Céleste Empire* (Geneva: Fondation Baur, Musée des arts d'Extrême-Orient, 2017); Estelle Niklès van Osselt, "From Swiss Watches to Chinese Antiques: The Story of the Loup Family," *Arts of Asia* 43, no. 4 (July-August 2013): 76-84.

<sup>64</sup> Yiyu Wang, "The Louvre from China: A Critical Study of C. T. Loo and the Framing of Chinese Art in the United States, 1915-1950" (DPhil diss, Ohio University, 2007); Dorota Chudzicka, "The Dealer and the Museum: C.T. Loo (1880-1957), the Freer Gallery of Art, and the American Asian Art Market in the 1930s and 1940s," in *Kunst Sammeln, Kunst Handeln: Beiträge des Internationalen Symposiums in Wien*, eds. Eva Blimlinger and Monika Mayer (Vienna: Böhlau Verlag Wien, 2012), 243-254; Géraldine Lenain, *Lu Qinzhai Zhuan 盧芹齋傳*, trans. Wanyu Bian (Beijing: Zhongguo wen lian chu ban she, 2015); Daisy Yiyu Wang, "C.T. Loo and the Formation of the Chinese Collection at the Freer Gallery of Art, 1915-1951," in *Collectors, Collections & Collecting the Arts of China: Histories & Challenges*, eds. Jason Steuber and Guolong Lai (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2014), 151-182.

<sup>65</sup> Johannes Gramlich, "Reflections on Provenance Research: Values – Politics – Art Markets," *Journal for Art Market Studies* 1, no. 2 (2017), <https://doi.org/10.23690/jams.v1i2.15>. In relation to Chinese art, see for example Esther Tisa Francini and Alexandra von Przychowski, "Provenance Research into the Collection of Chinese Art at the Museum Rietberg: Switzerland and the Transnational History of the Art Market and Art

Provenance (CARP), which is ambitiously building a database of Chinese art dealers and collectors of the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century based on the Burrell Collection in Glasgow, and recent publications like *Collecting and Provenance: A Multidisciplinary Approach*, with essays from scholars and museum practitioners mostly based in Europe and America, demonstrate this recent interest in provenance.<sup>66</sup> Apart from a number of studies on the provenance of Chinese art collections, other less scholarly works documenting lists of Chinese art collectors and dealers or surveying the global development of the Chinese art market (often substantiated by lists of market prices) have also proven useful for research on Chinese art collecting in providing data unavailable elsewhere.<sup>67</sup>

## Aims, Methodology and Sources

Considering the abovementioned areas of research on Hong Kong History and Collecting Studies, the present thesis not only offers more Chinese, specifically Hong Kong Chinese, perspectives to collecting studies which contributes to redressing the imbalance between research on Western collectors of Chinese art and Chinese (including Hong Kong) collectors of Chinese art; it also bridges a gap between research on late Qing to Republican collecting in China and contemporary Hong Kong collecting since the 1990s, and sheds further light on the role of dealers as well as collectors in the shaping of collections. In contrast to orthodox colonial discourse which views collecting primarily as a means of asserting imperialist power and ideas of empire, this thesis demonstrates that Chinese art collecting took on pluralistic forms which sometimes served the interests of Chinese people, as well as those of the colonial powers. Rather than being merely a passive repository of Chinese art during periods of political turmoil in China, Hong Kong actively sought to collect, study and promote the subject through various avenues, avenues which were private or public, scholarly or commercial. This throws into question the extent to which Hong Kong individuals appropriated Western modes

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Collections," *Journal for Art Market Studies, Forum Kunst und Markt* 2, no. 3 (2018), <https://doaj.org/article/cdff2d4af5c84448a74838814788ba41>.

<sup>66</sup> Nick Pearce, "'CARP-ON': Further Thoughts on Chinese Art Provenance Research," in *Collectors, Collections & Collecting the Arts of China: Histories & Challenges*, eds. Jason Steuber and Guolong Lai (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2014), 295-312; Jane Milosch and Nick Pearce, eds., *Collecting and Provenance: A Multidisciplinary Approach* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2019).

<sup>67</sup> Audrey Wang, *Chinese Antiquities: An Introduction to the Art Market* (Farnham: Lund Humphries, 2012); Roy Davids and Dominic Jellinek, *Provenance: Collectors, Dealers & Scholars in the Field of Chinese Ceramics in Britain & America* (Great Haseley: Roy Davids, 2011).

of collecting, and/or followed the lineage of traditional Chinese literati ways of collecting and promoting the act of collecting, in a city where people from diverse cultural and social backgrounds congregated.

Furthermore, by revealing how Hong Kong collectors and dealers played pivotal roles in forming and shaping private and institutional collections simultaneously, the case studies presented here offer new examples to studies on collecting which underline the intertwined and complex relationships between collectors, museums and the art market, all of them collaborators in the formation of collecting categories and the shaping of taste. While this study draws reference to some psychoanalytic theories on collecting, it does not adhere to a psychoanalytic framework, but rather prefers to examine the wider political, socio-economic and cultural factors in addition to personal circumstances which motivated collectors. Bourdieu's approach in considering art as a kind of cultural capital, a tool that represents social positioning and enhances social status, is thus adopted here to examine how tastes for certain categories of Chinese art were developed by a specific group of collectors, dealers, curators and scholars who exerted their influence in private collecting circles, museums and the art market.

To do so, the following thesis presents the case studies of four collectors who combine to represent the history of collecting Chinese art in Hong Kong between 1949 and 1997. This research has two key aims: firstly, to show how the political, economic, and socio-cultural environment of Hong Kong – closely positioned next to China and its sources of Chinese art, with a free market for the art trade and the settlement of a large number of collectors and dealers from different backgrounds, at a time when the British colonial government supported the growth of new museums and cultural institutions – enabled each individual collector to collect and shaped their collecting; and secondly, to examine how each individual in turn contributed to the multicultural collecting environment in Hong Kong, as seen through their involvement in the development of private collections, museum collections, Chinese art scholarship and art market trends.

To achieve the above aims, four specific collectors form the basis of this thesis, each selected to represent a particular cultural background, social group, mode of collecting and type of material collected. Although they cannot represent all types of Hong Kong collectors, the intention of this thesis is to provide a characterisation of Hong Kong collecting through an

investigation of these individuals' collecting biographies – examining their background, networks, motivations, sources, practices and methods with a view to demonstrate how collecting flourished in very different ways under a multicultural environment – rather than offering an encyclopaedic survey on the subject which would lack depth of analysis.<sup>68</sup> Through reconstructing the biographies of these four individuals, this thesis enables the portrayal of Hong Kong as a site of encounter and exchange where individuals with different backgrounds and motivations could co-exist while building private and institutional collections. Instead of making sweeping generalisations and presenting Hong Kong collectors as a homogenous group, these four case studies combine to be a sample group representative of the diverse range of Hong Kong collectors active at the time. As such, the different ways in which collecting activities took place in this specific geographical region can be investigated, and some defining characteristics of collecting unique to this location and time period may be identified.

During the process of selecting these main collectors, much time and effort was dedicated to surveying vast numbers of Chinese art collectors in Hong Kong as there is no pre-existing data set of this kind which has been published, and a comprehensive list was created to document key information on each individual, including their basic backgrounds and biographical information, what they collected, and how they studied, promoted, donated, bought or sold their collections. The total number of individuals examined amounted to over two hundred. This useful exercise gave a good overview of the main collectors who were active in Hong Kong, and from this it was possible to narrow down representative examples for this research. Apart from considering what combination of collectors could give a more realistic portrayal of the diversity of collecting in the city, the availability of sources was also an important determining factor in this selection. The following four collectors were chosen as a result of these considerations.

Edward T. Chow 仇焱之 (1910-1980) represents a group of dealers and collectors who migrated from Shanghai to Hong Kong, bringing with them Chinese art collections as well as knowledge and expertise in the subject accumulated from the vibrant Shanghai art scene

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<sup>68</sup> By focusing on four in-depth studies, the methodology adopted in this thesis is decidedly different from Wear's research on Hong Kong collecting in the 1990s, which is presented as summarised observations based on his interviews and interactions with around 30 collectors.

from the 1920s to early 1940s. In Hong Kong they fashioned themselves into tastemakers who inspired other collectors; in Chow's case, he helped to draw more attention to early Ming Dynasty (mostly dating to the 15<sup>th</sup> century) blue and white and Chenghua period (1465-1487) *doucai* 鬥彩 porcelain. Other notable Shanghai collectors include banker J. M. Hu 胡惠春 (1911-1995) and shipping tycoon T. Y. Chao 趙從衍 (1912-1999), but Chow was prioritised here as more material was available from the Chow private archive. Additionally, his case study offers the added dimension of trading as well as collecting Chinese art, representing not only Shanghai collectors, but also dealers such as T. Y. King 金從怡 (1904-?), P. C. Lu (n. d.) and Robert Chang 張宗憲 (1927-).

In contrast to the Shanghai group, Dr Ip Yee 葉義 (1919-1984) was chosen as an example of a Cantonese collector born and raised in Hong Kong. Other local collectors with roots in the Cantonese region include J. S. Lee 利榮森 (1915-2007), founder of the Art Museum at the Chinese University of Hong Kong and co-founder of the Min Chiu Society.<sup>69</sup> Lee's collection of Chinese painting and calligraphy under the family hall name Bei Shan Tang 北山堂 (the Hall of North Mountain) is often cited as one of the most important collections in Hong Kong museums.<sup>70</sup> However, Ip stood out as a better candidate for this study as he also represents a new group of Western-educated middle-class professionals, who took a scholarly interest in Chinese art and supported promotion of the subject through engagement with museums and collecting societies, building their private collections while assisting the expansion of museum collections. Drs Philip Wen-Chee Mao 毛文奇 (1915-2004), Adrian Joseph (?-2010), S. Y. Kwan (or Kwan Siu-Yee) 關肇頤 (1912-2013), P. P. Chiu 趙不波 (n. d.), Hu Shih-chang 胡世昌 (1924-2006), Leo K. K. Wong 黃貴權 (1932-), S. Y. Yip 葉承耀 (1933-) and S. C. Tso 曹紹釗 (n. d.) are some of the other Hong Kong doctor-collectors active during this period. As a private collector, leader of collector groups and adviser to museums, Ip was an authoritative figure who was able to use his influence to establish the category of Chinese bamboo carving. A discussion of his collecting activities enables us to understand how a category of Chinese art can be invented, promoted and institutionalised in Hong Kong through exhibitions,

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<sup>69</sup> The history of these two organisations will be provided in the following chapter.

<sup>70</sup> For a summary of J. S. Lee's contributions to the Chinese art field in Hong Kong, see Peter Y. K. Lam, "The Bei Shan Tang Legacy," in *The Bei Shan Tang Legacy: Gifts of Chinese Art* 北山汲古：利氏北山堂捐贈中國文物, ed. Peter Y. K. Lam (Hong Kong: Art Museum, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, 2009), 12-15.

scholarly publications and developments in the art market. Other collectors who similarly made use of opportunities in Hong Kong to define new categories art include the businessman K. S. Lo 羅桂祥 (1910-1995), whose collecting activities and commitment to promoting the subject through scholarly exhibitions and publications were key to drawing more attention to the category of Yixing pottery.<sup>71</sup>

Since painting and calligraphy form a major part of Chinese art collected in Hong Kong (it is often argued by collectors that this is *the* most important category according to the traditional hierarchy of art forms in China), it was necessary to choose a representative collector of this art medium in order to ensure that the range of Chinese art covered in this thesis is as comprehensive as possible in representing the popular categories collected in Hong Kong. Aside from J. S. Lee, other notable collectors of painting and calligraphy who also offered generous support to public art institutions in Hong Kong include Ho Lu-kwong 何耀光 (1907-2006), owner of Chih Lo Lou 至樂樓, and Low Chuck-Tiew 劉作籌 (1911-1993), owner of Xubaizhai 虛白齋. As a Singaporean Chinese, Low Chuck-Tiew's story seemed to be a better choice for the purposes of this study, as he also represents the perspectives of the Cantonese diasporic community in Southeast Asia. He was one of many collectors who held a nationalistic view towards preserving Chinese art within Chinese communities, and was driven by a sense of civic responsibility to donate to institutions. Other notable collectors who shared this similar background and commitment to sharing their private collections to the public include K. S. Lo, who spent many of his childhood and adolescent years in Malaya before moving to Hong Kong, and who later donated his collection of Chinese tea ware to the Hong Kong Museum of Art, which now forms the core of the collection at the Flagstaff House Museum of Tea Ware.

Finally, T. T. Tsui 徐展堂 (1941-2010) exemplifies how newly wealthy, self-made businessmen used their fortune to build collections of Chinese art in Hong Kong. He also represents a group of Hong Kong collectors who became important patrons of Chinese art institutions worldwide between the 1980s and 1990s. While other collectors like Sir Joseph Hotung 何鴻卿 (1930-) also demonstrated such philanthropic efforts, Tsui's activities had a wider international reach,

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<sup>71</sup> Terese Tse Bartholomew, "New Research on Yixing Ware," in *The Bei Shan Tang Legacy: Yixing Zisha Stoneware* 北山汲古：宜興紫砂, eds. Lai Suk Yee and Terese Tse Bartholomew (Hong Kong: Art Museum, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, 2009), 55.

hence examination of his biography allows us to reveal more clearly how these efforts were underlined by concerns over expanding business opportunities, diplomatic networks and ambivalent attitudes towards the imminent handover of Hong Kong from Britain to China. Compared to Chow, Ip and Low – who contributed to shaping or consolidating collecting fashions for Ming porcelain, bamboo carving and Ming and Qing painting and calligraphy respectively – Tsui's taste in collecting was more conventional, representing many Hong Kong collectors who followed widely accepted norms and connoisseurship standards in collecting. However, Tsui's construction of a private museum was a pioneering practice in Hong Kong, a practice that has continued to the 21<sup>st</sup> century as exemplified by the founding of the Liangyi Museum and the Sun Museum.

It is worth noting that Ip is the only one out of these four collectors who was born and raised in Hong Kong; the combination of these four collectors aptly reflects the multicultural nature of Hong Kong's migrant society in which people from different places encountered each other and exchanged their views on Chinese art. It was decided that four case studies could offer multiple angles on the subject without being overwhelming, and is the maximum quantity that can be addressed within the limited scope of this thesis to represent the wide-ranging approaches to collecting Chinese art in Hong Kong during this set period, enabling characterisation of the phenomenon of Hong Kong collecting.

The time frame of this research was originally set within the broader scope of the entire 20<sup>th</sup> century, but as research progressed, it became obvious that a more targeted period of 1949 to 1997 was more suitable for a meaningful discussion of these four collectors. The years 1949 and 1997 both signify milestones in Chinese and Hong Kong history. After the People's Republic of China was proclaimed on 1 October 1949, the heightened sense of separation between Communist mainland China and capitalist British colonial Hong Kong gradually led to the development of a more distinctive Hong Kong culture and identity. Chow and Tsui both fled China to settle in Hong Kong between 1949 and 1950, during the same period when Ip returned to Hong Kong after completing his studies in the United Kingdom and Low moved to Hong Kong from Singapore to work in the banking business. The story of our collectors hence truly begins from 1949 onwards when all four collectors moved or returned to Hong Kong and started or developed their collections. Chow passed away in 1980, followed by Ip in 1984, Low in 1993 and Tsui in 2010. Their stories end with the last donations of Tsui in the 1990s, when

many other Hong Kong collectors reconsidered the future of their collections in the lead-up to the handover of Hong Kong from Britain to China in 1997, terminating 150 years of British rule.

‘Chinese art’ discussed in this thesis refers to the category broadly understood by Hong Kong collectors of this period as objects representing the cultural past of China, which included what they labelled as ‘Chinese fine art’, ‘Chinese antiquities’, ‘Chinese antiques’ and ‘Chinese painting and calligraphy’, covering items ranging from Neolithic (ca. 7000-1700 BC) jades and ancient bronzes to early 20<sup>th</sup> century modern painting and calligraphy. In doing so, this thesis explores how Hong Kong collectors’ imaginations of the category expanded to cover more subcategories that they formed and promoted, such as early Ming blue and white porcelain and bamboo carving.

The findings of this research are derived from a vast range of primary sources. Much of this material, in its raw form, has never been reviewed before and is anecdotal, thus extensive fact-checking and cross-referencing had to be conducted to ensure that the observations made from these sources are accurate.<sup>72</sup> These sources include archival records, old newspapers and personal memoirs in both Chinese and English, particularly those in the Archive of the Public Records Office of Hong Kong (including the Carl Smith index card record documenting information on notable Hong Kong residents), the private Chow Archive handled by Edward Chow’s family in Switzerland, the Victoria and Albert Museum Archive in London, the Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery Archives in Washington D.C., the SOAS Archives in London and the National Archives in Kew.

Other than this, it is significant to note that art historian Jenny So and cultural sociologist Ling-Yun Tang initiated a research project to document the ‘global phenomenon’ of collecting Chinese art in Hong Kong to reveal the importance of Hong Kong collectors in the globalisation of Chinese art.<sup>73</sup> Between 2011 and 2014, they recorded interviews with active collectors, dealers and advisers in the field, and their work culminated in the workshop ‘Collecting

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<sup>72</sup> The few scholarly works on the topic also struggle to comprehensively and accurately document details related to the huge number of active collectors in Hong Kong during this period. For example, Wear mentions that Tsui’s collection was auctioned at Christie’s New York in 1997, neglecting the fact that they were actually sold in four parts at Christie’s Hong Kong and Christie’s New York in 1996-1997; see Wear, “Sense,” 203.

<sup>73</sup> The project entitled ‘Collecting Chinese Art in Hong Kong – A Global Phenomenon’ was funded by the Research Grants Council of Hong Kong.

Chinese Art in Hong Kong: A Global Phenomenon' presented by the Chinese University of Hong Kong at the Asia Society in Hong Kong in April 2013 as well as papers presented at other conferences.<sup>74</sup> While the current thesis concentrates on the stories of four deceased collectors, thus providing an analysis with the benefit of historical hindsight, So and Tang's approach resembles Wear's in understanding contemporary Hong Kong collecting through conversations with individuals still active in the field. Despite the different methodological approaches, information from these interviews is of great value to the present research. Although the findings of their project have not yet been critically analysed or published, it is fortunate that So and Tang generously shared transcripts of their interviews with the current author so that the present thesis can utilise these oral histories to better illustrate the wider story of Hong Kong collecting.

New interviews in Cantonese and English have also been conducted to document the oral history of individuals and provide unrecorded perspectives on the subject; collectors' family members and acquaintances as well as associated dealers, curators and auction house specialists were targeted.<sup>75</sup> Auction and dealers' catalogues featuring objects purchased or sold by Hong Kong collectors have been surveyed to obtain associated provenance information and market prices. Exhibition catalogues and related scholarly publications compiled by collecting societies and museums, most notably the Min Chiu Society, the Oriental Ceramic Society of Hong Kong, the Hong Kong Museum of Art, the University Museum and Art Gallery at the University of Hong Kong and the Art Museum at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, have also been studied to understand collectors' roles in presenting their collections and scholarly work to the public. In addition to these, several publications and articles surveying the history of collecting clubs or groups in Hong Kong, such as those coinciding with the anniversaries of the Min Chiu Society and the Oriental Ceramic Society of Hong Kong, provide useful, albeit somewhat celebratory, overviews on the activities of key society members and the development of connoisseurship circles in Hong Kong. These include Peter Lam's summary of the development of the Min Chiu Society and Tina Pang's article

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<sup>74</sup> For example, their paper "Collecting Chinese Art in Hong Kong – A Global Phenomenon" was presented at the 8<sup>th</sup> International Conference on the Arts in Society organised by the Arts in Society, held at Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest, Hungary, 24-26 June, 2013.

<sup>75</sup> In particular Franklin Chow and Antony du Boulay for the chapter on Chow, Dr Kenneth Mao and Brian McElney for the chapter on Dr Ip, Hui Lai Ping for the chapter on Low, and Rose Kerr, Andrew Lai and Elegant Wong for the chapter on Tsui.

reviewing the history of the Oriental Ceramic Society of Hong Kong, both of which provide some valuable biographical information on select collectors.<sup>76</sup>

In light of the aims of this research, the following chapter outlines the historical specificity of Hong Kong which enabled its collections of Chinese art to come into being in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, offering a contextual overview of the key institutions and networks in place before we examine our four case studies.

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<sup>76</sup> Peter Y. K. Lam, "Min Chiu Society: The First Fifty Years," in *The Grandeur of Chinese Art Treasures: Min Chiu Society Golden Jubilee Exhibition* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong Leisure and Cultural services Department, 2010), 35-57; Tina Yee-wan Pang, "A Passion for Collecting: The Oriental Ceramic Society of Hong Kong," *Orientalisms* 43, no. 1 (January/February 2012): 50-54.

## Chapter Two: Developing Collections, Museums and the Art Market in Hong Kong

To enable better understanding of the four collectors, this chapter outlines Hong Kong's historical, political, economic and socio-cultural circumstances throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century which informed collecting activities in the city, and identifies some key stakeholders and participants in collector groups, museums and the art market which made up what might be called 'Chinese art circles', or 'the Chinese art field' at the time. Observations on how collectors continued traditional Chinese collecting methods while appropriating foreign, mostly British, ways of collecting is also mentioned so as to understand their approaches to collecting. In doing so, this discussion does not attempt to label each collecting activity as exclusively Chinese or British in tradition – an exercise which would not only distract from the main themes of this thesis but also be impossible to achieve, considering the difficulties in defining absolute culturally-specific collecting behaviour – but instead draws comparison to general Chinese or British collecting patterns to demonstrate how Hong Kong was a site of encounter and exchange where art collecting took on diverse and multicultural forms, informed by the rise of a Hong Kong identity which became more distinct towards the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

To begin with, it is important to understand the wider environment for Hong Kong collecting between 1949 and 1997 in light of events on the other side of the border in China. Episodes of political upheaval unfolded under the leadership of Chairman Mao Zedong (1893-1976) from the 1950s to the 1970s, epitomised by the Anti-Rightist Campaign in 1957, the Great Leap Forward in 1958 and the Cultural Revolution from 1966 to 1976. During this period, Hong Kong experienced a relatively peaceful time when many of its art and cultural institutions were formed, only briefly interrupted by riots caused by the 1966 Star Ferry Movements and 1967 labour disputes.<sup>77</sup> Faced with persecution in China, art collectors, capitalists and intellectuals who did not conform to Chinese communist revolutionary rhetoric flocked to

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<sup>77</sup> These disputes escalated into strikes and demonstrations against British colonial rule, with clashes between pro-communist protestors and the Hong Kong Police Force. For further discussion on the 1967 riots which have gained more academic attention in recent years, see Robert Bickers and Ray Yep, *May Days in Hong Kong: Riot and Emergency in 1967* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2009).

Hong Kong in great numbers in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. The vibrant Hong Kong art market in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century owes its success to the contribution of these migrants, particularly those from Shanghai and Guangdong, and in many ways mimicked earlier art markets in Beijing and Shanghai pre-1949.

## The Art Trade in Beijing, Shanghai and Canton

In the Republican period, Beijing and Shanghai were the two principal cities for the trading of Chinese art. In Beijing, the opening of the Forbidden City as the new Palace Museum in 1925 exposed previously unseen collections of the Qing imperial court to the public, offering visitors an understanding of China's artistic pasts as seen through the eyes of the emperors. The imperial collections fascinated Chinese art connoisseurs and shaped many of their tastes and collecting preferences, while they were able to acquire items from these collections which had been leaking onto the market for years before the museum opened. Many such items were available to purchase in Liulichang 琉璃廠, which was the centre of the Beijing art market during this period.<sup>78</sup> Shanghai had become an affluent economic hub since being opened up as a treaty port during the signing of the Nanking Treaty in 1842. By 1924, over sixty-eight antique trading companies were registered in Shanghai's Huangpu district.<sup>79</sup> From antique street markets to the establishment of the first indoor antique shops in 1921, there were up to around 200 antique shops at the height of the Shanghai market in the mid-1930s.<sup>80</sup> Non-Chinese dealers who roamed the Beijing and Shanghai markets during this time included London dealers Bluett & Sons and John Sparks, and Japanese dealers Yamanaka and Mayuyama. The unpublished autobiography of Peter Boode (1887-1972), a Dutch dealer-collector active in Shanghai at this time, provides insight into Shanghai's antiques market,

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<sup>78</sup> For a succinct summary of first-hand accounts on late 19<sup>th</sup>-early 20<sup>th</sup> century dealers shops in Peking and Shanghai from a foreigners' perspective, see Michael St. Clair, *The Great Chinese Art Transfer: How So Much of China's Art Came to America* (Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2016), 51-68; for a detailed discussion on the Peking art market, specifically the dynamics between international dealers and buyers in the Liulichang area between 1911 and 1945, see Di Yin Lu, "Collecting China: Buying a Civilization in the Chinese Art Market, 1911-1945," accessed 8 January 2017, [http://www.antique-chinese-furniture.com/blog/wp-content/uploads/2008/11/china-1911-to-1945-antiques-market\\_xdluwzm9.pdf](http://www.antique-chinese-furniture.com/blog/wp-content/uploads/2008/11/china-1911-to-1945-antiques-market_xdluwzm9.pdf); for discussion on the strong presence of female collectors and intellectuals in Liulichang during the late Qing period, see Brown, "Women," 279-294.

<sup>79</sup> Notably on Hankow Road, Canton Road, Honan Road, Niuzhuang Road and Jiangxi Zhong Road where the former Tea Shop housed dealers' stalls; see Huang, "John Sparks."

<sup>80</sup> Zheng Zhong, *Hai Shang*, 446.

although he tends to slightly idealise this era, lamenting about ‘the bygone days of pre-Communist China’.<sup>81</sup> He depicts a ‘golden age’ for purchasing Chinese art, when restrictions at customs were relatively loose and many objects became available on the market due to three main factors:<sup>82</sup>

Firstly, items from the Forbidden City became available to purchase on the market through various avenues. Emperor Xuantong, Pu Yi 溥儀 (1906-1967), and eunuchs in his court needed to raise funds after the fall of the Qing Dynasty (1644-1912); the court of Pu Yi borrowed money from the Yien Yieh Commercial Bank 鹽業銀行 at least five times in 1924, and items from the Qing court collection were sometimes pledged for loans and eventually sold when these loans went unpaid.<sup>83</sup> The official inventory of porcelain in the imperial court, *Qinggong Ciqi Dangan Quanji* (Complete Records of Porcelain in the Qing Court) 清宮瓷器檔案全集, contains seventeen records of porcelain being removed from the court in 1923-1924 and one record of Puyi himself taking out twenty-five items in 1921.<sup>84</sup> Eunuchs and officials of the imperial household allegedly ran antique shops in the Qianmen district where they sold imperial porcelains.<sup>85</sup> Furthermore, theft from the palace was not unknown. The *Qinggong Ciqi Dangan Quanji* also records an incident in which three thieves broke into the imperial porcelain store in 1908 and stole sixty-eight pieces of porcelain which were subsequently sold on to various individuals in the market.<sup>86</sup>

Secondly, excavations, both professional and amateur ones, led to the discovery of items like early bronzes and ceramics. Boode records how ‘up-country folk’ unearthed vessels while digging the fields or even moving old graves; still covered with clay, these goods were brought to dealers in Shanghai where they could be exchanged for cash.<sup>87</sup> Although Boode suggests that these ‘excavations’ were never conducted systematically, dealers like C. T. Loo and T. Y. King sent runners to search the provinces, and these were probably conducted in more

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<sup>81</sup> Peter Boode, “A Chinese Antique Dealer Remembers” Manuscript Memoir, 1967, SOAS Archive, University of London, London.

<sup>82</sup> Boode, “Chinese Antique Dealer,” 67, SOAS Archive.

<sup>83</sup> Huang, “John Sparks” 182-83.

<sup>84</sup> Yuan Tie and Guorong Li, eds., *Qinggong Ciqi Dangan Quanji: Dangan Tiyao 2* 清宮瓷器檔案全集: 檔案提要二 (Beijing: Zhongguo Huabu Chubanshe, 2008), 878–80.

<sup>85</sup> Shambaugh Elliott and Shambaugh, *The Odyssey*, 61.

<sup>86</sup> Yuan Tie and Guorong Li, eds., *Qinggong Ciqi Dangan Quanji: Juan 49* 清宮瓷器檔案全集: 卷四十九 (Beijing: Zhongguo Huabu Chubanshe, 2008), 129-31.

<sup>87</sup> Boode, “Chinese Antique Dealer,” 3-4, SOAS Archive.

organised ways.<sup>88</sup> The Academia Sinica, founded in 1928, also led excavations during this time; Shang period (c. 1600-1040 BC) tombs near Anyang in the early 1930s were probably raided before and even during the excavation, resulting in items from these tombs being sold on the market.<sup>89</sup>

Thirdly, with the Qing dynasty overthrown and the demise of old aristocratic families, many private heirlooms were disposed of, epitomised by Yamanaka's sale of the collection of Prince Gong 恭親王 (1833-1898) in 1912.<sup>90</sup> With incessant fighting between warlords in North China, the wealthy liquidated their assets in order to raise money and move their families away from areas of conflict.

While Shanghai developed as a trading centre for Chinese art, a new generation of artists in the region produced work of a new modern style to cater for a sizeable group of merchant patrons and scholarly elites from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century onwards. These masters of the Shanghai School of Painting, known as Haipai 海派, included artists like Zhang Daqian 張大千 (1899-1983) whose work was later highly sought after by Hong Kong collectors. Although rooted in traditional ink painting, the new style adopted modern subjects and Western techniques which added bold and innovative elements to the group's *oeuvre*. Many new artistic institutions were set up, and the publishing industry also expanded to circulate image reproductions of artworks which were in high demand.<sup>91</sup> A number of Shanghai artists visited Singapore during the Republic period, where a sizeable Chinese community was interested in purchasing their work. Many of these Haipai artists' painting and calligraphy works later became desirable collectible items in Hong Kong.

Apart from the Beijing and Shanghai art markets, the development of Canton throughout the 18<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> centuries is also crucial to our understanding of Hong Kong's collecting scene. As the only Chinese port open to foreign trade from 1759 to 1842, Canton had a thriving community of cosmopolitan artists during the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century which catered

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<sup>88</sup> Boode, "Chinese Antique Dealer," 56, SOAS Archive; Davids and Jellinek, *Provenance*, 15.

<sup>89</sup> Stacey Pierson, "How the British Fell for Chinese Art," *Apollo*, 18 November 2017, <https://www.apollo-magazine.com/how-the-british-fell-for-chinese-art/>.

<sup>90</sup> Thomas Lawton, "Yamanaka Sadajirô: Advocate for Asian Art," *Orientalism*, January 1995, 85-86; Maezaki, "Innovative Trading Strategies," 306.

<sup>91</sup> An insightful account of the modern art world of Republican Shanghai viewed through a discussion of *guohua*, national painting, is provided by Pedith Chan, *The Making of a Modern Art World: Institutionalisation and Legitimation of Guohua in Republican Shanghai* (Leiden: Brill, 2017).

for a mostly Western clientele. They produced many China Trade artworks including those which are now preserved in Hong Kong collections. These artists operated through the Hong merchants, who formed an exclusive guild in the port city and dominated overseas trade.<sup>92</sup> When Western powers were later granted access to trade in Shanghai, obtaining concessions in Tianjin and legations in Peking as a result of the two Opium Wars of 1839-1842 and 1856-1860, the Canton monopoly ceased to exist. Hong Kong island became a British colony in 1842, expanding to include the Kowloon Peninsula in 1860 and the New Territories in 1898. A large number of Hong Kong art dealers inherited or adopted their business methods from dealers in Canton, many of whom relocated to the British colony during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Guangzhou was also particularly important to the development of Hong Kong artistic groups and organisations. Before the 1930s, Chinese painting and calligraphy connoisseurship in Canton, Macau and Hong Kong was led by scholars of the late Qing centred in Guangzhou; while the period between the 1911 Xinhai Revolution and the 1919 May Fourth Movement saw the rise of new societal modes and modern ways of thinking, old forms of literati gatherings were replaced by organised cultural societies such as the Guangdong Society for National Paintings 國畫研究會 set up in Guangzhou in 1925.<sup>93</sup> In the mid-1920s, members of the wealthy Mok and Lee families in Hong Kong briefly hosted a poetry society named Beishan Shishe 北山詩社 in one of the former tai-pan 大班 (businessmen leading large trading houses) residences which was bought by Lee Hysan 利希慎 (1879-1928).<sup>94</sup> This house was named Bei Shan Tang, which later hosted regular meetings of the Hong Kong branch of the Guangdong Nanshe 廣東南社 and also held exhibitions for the Hong Kong branch of the Guangdong Society for National Paintings.<sup>95</sup> Artistic and literary groups like these flourished for a brief period while many artists escaped political upheaval and sought refuge in Hong Kong, until their activities were terminated by the Japanese invasion of Hong Kong in 1941.<sup>96</sup> Historians

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<sup>92</sup> One of the few artists who were allowed to conduct business directly with foreigners without going through the Hong merchants was Chitqua (ca. 1728-1796). His work became fashionable in London when he worked there for a few years in his career.

<sup>93</sup> Cheung, *Xiang Gang Shu Hua*, 13.

<sup>94</sup> Lam, "Bei Shan Tang," 11.

<sup>95</sup> Lee Hysan's hall name was later inherited by his fourth son J. S. Lee. See Lam, "Bei Shan Tang," 12.

<sup>96</sup> Cheung, *Xiang Gang Shu Hua*, 13.

like May Bo Ching consider the triangular network between Hong Kong, Shanghai and Guangzhou in generating a vigorous cultural industry in the 1920s and 1930s:

*Guangzhou and the Pearl River Delta hinterland exported commercial talents with their inheritance of the long-term practices of Sino-foreign trade; Shanghai congregated human and material resources from all over the country with its advantageous geographical position and treaty port status; and Hong Kong served as an occasional and ultimately more secure haven against the political turmoil occurring in the mainland.*<sup>97</sup>

Very few Chinese art collections which existed in Hong Kong before 1955 are well-recorded. Among those are the collections of some of the wealthiest Hong Kong entrepreneurs – British-Indian businessman Sir Catchick Paul Chater (1846-1926), Eurasian businessman Sir Robert Hotung 何東 (1862-1956) and Cantonese businessman Mok Kon Seng 莫幹生 (1882-1958). Chater and Hotung’s collections, mostly consisting of 18<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> century China Trade oil paintings and watercolours depicting Canton produced by both Chinese and Western artists, were some of the earliest donations made to the Hong Kong government, which later formed the basis of the Hong Kong Museum of Art’s collection of China Trade Art.<sup>98</sup> Mok Kon Seng was the grandson of Mok See Yeung 莫仕揚 (1820-1879), the first comprador of the British firm Butterfield & Swire (Taikoo). Mok Kon Seng’s collection included imperial Qing porcelains, later exhibited at the Art Museum of the Chinese University of Hong Kong.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> May Bo Ching, “Where Guangdong Meets Shanghai: Hong Kong Culture in a Trans-regional Context,” in *Hong Kong Mobile: Making a Global Population*, eds. Helen F. Siu and Agnes S. Ku (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2008), 47.

<sup>98</sup> Chater’s collection of historical pictures and ceramics were donated in 1926. Out of the 400 historical pictures, less than a quarter of the paintings and none of the ceramics survived the war. J. S. Lee later collected two of the lost Chater paintings and donated them to the museum in 1963. Hotung’s collection of more than 80 China Trade paintings, which included works by George Chinnery (1774-1852), were donated in 1955. See Hilda W. M. Mak, “Nurturing Tradition and Heritage: Sixty Years of Friendship between the Hong Kong Museum of Art and the Min Chiu Society,” in *Honouring Tradition and Heritage: Min Chiu Society at Sixty* (Hong Kong: Min Chiu Society, 2020), 102-105.

<sup>99</sup> Christopher Mok, ed., *Timeless Legacy: the Mok Family Collections 澄懷古今：莫家三代珍藏* (Hong Kong: Art Museum, Chinese University of Hong Kong, 2009).

## Elegant Gatherings and the Hong Kong Antiques Market

According to the *Annual Report on Hong Kong for the Year 1949*, 'At the time of the fall of Shanghai in May and later in October when the Communist capture of Canton was imminent the number of Chinese flocking into the Colony reached at times over 10,000 in one week'.<sup>100</sup> *Colonial Reports Hong Kong 1950* records that 'The population estimate of 2,360,000 in May 1950 is the highest figure ever given for population in the history of the Colony'.<sup>101</sup> Many painters, calligraphers, scholars and art collectors fled to Hong Kong. Local art historian Peter Lam purports that Hong Kong became 'a mirror image' of Shanghai, as capitalists and entrepreneurs brought new impetus to its economy while art connoisseurs raised the level of collecting standards.<sup>102</sup> The capital, technical skills and business acumen brought by Chinese migrants greatly contributed to the rapid industrialisation of Hong Kong, with particular success in textiles, as trade in the free port expanded. Even Shanghai's cabaret culture seemed to shift to Hong Kong, when there was a notable 'exodus' of top dance hostesses who left Shanghai for better working environments and higher salaries in the British colony.<sup>103</sup> Political restrictions on art development in Maoist China meant that Hong Kong and Taiwan became important sites where Chinese artistic practices were inherited and artists continued to encounter Western modernist styles.<sup>104</sup>

As the British government tightened border control between Hong Kong and China after Communist victory in China, Hong Kong residents continued their lives in a westernised sphere under British colonial rule which was distinctively different from their Communist

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<sup>100</sup> Government of Hong Kong, *Annual Report on Hong Kong for the Year 1949* (London: Local Printing Press, Hong Kong, 1950), 2.

<sup>101</sup> *Colonial Reports Hong Kong 1950* (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1951), 14.

<sup>102</sup> Lam, "Min Chiu," 41.

<sup>103</sup> Andrew Field, *Shanghai's Dancing World: Cabaret Culture and Urban Politics, 1919-1954* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2010), 188.

<sup>104</sup> For example, regarding the development of Hong Kong calligraphy as an extension of traditional practices in China, see Lee Yun-woon, "Cong Xiangjiang xianxian moji kan Xianggang shuji yishu de jicheng yu fazhan 從香江先賢墨蹟看香港書法藝術的繼承與發展 (A Study of Cultural Inheritance and Development of Hong Kong Calligraphy via the Early Hong Kong Ink Works)", in *Xianggang xianxian moji 香江先賢墨蹟* (Chinese Handwriting in Hong Kong: Gleanings of a Hundred Years), Hong Kong: Art Museum of The Chinese University of Hong Kong, 2006), 9-14; Harold Mok 莫家良, 'Xianjiang xianxian moji – wenhua chengchuan yu shufa' 文化承傳與書法 (Early Hong Kong Works: Cultural Interitance and Calligraphy) in *Xianggang xianxian moji 香江先賢墨蹟* (Chinese Handwriting in Hong Kong: Gleanings of a Hundred Years), Hong Kong: Art Museum of The Chinese University of Hong Kong, 2006) 15-24; Chen Yafei, 'Early Hong Kong Calligraphy: A Cultural Study,' in Harold Mok ed., Tina Liem trans., *Hong Kong Visual Arts Yearbook 2004* (Hong Kong: Department of Fine Arts, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, 2005), 64-89.

neighbours in the north. Native Place Associations played a significant role in providing support networks to Chinese migrant communities; although they often spoke in their own native dialects and had their distinctive cuisines and customs, they by and large cooperated with each other in the British colony and adopted the local dialect of Cantonese as they sought to establish themselves in their new home.

Later postwar baby boomers identified with a cosmopolitan Hong Kong which became further removed from a China which turned inward.<sup>105</sup> However, there was still a degree of flexibility in the movement of people and objects, which Hong Kong dealers took advantage of. Hong Kong dealer Andy Hei 黑國強 (1967-), whose father Hei Hung Lu 黑洪祿 (1933-) had migrated to Hong Kong from Beijing, recounted: ‘There was more freedom of movement than you’d think in the years immediately after 1949... My father’s immediate family stayed in Beijing. All he had to do was to purchase an exit permit from a government office in Tiananmen Square and get on a boat in Tianjin’.<sup>106</sup> Hei Hung Lu recalled that when his family and other dealers from Northern China, Shanghai and Guangzhou moved to Hong Kong between 1949 and the early 1950s, they could still legally export cultural relics from China to Hong Kong, as long as they were reported and the correct paperwork was completed.<sup>107</sup> Hence in the immediate years after 1949, many dealers in Hong Kong made frequent trips to restock from Beijing’s Liulichang district or Chinese dealers who kept items at home.<sup>108</sup> Hei Hung Lu said: ‘Nothing as old as Han (206 BC-AD 220) and Tang (618-907) dynasty was allowed to be taken out but Qing (1644-1911) and Ming (1368-1644) stuff, no problem... Even imperial kiln ceramics could be exported’.<sup>109</sup>

The Min Chiu Society 敏求精舍, which was established in 1960, became the most prominent and respected Chinese art collectors’ society in Hong Kong. It had fifteen founding members,

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<sup>105</sup> Siu, “Cultural Kaleidoscope,” 395.

<sup>106</sup> Enid Tsui, “Chinese Dealers Who Made Hong Kong an Antiques Trade Hub Recall the Glory Days,” *Post Magazine, South China Morning Post*, 14 Jan 2018, accessed 24 June 2020: <https://www.scmp.com/magazines/post-magazine/long-reads/article/2127782/chinese-dealers-who-made-hong-kong-antiques-trade>.

<sup>107</sup> Hei Hung Lu and Andy Hei, interview by Jenny So and Ling-Yun Tang, 7 April 2011, “Collecting Chinese Art in Hong Kong – A Global Phenomenon” Project Archive, Hong Kong.

<sup>108</sup> Tsui, “Chinese Dealers.”

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*

ten of whom were from Greater Shanghai, including Jiangsu and Zhejiang.<sup>110</sup> Although the society was an exclusive gentlemen's club which only welcomed esteemed collectors and not dealers by recommendation, some exceptions were made for individuals like Harold Wong Chung Fong 黃仲芳 (1943-), an artist-dealer who ran Hanart Gallery and was widely respected for his family's collection. His father Wong Pao Hsie 黃寶熙 (n. d.) (sometimes referred to as Wong Pao-hsi) was one of the earlier members of the Min Chiu Society who also originated from Shanghai.<sup>111</sup> Harold Wong recalled that his father was 'quite against' the idea of him starting a commercial gallery, which was looked down on in traditional scholarly families.<sup>112</sup> Indeed, the Confucian view maintains that scholar-officials who collected for leisure held a higher status than merchants who profited from the trading of art.

The society styled itself as an organisation that continued the tradition of Chinese 'elegant gatherings', *yaji* 雅集, with an aim to promote Chinese culture and foster antiquarian research in Chinese art. The society's name was derived from a saying by Confucius (551-479 BC), recorded in the classic text *Analects* (Book 7:20): 'I was not born with knowledge but, being fond of antiquity, I am quick to seek it 我非生而知之者，好古，敏以求之者也'.<sup>113</sup> The society's logo design was based on a rubbing of *Shengjiao Xu* ('Preface to the Holy Teaching') by famous calligrapher Wang Xizhi 王羲之 (303-361).<sup>114</sup> A fundamental part of Chinese traditional values is centred on reverence for the past, associated with Confucian philosophy which advocates family loyalty, ancestor worship, filial piety and seeing one's family as the basis for ideal government. 'Elegant gatherings', in which scholarly groups congregate to compose poetry, create paintings and authenticate and appreciate antique objects over cups

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<sup>110</sup> The ten founding members from Greater Shanghai were Chen Kwang Pu 陳光甫 (1880-1976), T. Y. Chao 趙從衍 (1912-1999), Hsu Shi Hao 徐士浩 (1899-1967), T. Y. Wong 王統元 (n. d.), C. S. Loh 陸菊森 (n. d.), C. T. Kwok 郭正達 (1923?-2009?), K. K. Chu 朱孔嘉 (n. d.), G. T. Yuan 袁虬初 (n. d.), Liu Han Tang 劉漢棟 (n. d.) and J. M. Hu; see Lam, "Min Chiu," 40-41.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, 41-42.

<sup>112</sup> Harold Wong, interview by Jenny So and Ling-Yun Tang, 21 March 2011, "CCAHK" Project Archive.

<sup>113</sup> James C. Y. Watt, "Memories of the Early Min Chiu Society," in *The Grandeur of Chinese Art Treasures: Min Chiu Society Golden Jubilee Exhibition* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong Leisure and Cultural Services Department, 2010), 17.

<sup>114</sup> George Fan, "Jen Mou H. C. Hu (1911-1995), Master of Zande Lou," in *In Pursuit of Antiquities: 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Exhibition of the Min Chiu Society*, ed. Hong Kong Museum of Art (Hong Kong: Leisure and Cultural Services Department, 2001), 45.

of tea or wine have been well recorded.<sup>115</sup> In the early days, Min Chiu Society members would meet regularly to exchange opinions on items they had brought from their respective collections, or items they intended to buy and were undecided on, followed by a lunch or dinner.<sup>116</sup> While early society members followed a consensus not to buy and sell objects among themselves in order to prevent commercial interests from tainting their neutral platform for knowledge exchange (this also being the reason why dealers were disallowed from society membership), there were known instances of items being gifted or swapped between members, a practice that Chinese scholarly collectors often used in the past to develop their collections and foster relationships with fellow collectors.<sup>117</sup>

Apart from mounting private exhibitions of members' collections at the society's headquarters, society members cooperated with Hong Kong museums to present public exhibitions, often accompanied by scholarly publications which were sometimes authored by society members themselves. In addition to sharing their knowledge of Chinese art through exhibitions and publications, visits to museums with Chinese art collections were organised, and famous Chinese art scholars worldwide were invited to give lectures to the society. In the existing literature of collecting theory, we can identify certain collecting rationales which perhaps apply to this group of Shanghai collectors. Referring to collectors' clubs, societies and fairs that blossomed in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century in Britain, Martin's study on British popular collecting suggests that collecting can be a response to social fragmentation, initiated by those who feel alienated from a part of society that they were previously a fundamental part of; these individuals attempt to connect with the past through collecting as a reaction to the uncertain future.<sup>118</sup> Similarly, this group of Shanghai collectors, who were mostly wealthy textile manufacturers and bankers, certainly originated from a key professional sector of society that became displaced in Hong Kong; the large collections of Chinese art they

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<sup>115</sup> Some of the earliest mentions of famous scholarly gatherings include the Seven Sages of the Bamboo Grove from the Wei and Jin Periods (3<sup>rd</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> Century) and the Orchid Pavilion gathering in 353, as recorded by Wang Xizhi.

<sup>116</sup> James Watt, interview by Jenny So and Ling-Yun Tang, 17 October 2011, "CCAHK" Project Archive; Lam, "Pursuit of Antiquities," 71.

<sup>117</sup> For example, Brian McElney recounts one occasion when he gave a brush rest to Harold Wong as a 'gesture of friendship, as the mandarins of China would once have done'; Brian McElney, *Collecting China: The Memoirs of a Hong Kong Art Addict* (Hong Kong: Earnshaw Books, 2017), 125. Also see Brian McElney, "The Min Chiu Society: Reminiscences of Things Past," in *In Pursuit of Antiquities: 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Exhibition of the Min Chiu Society*, ed. Hong Kong Museum of Art (Hong Kong: Leisure and Cultural Services Department, 2001), 38.

<sup>118</sup> Paul Martin, *Popular Collecting*, 9.

preserved and developed in Hong Kong can be seen as the result of an attempt to remain connected with their past in China while making sense of new unfamiliar surroundings in Hong Kong. Other than collectors, Shanghai dealers like Edward T. Chow, T. Y. King and Robert Chang also became widely respected in the Hong Kong art market, as they advised a broad international clientele on building Chinese art collections, fashioning themselves into the torchbearers of traditional Chinese 'standards' of Chinese art connoisseurship.

While art collectors from different Chinese regions settled in Hong Kong, they encountered local Cantonese-speaking collectors whose families originated from various places in Guangdong province and had settled in Hong Kong for generations. They include J. S. Lee, a co-founder of the Min Chiu Society, and Dr Ip Yee, one of the founding members of the Min Chiu Society. The society later also included European collectors such as Brian McElney (1932-) and Richard Kilburn (1937-1999) who were both committed to publishing their research on Chinese art like many of their Chinese counterparts.<sup>119</sup> Society members also invited local museum curators James C. Y. Watt 屈志仁 (1936-), Laurence C. S. Tam 譚志成 (1933-2013) and Peter Y. K. Lam 林業強 (?-) to join the society as Associate members, so that collectors' methods of connoisseurship informed museum practices. Lam saw society meetings, exhibition displays, handling sessions and lectures as 'an excellent training ground' for museum curators, and expressed his gratitude to Min Chiu members, particularly J. M. Hu, Dr Ip Yee and J. S. Lee, for teaching him 'true taste in Chinese art'.<sup>120</sup> Watt recounted how he 'gained a lifetime's worth of knowledge' in the areas of connoisseurship and the art of display while working as an assistant to J. M. Hu, who curated an exhibition at the Min Chiu Society in 1968.<sup>121</sup>

Before the arrival of Shanghai collectors and dealers, the Hong Kong market mostly adopted traditions in trading art from the Guangdong region, as addressed earlier in this chapter. The area surrounding Hollywood Road, the first road to be completed in Hong Kong in 1844,

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<sup>119</sup> Angus Forsyth and Brian McElney, *Jades From China* (Bath: Museum of East Asian Art, 1994); Brian McElney, *Chinese Ceramics and the Maritime Trade Pre-1700* (Bath: Museum of East Asian Art, 2006); Brian McElney, *Museum of East Asian Art: Inaugural Exhibition vol. 1 and 2* (Bath: Museum of East Asian Art, 1993); Colin Sheaf and Richard Kilburn, *The Hatcher Porcelain Cargoes: The Complete Record* (Oxford: Phaidon-Christie's, 1988). McElney also later founded the Museum of East Asian Art in Bath to house his collection.

<sup>120</sup> Peter Y. K. Lam, "In Pursuit of Antiquities: the Min Chiu Society at Fifty," *Arts of Asia* 40, no. 5 (September-October 2010), 72-73.

<sup>121</sup> Watt, "Memories," 18.

became a popular place for dealers to set up their family businesses, alongside street markets selling lesser quality items and tourist knick-knacks. Cat Street (also known as Upper Lascar Road, parallel to Hollywood Road) was seen by many early collectors as a treasure trove where rare finds could be discovered. Some of the earliest shops in the area set up by Cantonese dealers include Luen Chai Curios Store (later K. Y. Fine Art 繼遠美術, run by second-generation dealer K. Y. Ng 吳繼遠 (n. d.)); and Tai Sing Antiques 大成古玩, run by brothers Lai Tak 黎德 (n. d.) and Lai Loy 黎來 (1926-2012) who continued their family business in trading antiques after moving to Hong Kong from Guangzhou in the late 1940s/1950s.<sup>122</sup> These dealers were vital in providing objects and advice to collectors in Hong Kong. Many of them gained the trust of museum curators and scholars who consulted them on Chinese art connoisseurship, as they were respected for their expertise passed on within their families – this reflects the traditional perception of Chinese connoisseurship as knowledge tied to family lineage and upbringing.<sup>123</sup> Outside of the Hollywood Road area, across the harbour in Kowloon, there were also shops in Ocean Terminal selling a mixture of antiques, modern jewellery and tourist memorabilia which benefitted from the business generated from international cruise liner passengers.

Most of the more ‘serious’ antique shops in Hong Kong operated in the same style of early 20<sup>th</sup> century Shanghai antique shops. The dealers decided what the customers would be interested in and only showed select pieces available for purchase; items deemed more important or valuable would be reserved at the back for clientele of a certain calibre of expertise and buying ability. It has been suggested by Beijing dealers that traders from Beijing and Fujian around Hankow Road and Nathan Road in Tsim Sha Tsui tended to be ‘less flashy’ compared to Shanghai dealers in Central and Ocean Terminal in terms of what they sold.<sup>124</sup> Beijing dealers were not the only ones who noted how the ‘flashy’ Shanghainese stood out in

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<sup>122</sup> Interviews with K. Y. Ng and Andrew Lai, son of Lai Tak, have enabled the current author to gather some general information on the networks and practices of dealers. K. Y. Ng, interview by author, 16 June 2017; Andrew Lai, interview by author, 14 June 2017 and 14 September 2020.

<sup>123</sup> For example, Phillip Mak notes that museum curators including himself often consulted Lai Tak when they were unsure about ‘questionable pieces’. See Phillip Mak, “Foreword,” in *The Art of Chinese Wooden Stands: The Songde Tang Collection* (Hong Kong: University Museum and Art Gallery, University of Hong Kong, 2008), 15.

<sup>124</sup> Tsui, “Chinese Dealers.”

Hong Kong. As Alexander Grantham (1899-1978), the Governor of Hong Kong from 1947 to 1957, recalled in his memoir:

*The gentle contempt that the Europeans from Shanghai had for Hong Kong was amusing. Shanghai in pre-communist days was a great cosmopolitan centre; a sort of New York-Paris in an oriental setting. Hong Kong, by comparison, was a small village. The feeling of the Cantonese – and most of the Chinese in Hong Kong are Cantonese – towards the Shanghai-Chinese who had come to live and set up business in Hong Kong was one of resentment. They regarded them as altogether too smart and slick.*<sup>125</sup>

In fact, James Watt observes that the Min Chiu Society was unique in bringing together the Shanghainese and Cantonese groups who had different languages (the Shanghainese and others from the mainland who did not originally speak Cantonese gradually spoke the local language with a ‘funny accent’ after settling in Hong Kong), traditions, collecting interests, social clubs, and approaches to the appreciation of artworks.<sup>126</sup> He believes it was only thanks to the ‘wonderful fortuitous historical accident’ when the society founders J. M. Hu and J. S. Lee met as students at Yenching University 燕京大學 in Beijing that the two groups of collectors socially mixed together.<sup>127</sup> Perhaps Watt is right that the society was extraordinary in enabling two very different groups to bond over a shared interest in Chinese art, but it is a slight exaggeration to view Hu and Lee’s encounter in Beijing as pure accident – Yenching University attracted students from wealthy and prestigious families from all over China and produced many prominent intellectuals including collectors Wang Shixiang 王世襄 (1914-2009) and Professor Cheng Te-k’un 鄭德坤 (1907-2001).<sup>128</sup> Although divided over regional culture and language, they came from the same elitist scholarly classes of society, hence it comes as no surprise that they studied in the same prestigious institute and were able to find

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<sup>125</sup> Alexander Grantham, *Via Ports: From Hong Kong to Hong Kong* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1965), 104-105.

<sup>126</sup> Watt, interview, “CCAHK” Project Archive.

<sup>127</sup> Watt, interview, “CCAHK” Project Archive.

<sup>128</sup> Scholar-collector Jian Youwen 簡又文 (1896-1978), also known as Jen Yu-wen, also taught at Yenching University in the 1920s before moving to Hong Kong after the Japanese invasion of China in 1937. His collection of Guangdong paintings formed the basis of the Art Museum’s collection at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, and he also worked with those like F. S. Drake 林仰山 (1892-1974) and Jao Tsung-I 饒宗頤 (1917-2018) in studying Hong Kong archaeology. See Josh Yiu, “Defining Gao Jianfu: The Contribution of Jian Youwen,” in *Two Masters, Two Generations and One Vision for Modern Chinese Painting*, ed. Josh Yiu (Hong Kong: Art Museum, the Chinese University of Hong Kong, 2013), 22.

common ground over a shared interest in collecting Chinese art, a typical pursuit of the upper echelons of society.

## 1950s to 1960s: Early Museums and Academic Institutions

Two important museums for the display of Chinese art were established between the 1950s and 1960s: the Fung Ping Shan Museum at the University of Hong Kong, later renamed the University Museum and Art Gallery, was founded in 1953; the City Museum and Art Gallery, which was later separated into the Hong Kong Museum of History and the Hong Kong Museum of Art (hereafter cited as the HKMoA), was founded in 1962. While historical fascination with antiquarianism can be seen in both Chinese and Western civilisations, Chinese ownership and appreciation of art objects were traditionally largely limited to private connoisseurship gatherings; the concept of a museum where objects are displayed to public was a foreign one which originated from the ‘cabinet of curiosities’ of 16<sup>th</sup> century Europe.<sup>129</sup> Marzia Varutti, Pedith Chan and Selina Chui-fun Ho have discussed how early museums in China in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries were a Western import used by Chinese elites to strengthen China through education and reform, although some ‘proto-museums’ like the Temple of Confucius pre-existed in China.<sup>130</sup> Hong Kong museums followed a separate trajectory, as they were directly set up under British colonial structures. However, they relied heavily on the support of local staff, advisers, collectors and donors in expanding their collections and directing museum development – items from local private collections were purchased to form the core of the two museum collections in their formative years; the first item donated to the HKMoA was a white-glazed stem cup, dating from the Jin to Yuan period (circa 1115-1368), from the collection of J. M. Hu.<sup>131</sup> The significance of private collectors as figures of authority in the early development of Hong Kong museums shows that museums

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<sup>129</sup> Oliver Impey and Arthur MacGregor, eds., *The Origins of Museums: The Cabinet of Curiosities in Sixteenth and Seventeenth-Century Europe* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1985).

<sup>130</sup> Marzia Varutti, *Museums in China: The Politics of Representation After Mao* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell Press, 2014), 25-26; Pedith Chan, “Representations of Chinese Civilisation: Exhibiting Chinese Art in Republican China,” in *The Future of Museum and Gallery Design: Purpose, Process, Perception*, eds. Suzanne MacLeod, Tricia Austin, Jonathan Hale and Oscar Ho Hing-Kay (London: Routledge, 2018), 71-85; Selina Chui-fun Ho, *Museum Processes in China: The Institutional Regulation, Production and Consumption of the Art Museums in the Greater Pearl River Delta Region* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2019), 66-71.

<sup>131</sup> Mak, “Nurturing Tradition,” 105.

lacked professional expertise in Chinese art in their infancy, expertise which collectors were willing to offer to the museum in exchange for social prestige.

The 1966 and 1967 riots barely caused problems for the two museums, and both continued to organise public exhibitions of Chinese art. Historians have noted how the riots were ultimately beneficial to the development of art and culture in Hong Kong, as the colonial government sought to appease public grievances by accelerating social reform and instilling a better sense of belonging in the local population through recognition of their heritage and identity. The City Hall Museum and Art Gallery and the Min Chiu Society actually held their first joint Chinese art exhibition in 1966 and continued to collaborate in presenting the museum's collections as well the private collections of Min Chiu members to the public in the following decades.<sup>132</sup>

The City Hall Museum and Art Gallery fell under the direction of the Museums Select Committee of the Urban Council, a municipal council with some elected elements that oversaw the administration of urban affairs. At its founding, the collection of the museum was to 'reflect the fine arts of Hong Kong and its hinterland, with special reference to China and Southeast Asia'.<sup>133</sup> The museum aimed to promote appreciation of art, both local and international, modern and traditional, through a programme of exhibitions, education services and development of its collections. Its first curator was the British expatriate John Warner (n. d.), who served from 1962 to 1976.<sup>134</sup> The museum followed a largely British mode of operation in terms of its acquisition policies as well as staffing in its early years. At a meeting in 1961, the City Hall Museum and Art Gallery Sub-Committee decided to invite a select group of 18 individuals to serve on the museum's panel of advisers, including William Lee Kwok-leung (n. d.), Louis Chan (n. d.), Soame Jenyns (1904-1976), Professor D. Barker (n. d.) (University of Hong Kong), Professor H. Stenton (n. d.) (University of Hong Kong), Dr C. T. Yung (1908-1987) of Chung Chi College, Professor F. S. Drake 林仰山 (1892-1974) (University of Hong Kong), Mary Tregear (1924-2010) (Museum Curator, University of Hong Kong), J. Hayes

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<sup>132</sup> James C. Y. Watt, *Paintings, Calligraphy and Porcelain of the Ming Period (1368-1644) 14 October - 20 November, 1966* (Hong Kong: City Hall Museum and Art Gallery, Min Chiu Society, 1966).

<sup>133</sup> Christina Chu, "The Collection of Chinese Painting and Calligraphy," *Arts of Asia* 21, no. 6 (November-December 1991): 113.

<sup>134</sup> Colin Sheaf, "John Warner's Recollections of Hong Kong," *Arts of Asia* 49, no. 6 (November-December 2019): 92-96.

(n. d.) (Administrative Officer, Archaeology), Professor S. G. Davids (n. d.) (University of Hong Kong, Geology, Gemmology) and J. R. Jones (1887-1976) (President of Hong Kong Branch of Royal Asiatic Society, Sinology).<sup>135</sup> It is clear from the list of mostly Western names that the museum valued the opinion of British colonialists and other Westerners at the time of its founding. Furthermore, this list of names reflects male dominance in positions of influence in arts institutions during this period, which continued throughout the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Despite the mention of Mary Tregear, the document referring to the group of potential advisers mistakenly addresses the group collectively as ‘gentlemen’, which perhaps suggests how unusual it was to mention women in high-ranking positions.<sup>136</sup> Within the museum’s collections, the different categories of art defined by the museum were sometimes unclear and evolved over time. For example, the range of material covered under ‘Local Art’ can be vague, and terms such as ‘Fine Art’ and ‘Minor Art’ were later replaced or absorbed into the categories of ‘Chinese Painting and Calligraphy’ and ‘Chinese Antiquities’.<sup>137</sup> Despite these small discrepancies, throughout the period discussed in this thesis the museum generally categorised its collection into four main genres: ‘Contemporary Hong Kong Art’, ‘Historical Pictures’, ‘Chinese Antiquities’ and ‘Chinese Fine Art’ – although today they have been relabelled as ‘Modern and Hong Kong Art’, ‘China Trade Art’, ‘Chinese Antiquities’ and ‘Chinese Painting and Calligraphy’ respectively. The museum’s acquisition methods and policies also changed slightly over the decades in light of shifting market trends and financial concerns. Records show that from its inception to the 1990s, the museum consistently acquired items from dealers mostly based in Hong Kong and London (e.g. Bluett & Sons, Spink & Son Ltd., A & J Speelman Oriental Art, Luen Chai Curio Store, Chinese Art & Crafts Ltd., T. Y. King & Sons, Hugh Moss (1943-), Hanart Ltd.), local collectors (e.g. Helen Perrell (1904-2002), Chan Sing-chak (n. d.), Lee Kwok-wing 李國榮 (1929-2021), C. H. Au 歐振雄 (1917-1994)) and artists or family members of artists and/or collectors (e. g. Yung Chee 翁芝 (1917-2014), the

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<sup>135</sup> Memo from Director of Urban Services to Hon. Colonial Secretary, 17 January 1961, HKRS877-1-5 1951-1964. Hong Kong Public Records Office, Government Records Service, Hong Kong.

<sup>136</sup> Memo, HKRS877-1-5 1951-1964, HKPRO.

<sup>137</sup> For instance, see adoption of these terms in Memorandum for Members of the Museums Select Committee, Committee Paper MUS/83/78, 27 October 1978, HKRS1104-1-1 1978-1979; Memorandum for Members of the Museums Select Committee, Committee Paper MUS/61/89 (24.7.89), 14 July 1989, HKRS1124-1-126 1989. HKPRO; Memorandum for Members of the Museums Select Committee, Committee Paper MUS/67/92, 5 September 1992, HKRS1124-1-132. HKPRO.

widow of Lingnan School painter Gao Jianfu 高劍父 (1879–1951)).<sup>138</sup> The museum was clearly aware of its advantageous location in Asia where direct inheritance or acquisition of items from local artists or collectors offered a wealth of material to the museum, whereas Western museums gained access to Chinese art through more indirect routes.<sup>139</sup> Furthermore, the maintenance of an amicable relationship with mainland Chinese museums meant that the museum in Hong Kong benefitted from occasional diplomatic donations of objects. For instance, the National Museum of Chinese History in Beijing made a donation of 60 items of Chinese antiquities, valued at \$4 million, in February 1991, to thank the Urban Council's 'policy and assistance in returning smuggled goods to their country of origin'.<sup>140</sup>

In 1971, another important museum and centre for the study of Chinese art was founded at the Chinese University of Hong Kong. The university was founded in 1963 after uniting three existing colleges – New Asia College 新亞書院 (1949), Chung Chi College 崇基學院 (1951), and United College 聯合書院 (1956). It was in many ways different from the British colonial institution of the University of Hong Kong which adopted English as its language for teaching and trained many bureaucrats who joined the civil service under the colonial government.<sup>141</sup> With Chinese as its main medium of instruction at its founding, the Chinese University hired many scholars who had escaped China in 1949. Famous intellectuals who taught at the university or one of the three colleges before unification include historian Qian Mu 錢穆 (1895-1990), New Confucian Philosophers Tang Chun-I 唐君毅 (1909-1978) and Mou Zongsan 牟宗三 (1909-1995) and artist Ding Yanyong 丁衍庸 1902-1978) (also known as Ting Yen-yung or Ting Yin-yung). The Chinese University thus became a unique educational space where traditional Chinese philosophical and cultural values were passed on to new generations outside Communist China. Chinese Studies was hailed as the flagship programme of the university, and the university's first Vice-Chancellor Prof. Choh-ming Li 李卓敏 (1912-1991) aimed to build a university museum to provide a platform for learning from Chinese cultural relics. J. S. Lee was a major sponsor and supporter of the new Art Museum, helping

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<sup>138</sup> Memorandum for Members of Museums Select Committee, Committee Paper MUS/75/78, 12 September 1978, HKRS 1104-1-1 1978-1979, HKPRO.

<sup>139</sup> Memorandum, Committee Paper MUS/75/78, HKRS1104-1-1 1978-1979, HKPRO.

<sup>140</sup> Memorandum, Committee Paper MUS/67/92, HKRS1124-1-132, HKPRO.

<sup>141</sup> Alfred H. Y. Lin, "The Founding of the University of Hong Kong: British Imperial Ideals and Chinese Practical Common Sense," in *An Impossible Dream: Hong Kong University from Foundation to Re-establishment, 1910-1950*, eds. Chan Lau Kit-ching and Peter Crunich (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 1-22.

to recruit the Hong Kong-based, Oxford-educated James Watt, at the time curator at the City Hall Museum and Art Gallery, to direct the museum. The Art Museum benefitted from China's open-door policy after the end of the Cultural Revolution, which encouraged Chinese national museums to work with institutions outside the mainland: in 1981, the Art Museum organised exhibitions on paintings and other relics with the Guangzhou Museum, and in 1984, it became the first museum in Hong Kong to collaborate with the Palace Museum in Beijing, when a hundred pieces by Yangzhou artists from the Palace Museum collection was displayed at the Art Museum.

## **Late 1960s to 1980s: Expansion of the Art Market**

Hong Kong's reputation as a centre for Chinese art grew as it became an important commercial and financial hub from the 1970s onwards. With support from the colonial administration, local entrepreneurs developed successful service sectors, and many of them took control of established British companies in the city. The efficiency and entrepreneurial spirit of Chinese workers combined with stable, orderly and transparent British administrative structures such as an independent judiciary system enabled Hong Kong to become an international financial centre which attracted global investment, while the service sector overtook the industrial sector as an accelerator for growth.

An influx of objects came from China during the Cultural Revolution of 1966-1976, when collectors were scared to keep antiques in their possession and sold them cheaply. Items in private hands or the antiques market were confiscated or handed over to the Chinese state; the more valued items were transferred to state-owned museums, and those deemed second-rate were sold by the Arts and Crafts Company to overseas buyers.<sup>142</sup> Hong Kong dealers such as Alvin Lo (?-) and his father P. C. Lu (n. d.) purchased huge volumes of Chinese art objects from the company, which had regular fairs in Beijing, Tianjin, Shanghai and Guangzhou.<sup>143</sup> According to Hei Honglu, this company was a way for the Chinese government to obtain foreign currency which they were 'desperate' for.<sup>144</sup> State-owned Friendship Stores

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<sup>142</sup> Lu, "Seizing Civilization," 231-32.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*, 230.

<sup>144</sup> Tsui, "Chinese Dealers."

also sold Chinese art as well as Western imported items to foreigners, and only accepted foreign currency until the early 1990s.

Apart from the availability of art objects, economic growth followed by political and social stability in the 1970s and 1980s also encouraged the Hong Kong antiques trade to thrive. On an international level, the art market steadily flourished from the 1960s to the 1980s, when art was increasingly valued as a hedge against inflation and bought by not just collectors but also investors and speculators. The upper-middle class began to buy directly from auctions in London and New York which were previously mostly attended by dealers who resold artworks at higher prices. London dealer Giuseppe Eskenazi (1939-) recalls that people regarded art as a good 'alternative investment' in the early 1970s due to high inflation and interest rates.<sup>145</sup> Mirroring these global collecting trends, an expanding group of political and social elites and Western-educated middle-class professionals actively collected Chinese art and supported cultural organisations such as museums and collecting societies.

Towards the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Hong Kong steadily caught up with London and New York in becoming a new centre for the Chinese art trade due to a series of events and wider financial concerns that prompted international auctioneers and dealers to pursue business in the British colony. Sotheby's auction house, established in London in 1744, saw the potential of the Hong Kong market for Chinese art. James Lally (?-), who was a Sotheby's director in the 1970s-1980s and worked with Julian Thompson (1941-2011) to start the first Hong Kong auctions, recalled that Sotheby's saw a supply of goods ready to be consigned for sale in Hong Kong, as well as a strong pool of local buyers.<sup>146</sup> As a free port, Hong Kong was an ideal place to expand their business, compared to Japan or Taiwan which had more restrictive business procedures – Hong Kong people were perceived to be more 'open' and cooperative, more 'tuned in to international business' and less 'protectionist' than the Japanese or Taiwanese.<sup>147</sup> The first Sotheby's Hong Kong sale held in 1973 was extremely well-attended by local and international collectors and dealers, with the bidding conducted in British sterling. Lally admitted that the first sales were 'not Chinese taste', as they were yet to understand the preferences of local collectors – no one had told them 'Don't you understand everybody in

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<sup>145</sup> Giuseppe Eskenazi and Hajni Elias, *A Dealer's Hand: The Chinese Art World through the Eyes of Giuseppe Eskenazi* (London: Scala, 2012), 73, 48.

<sup>146</sup> James J. Lally, interview by Jenny So and Ling-yun Tang, 6 October 2011, "CCAHK" Project Archive.

<sup>147</sup> Lally, interview, "CCAHK" Project Archive.

Hong Kong likes *doucai*... and doesn't like Tang?'<sup>148</sup> Lally identified Ming and Qing porcelain as the category that caused a 'buzz', whereas other categories like early bronzes were far less popular.<sup>149</sup>

The 1973 oil crisis and the 1974 property slump in Britain have been cited by dealers as causes of the crash of the global art market, which further encouraged players in the market to move their focus to the East.<sup>150</sup> Dealer Roger Bluett (1925-2000) describes the 'traumas of 1974-1975' when competition between European investors, Japanese buyers and one particular Portuguese buyer named Jorge de Brito (n. d.) created a bubble which burst after the 1974 revolution in Portugal abruptly removed de Brito from the scene.<sup>151</sup> The notable Japanese collector Eiichi Ataka (1901-1994) also withdrew from the market when his company went bankrupt in 1975.<sup>152</sup> Lally similarly recalls that prices for certain categories of Chinese art were 'doubling every 6 months' in the late 1960s and early 1970s; this rapid, unprecedented rise in prices was driven by Japanese buyers until the oil crisis 'shot everybody down'.<sup>153</sup> In his view this happened almost overnight as high prices achieved in the Frederick Mayer sale at Christie's London in July 1974 was followed by 'doom and gloom' in August.<sup>154</sup> This was a time when buying activity in Hong Kong was strong and showed no signs of stopping, prompting dealers like Hugh Moss to relocate from London to Hong Kong, where his business proved successful throughout the 1980s and 1990s.

Before Sotheby's expanded into the Hong Kong market, the buying and selling of Chinese art in Hong Kong were generally conducted discreetly in shops or private residences. As Lally describes: 'a dealer would put pretty things in the front which were not very good in the window, and gradually test the person that comes in. The best things are in the back, you take a long time, you drink lots of tea, you have to prove you know what you're doing before they finally show you a good object'.<sup>155</sup> This was often followed by a long bargaining process.

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<sup>148</sup> Ibid.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid.

<sup>150</sup> Eskenazi and Elias, *Dealer's Hand*, 48; Hugh Moss, interview by Phillips Auction House, accessed 27 September 2020: <https://www.phillips.com/article/52123497/in-conversation-with-hugh-moss>

<sup>151</sup> Roger Bluett, "Trends in Oriental Art with an Accent on Chinese Ceramics." *Arts of Asia* 10, no. 6 (November-December 1980): 100–101. This is also mentioned in Eskenazi and Elias, *Dealer's Hand*, 48.

<sup>152</sup> Eskenazi and Elias, *Dealer's Hand*, 73.

<sup>153</sup> Lally, interview, "CCAHK" Project Archive.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid.

Collector Robert Tang 鄧國楨 (1947-) also explains how this private method of dealing can cause awkwardness between collectors:

*Let's say the Min Chiu Society, one goes there to get full pride and happiness: 'look what I bought'. Another collector then says, 'oh well it was offered to me three weeks ago and I turned it down'. Now how crestfallen would that person be. He will not be very happy with the dealer who sold it to him... You want to be the first person to see it and if one is not I think one tends to be unhappy about it.<sup>156</sup>*

In contrast, during the Sotheby's auctions, items were sold swiftly within a set amount of time and the names of successful buyers were announced in the saleroom and published alongside the sale results, marking a very different, much more public business style. Some perceive this as a 'democratisation' of the buying and selling of Chinese art.<sup>157</sup> Phyllis Joseph (1927-), the widow of the Welsh dealer-collector Adrian Joseph who had moved from London to Hong Kong in the 1970s, recalls that although dealers were initially 'a bit wary' of auctions as they were protective of their private clients, they generally appreciated the arrival of specialists like Thompson and Lally, whose knowledge and expertise contributed to the local collecting scene.<sup>158</sup> While many dealers of ceramics and other works of art embraced the presence of auctions in Hong Kong, often using this platform to buy and sell their stock, those like Harold Wong noted that auctions gradually caused the decline of Chinese paintings galleries at least from the 1980s onwards as buyers and sellers moved their focus to auctions.<sup>159</sup>

From the 1970s onwards, the HKMoA expanded its collection under the direction of Laurence Tam, who worked as John Warner's successor and held good relationships with local collectors, serving the museum for a long period from 1976 and 1993. Although as a local Chinese he aided the museum's efforts in connecting with Hong Kong Chinese collectors, British opinion remained influential in shaping the museum's development: the London dealer Bluett & Sons was the museum's Overseas Purchasing Agent from 1976 to early 1990s, while John Ayers (n. d.), Keeper of the Far Eastern Section of the Victoria and Albert Museum

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<sup>156</sup> Robert Tang, interview by Jenny So and Ling-yun Tang, 21st May 2011, "CCAHK" Project Archive.

<sup>157</sup> Watt, interview, "CCAHK" Project Archive.

<sup>158</sup> Phyllis Joseph, interview by author, 20 May 2020.

<sup>159</sup> Wong, interview, "CCAHK" Project Archive.

in London, was an Honorary Adviser to the museum throughout the 1970s to 1980s.<sup>160</sup> On the other hand, an increasing number of local Hong Kong Chinese collectors and dealers were recruited to inform the museum's decisions on acquisitions and exhibitions. They include Dr Ip Yee and Low Chuck-Tiew, who were advisers for the categories 'Chinese Antiquities' and 'Chinese Painting and Calligraphy' respectively. Local dealer Hanart Gallery Limited was also appointed as Overseas Purchasing Agent for the museum's Chinese painting and calligraphy section from 1987 onwards, advising the museum from the late 1980s through to the 1990s.<sup>161</sup> As the HKMoA's collection was gradually built up through acquisitions and donations from local dealers and collectors, exemplified by the 1989 donation of the Xubaizhai collection owned by Low, the Chinese painting and calligraphy section developed not only in the area of local regional Guangdong works, but in the mainstream of Chinese painting overall, as Hong Kong became a repository for all types of artworks from all over China. Spurred on by this unexpected expansion of the collection, curators and museum advisers began to pay more attention to filling the gaps of painting and calligraphy produced outside the Guangdong region.<sup>162</sup> The HKMoA also acquired many items from the Sotheby's and Christie's sales in Hong Kong and other locations, finding this easier than searching through local dealers' shops:

*Auction items and items offered to the museum for consideration come with a price, whereas prices for most display items in local shops are available only on request. If the curator visits shops to do the preliminary scouting before inviting Honorary Advisers for detailed assessments and obtain the asked-for price of a selected item from one of the many shops, the arrangement is open to suspicion and abuse, and is not desirable. The situation is further aggravated by the fact that the market is believed to be flooded with smuggled goods and items of suspect sources.*<sup>163</sup>

The sale of Edward Chow's collection between 1980 and 1981 is often cited as a 'turning point' when his high-profile pieces attracted buyers in Hong Kong and achieved record-breaking

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<sup>160</sup> Memorandum for Members of the Museums Select Committee, Committee Paper MUS/64/92, 5 September 1992, HKRS1124-1-132, HKPRO.

<sup>161</sup> Memorandum, Committee Paper MUS/64/92, HKRS1124-1-132, HKPRO.

<sup>162</sup> Memorandum for Members of the Museums Select Committee, Committee Paper MUS/56/83, 4 June 1983, HKRS1104-1-9, HKPRO.

<sup>163</sup> Memorandum, Committee Paper MUS/67/92, HKRS1124-1-132, HKPRO.

results, signifying the emergence of a new generation of Hong Kong collectors who were willing to accept the British style and transparent nature of the auction business.<sup>164</sup> Hong Kong, with its diverse multicultural society, was very much accustomed to Western methods of governance and business, and a notable number of dealers including Chow had already started purchasing from auctions abroad in the late 1960s prior to their branches being established in the city. When Christie's started its first sales of jewellery and 20<sup>th</sup> century Chinese paintings in Hong Kong on 13 January 1986, Sotheby's Hong Kong had already held many successful sales in Hong Kong for over a decade, and many Christie's staff members have in hindsight lamented over the company's late arrival in Hong Kong where business opportunities in Asia were missed.<sup>165</sup>

The strength of the Hong Kong art market is reflected in various sources which mention incredible price inflations during this period. In a meeting held by the Urban Council on 27 November 1979, there was a discussion on setting ceiling bids for an upcoming Sotheby's sale, when the adviser to the HKMoA Dr Ip Yee mentioned that 'the prices in Hong Kong were generally high when compared with similar auctions in London and New York'.<sup>166</sup> In a letter sent from another museum adviser, Dr Philip W. C. Mao, to the Chairmain of the Cultural Services Select committee and Chairman for the Subcommittee for the Hong Kong Museum of Art Purchases in 1980, it was noted that:

*Economic changes, inflation in most major currencies associated with recession in other parts of the world, has made Hong Kong now an important centre for the buying & selling of Chinese antiques, especially ceramics. The steep rise in prices of the best pieces reflects not only the interests of genuine collectors, but also the fall in the value of money as well as the involvement of individuals & syndicates buying for investment or financial hedging. Prices therefore cannot fall....The value of the (museum) collection has*

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<sup>164</sup> Wang, *Chinese Antiquities*, 126-127; Richard W. C. Kan, "Preface," in *A Millennium of Monochromes From the Great Tang to the High Qing: The Baur and the Zhuyuetang Collections*, eds. Peter Y.K. Lam, Monique Crick and Laure Schwartz-Arenales (Hong Kong : The Zhuyuetang collection, 2018), 10.

<sup>165</sup> Colin Sheaf, 'Interview with Anthony du Boulay, *Arts of Asia* 49, no. 4 (July-August 2019): 79-83.

<sup>166</sup> Museums Select Committee, Committee Minutes MUS/9/79, 27 November 1979, HKRS1124-2-175 1978-1984, HKPRO.

*increased by leaps and bounds, in cash terms certainly more profitable than many other ventures of the Urban Council. This is therefore money well spent.*<sup>167</sup>

Furthermore, it was remarked in a Museums Select Committee meeting held in June 1979 that the prices at the local Sotheby's auctions had been 'going up all the time', hence it would be better for the Urban Council to make purchases abroad, such as in the UK, where prices were not so high.<sup>168</sup> Indeed it was reported that the museum was able to acquire items from the Sotheby's auction in London on 11 December 1979 'at very favourable low prices', and it was stated that 'prices in London were not as high as in Hong Kong perhaps because there were not so many keen competitors in London'.<sup>169</sup> The museum's success rate in winning items in the Hong Kong Sotheby's auctions in 1979 was only 20 to 30 percent, which shows they were competing against many other strong bidders.<sup>170</sup> Auction prices for Ming ceramics rose steadily throughout the 1970s and 1980s, with blue and white porcelain dating to the Xuande (1426-1435) and Chenghua (1465-1487) periods achieving the highest prices.<sup>171</sup> This was followed by an increase in prices for Qing ceramics, which could be found in greater quantities and better conditions, when collectors in the early 1990s onwards could no longer afford earlier Song to Ming ceramics.<sup>172</sup>

Apart from the dramatic rise in prices for Chinese ceramics, the values for Chinese painting and calligraphy also rose considerably, albeit not as quickly as the category of ceramics. In an Urban Council meeting held in September 1980, the advisers for the HKMoA, Chuang Shen 莊申 (1932-2000) and Low Chuck-Tiew, remarked on the market value of an album of calligraphy by Wu Li: 'the cost of the album was about \$40,000 ten years ago...at present, the break-up value of the 38-page album was estimated at about \$20,000 per page; therefore the cost of HK\$400,000 now offered was reasonable'.<sup>173</sup>

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<sup>167</sup> Memorandum for Members of the Cultural Services Select Committee, Committee Paper CS/203/80, 29 December 1980, HKRS1104-1-19 1980-1981, HKPRO.

<sup>168</sup> Museums Select Committee Minutes MUS/3/79, 6 June 1979, HKRS1104-1-2 1979-1980, HKPRO.

<sup>169</sup> Museums Select Committee meeting minutes MUS/11/79, 2 January 1980, HKRS1104-1-2 1979-1980, HKPRO.

<sup>170</sup> Museum Select Committee Minutes, Committee Paper MUS/9/79, 27 November 1979, HKRS1104-1-2 1979-1980, HKPRO.

<sup>171</sup> Wang, *Chinese Antiquities*, 81.

<sup>172</sup> *Ibid.*, 82-83.

<sup>173</sup> Cultural Services Select Committee, Committee Minutes CS/7/80, 15 September 1980, HKRS1104-1-18 1980-1981, HKPRO.

With the strong presence of Sotheby's and Christie's auction houses, Hong Kong had overtaken London and New York to become the premier auction site for Chinese art towards the end of the year 2000, taking the majority of global market share.<sup>174</sup> The two auction houses diversified their traditionally British businesses to suit Asian clients, hiring teams of multilingual specialists and taking advantage of the lenient business-friendly environment in Hong Kong to attract buyers, as there were no tariffs or sales tax imposed on the majority of objects entering or leaving the territory.<sup>175</sup>

## Collector Groups: Confucian Teachings and British Traditions

Following the founding of the Min Chiu Society, another collectors' group was formed during the 1970s. In March 1974, existing members of both the Oriental Ceramic Society in London and the Min Chiu Society in Hong Kong, including Dr Ip Yee, J. S. Lee, McElney and Dr Philip Wen-chee Mao, founded the Oriental Ceramic Society of Hong Kong (hereafter cited as the OCSHK).<sup>176</sup> While the Min Chiu Society's activities imitated traditional 'elegant gatherings' of Chinese literati, the OCSHK resembled other societies in Hong Kong which copied traditional British learned societies, such as the Royal Asiatic Society of Hong Kong, which was created in 1847 as a branch of its parent society in London – the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland.<sup>177</sup> The OCSHK was modelled on the Oriental Ceramic Society which had existed in London since 1921, and members of the Hong Kong society enjoyed reciprocal membership with the London society.<sup>178</sup> Founded to address a local desire to have an English-speaking society with a broader membership that encouraged new, emerging collectors, the OCSHK became a 'forum for arts professionals and amateur enthusiasts to share their interest in Asian art' unrestricted to ceramics, mounting exhibitions with the publication of exhibition catalogues and a *Bulletin* documenting papers delivered to the society by collectors, dealers, auction house professionals, curators and scholars in the field.<sup>179</sup> The society's first lecture

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<sup>174</sup> Wang, *Chinese Antiquities*, 139.

<sup>175</sup> *Ibid.*, 142 & 151.

<sup>176</sup> Pang, "Passion for Collecting," 52.

<sup>177</sup> The Royal Asiatic Society of Hong Kong was inactive between 1859 and 1959, but continues to offer lectures and fieldtrips to encourage interest in East Asia as a registered charitable institution today.

<sup>178</sup> Pang, "Passion for Collecting," 50.

<sup>179</sup> *Ibid.*

was given by Soame Jenyns, the Assistant Keeper of Oriental Antiquities at the British Museum, on the topic of Yixing teapots.<sup>180</sup> The first OCSHK exhibition was held in 1975, with the theme of Chinese blue and white porcelain. Sir John Addis (1914-1983), President of the Oriental Ceramic Society in London, wrote the introduction to the exhibition catalogue.<sup>181</sup> The society also held lectures and 'appreciation evenings' in which a panel of experts would discuss a specific topic of interest, creating 'an open environment' for all participants to learn about Asian art.<sup>182</sup> Although Angus Forsyth, the President of the OCSHK in 1984, insisted that the society was 'entirely locally established and fully autonomous', run by local collectors committed to having an open international platform for discussions on Chinese art, the appropriation of British frameworks and adoption of British expertise in furthering knowledge on Chinese art nonetheless demonstrate that the society was an extension of colonial attitudes towards collecting.<sup>183</sup>

Apart from the OCSHK, the founding of a number of English periodicals and specialist magazines associated with the trade and connoisseurship of Chinese art, such as *Arts of Asia* and *Orientations*, which both started publishing in 1970, show that there was a good amount of interest in studying, collecting and dealing in Chinese art from English speakers in Hong Kong. Some of these publications were also widely read by international collectors of Chinese art outside Hong Kong, reflecting the role Hong Kong held in the international dissemination of Chinese art knowledge. Other than these, Chinese publications like *Han Mo* 名家翰墨, which started publishing in 1990, catered to a more local and regional Chinese readership mostly based in Hong Kong and Taiwan.

In 1979, the Kau Chi Society 求知雅集, which included dealers as well as collectors in its membership base, was founded as a response to the Min Chiu and OCSHK's rejection of dealers or dealer-collectors such as Robert Chang who were seen to be motivated by commercial interests in their collecting. The Kau Chi Society also mounted public exhibitions and published related catalogues to promote Chinese art to a wider audience. Although there

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<sup>180</sup> Ibid.

<sup>181</sup> John Addis, "Introduction," in *Exhibition of Chinese Blue and White Porcelain and Related Underglaze Red*, (Hong Kong: Oriental Ceramic Society of Hong Kong, 1975), 9-16.

<sup>182</sup> Pang, "Passion for Collecting," 51.

<sup>183</sup> A. H. Forsyth, "Oriental Ceramic Society Explains Functions, Goals," *Hong Kong South China Morning Post*, 27 November 1984, 26, accessed 18<sup>th</sup> June 2020:

<https://search.proquest.com/docview/1537859918?accountid=16710>.

are discernible differences between the three collecting societies, all of them were committed to sharing their collections with the public, which undoubtedly boosted the reputation and value of their collections and their status as collectors or dealers, following not just the Chinese tradition of discussing objects in the form of ‘elegant gatherings’ (the Kau Chi Society’s Chinese name in fact uses the term *yaji* for ‘elegant gathering’) but also appropriating Western methods of educating the wider public through exhibitions and scholarly publications.

Another obvious continuation of traditional Chinese methods in Chinese art connoisseurship in Hong Kong is seen in the widespread adoption of hall marks or pseudonyms to represent collections or collectors. All four representative collectors discussed in this thesis used hall marks or pseudonyms, and even Western collectors and dealers in Hong Kong like Hugh Moss, who goes by the name Master of the Water, Pine and Stone Retreat 水松石山房主人, adopted this practice. However, although Chinese and Western collectors largely worked together to promote Chinese art and often shared cultural practices in their collecting methods, animosity between the groups was not unknown. On one hand, Lally observes that the European approach of judging an artwork based on empirical testing was embraced by Western-educated Hong Kong Chinese, and local dealers like K. Y. Ng praised the methods of several Westerners such as McElney for having a ‘good eye’ (while the term a ‘good eye’ is often used to applaud one’s ‘intrinsic ability’ to appreciate or appraise artworks, it in fact merely shows one’s adherence to accepted norms of judgement; in this case Ng’s adoption of the term in regards to McElney simply indicates that Ng agreed with McElney’s connoisseurship standards and appraisal methods).<sup>184</sup> On the other hand, Wear observes that some Hong Kong Chinese who adopted self-proclaimed ‘Chinese models’ or ‘Chinese taste’ in collecting, defined as more reliant on ‘empathy and intuitive judgements’, were dismissive of ‘scientific, Western analysis’ held by Western-educated collectors; distinctions between these

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<sup>184</sup> Lally, interview, CCAHK ; Deyuan Liu 劉德媛 and K. Y. Ng 吳繼遠, “Du Ju Hui Yan Tui Chen Chu Xin - Wu Ji Yuan Xian Sheng Fang Tan 獨具慧眼 推陳出新 - 吳繼遠先生訪談,” in *Ming Jia Tan Shou Cang - Jing Yan Piao (Shang) 名家談收藏 - 經驗篇 (上)*, ed. Hua Ren Shou Cang Jia Da Hui Zu Wei Hui 華人收藏家大會組委會 (Shanghai: Dongfang Publishing, 2009), 198. As Bourdieu states, the ‘eye’ is ‘a product of history reproduced by education’; Bourdieu, *Distinction*, 3.

two groups were often upheld by those who felt excluded from either Chinese or Western circles of collecting.<sup>185</sup>

## Political Apprehension and Collection Management: the 1980s-1990s

From the 1980s onwards, in the years leading up to the return of Hong Kong to China in 1997, feelings of Chinese nationalistic pride were combined with a sense of apprehension towards a new unfamiliar sovereignty. After two years of formal negotiations between the British and Chinese governments, the Sino-British Joint Declaration was signed in Beijing in 1984, confirming that the transfer of sovereignty over Hong Kong would take place on 1 July 1997. Widespread reports of bloodshed during the crackdown on pro-democracy protestors in Beijing's Tiananmen Square on 4 June 1989 fuelled fears that reunification with China would change existing lifestyles in Hong Kong, despite promises outlined in the Basic Law that Hong Kong as a Special Administrative Region would retain its own judiciary structure under the slogan 'One Country Two Systems'. Many Hong Kong citizens, frightened of living under Communist rule, emigrated or found secondary homes in countries such as Singapore, Canada and Australia. Expatriates also became concerned about their future in Hong Kong – apprehensive of the 1997 handover, Hugh Moss moved back to England in 1995.<sup>186</sup> Singapore's first Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew (1923-2015) recalled that six weeks after the Tiananmen crackdown, Singapore offered Hong Kong families Approval In-Principle permanent residency, and when applications opened huge queues formed outside the Singapore Commission in Hong Kong, almost causing a riot.<sup>187</sup> A year later Singapore had granted a total of 50,000 AIPs, eliminating those who did not qualify due to a lack of necessary education or skills.<sup>188</sup>

With the sufferings of collectors and artists under the Cultural Revolution fresh in their minds, and fearful that Chinese export regulations would be extended to restrict the art trade in Hong Kong, many Hong Kong collectors began to consider relocating their collections to

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<sup>185</sup> Wear, "Patterns," 67-68 & 283-286; Wear, "Sense," 199.

<sup>186</sup> Wear, "Patterns," 298.

<sup>187</sup> Kuan Yew Lee, *From Third World to First: Singapore and the Asian Economic Boom*. New York: Harper Perennial, 2013), 548.

<sup>188</sup> *Ibid.*

overseas storage facilities. Lally noted that 'the mainland government was very savvy and very carefully made every effort to tell people that nothing was going to change. But this is the same government that told people nothing was going to change in 1949, so people naturally didn't believe them.'<sup>189</sup> Indeed, it was reported by the *South China Sunday Morning Post* that when in February 1997 Zhang Wenbin, director of the State Bureau of Cultural Relics, reassured Hong Kong that it will be able to make its own laws, it 'doesn't seem to have done much to settle nerves'.<sup>190</sup> Christie's actively promoted a warehouse service in London for Hong Kong clients to store their collections overseas, and the auction house acknowledged that many were using the service.<sup>191</sup> Many Hong Kong collections were moved to overseas safes, placed on loan or donated to overseas institutions at this time, although the motivations behind these donations were not made explicitly clear in fear of appearing 'unpatriotic' towards China. In February 1997, it was reported in the *Guardian* that 'works of art worth one billion pounds may have been moved out of Hong Kong as the colony prepares for the handover to Chinese rule'.<sup>192</sup>

Apart from physical objects, private financial sponsorship from Hong Kong collectors was extended to museums worldwide to support redisplay of Chinese art. In Britain, two major renovations of Chinese art galleries in national museums were sponsored by Hong Kong businessmen: the T. T. Tsui Gallery at the Victoria and Albert Museum (1991) and the Joseph Hotung Gallery of Oriental Antiquities at the British Museum (1992). While such art sponsorship disrupts the existing balance of power between Britain and Hong Kong, the following case study of Tsui presented in Chapter Six sheds light on how these philanthropic acts have political undertones, in his case specifically related to international business and diplomacy. As Barringer and Flynn suggest, objects play a complex role in the shifting economic and political geography of the 'post-colonial' world; and the way Hong Kong

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<sup>189</sup> Lally, interview, "CCAHK" Project Archive.

<sup>190</sup> Alice Cairns, "Bullish in The China Shop: Hong Kong's Auction Rooms Are Awash with Rumours That China Will Clamp Down on The Profitable Antiques Trade After The Handover," *South China Sunday Morning Post* (1985-2000), 27 April 1997, 94. Accessed 27 June 2020: <https://search.proquest.com/docview/1799643595?accountid=16710>.

<sup>191</sup> Cairns, "Bullish."

<sup>192</sup> D. Glaister, "Hong Kong's Nervous Art Collectors Export Works," *Guardian*, 10 February 1997, 8.

collections were handled during this period underline the sometimes problematic and contentious meanings attached to Chinese art.<sup>193</sup>

Other collectors who remained in Hong Kong were optimistic about the handover and believed that promotion of Chinese art and culture could help consolidate the relationship between Hong Kong and the mainland as the two reconciled on a political level. As part of government efforts to generate a better sense of belonging and optimism for the future amidst political ambivalence, the Hong Kong Cultural Centre was constructed on the prominent Tsim Sha Tsui waterfront, with the opening ceremony in 1989 officiated by Prince Charles and Princess Diana. In 1991, the HKMoA moved from its old premises in City Hall in Central to join the Cultural Centre complex, where a much larger space enabled further expansion of the museum's collection and exhibition programmes. In 1995, the Hong Kong Arts Development Council was established by the Hong Kong government to support the development of the arts in the city, while the Flagstaff House Museum of Tea Ware constructed a new wing to house the collection of Chinese ceramics and seals donated by K. S. Lo in the 1970s.

In 1997, the exhibition *National Treasures – Gems of China's Cultural Relics Exhibition*, jointly presented by China's State Bureau of Cultural Relics and Hong Kong's Provisional Urban Council and organised by the HKMoA, the National Museum of Chinese History and the China Cultural Relics Promotion Centre, was mounted to celebrate Hong Kong's reunification with China.<sup>194</sup> The overtly political agenda of the exhibition is obvious from the HKMoA curator's statement on the 'meaning' of the exhibition, which in his view lies in enabling Hong Kong citizens to 'find' their identity through understanding their Chinese cultural tradition, condemning the 'shallow thought of regarding anything Western as superior and any mode Western as advanced'.<sup>195</sup> The exhibition featured over 160 exhibits drawn from over 30 institutions in Hong Kong and the mainland, attracting a high number of visitors. A year later, *Egyptian Treasures from the British Museum* became the most well-received exhibition at the

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<sup>193</sup> Tim Barringer and Tom Flynn, "Introduction," in *Colonialism and the Object: Empire, Material Culture and the Museum*, eds. Tim Barringer and Tom Flynn (London: Routledge, 1998), 7-8.

<sup>194</sup> Wenbin Zhang, "Message by the Director of the State Bureau of Cultural Relics," in *National Treasures – Gems of China's Cultural Relics* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong : Provisional Urban Council of Hong Kong, 1997), 11.

<sup>195</sup> Gerald C. C. Tsang, "Preface by the Chief Curator of Hong Kong Museum of Art," in *National Treasures – Gems of China's Cultural Relics* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong : Provisional Urban Council of Hong Kong, 1997), 29.

time, demonstrating that the local appetite for traditional Chinese as well as foreign artefacts and culture from a famous British institution was strong.

1997 proved to be a catalytic historical juncture when Hong Kong citizens reflected upon their mixed cultural identity. While Hong Kong won its first ever gold medal at the 1996 Summer Olympics, heightening the city's sense of local pride, Hong Kong artists also gained more international recognition from 1997 onwards as they secured a stronger sense of identity through a wide variety of artistic styles.<sup>196</sup> The Chinese art collecting scene in Hong Kong by then consisted of several world-renowned collector groups, established museums which regularly presented Chinese art displays to a multilingual audience, and a buoyant art market that was at the epicentre of the international trade for Chinese art.

It was under this context that the four representative collectors of this thesis developed their collections. This was a time when collector groups, museums and the art market benefitted from Hong Kong's unique political situation at the intersection of Chinese and British influence, its advantageous geographical location which was close to sources of Chinese art, the rapid expansion of its art market as a result of economic success and favourable trade terms, and its cultural diversity shaped by a wide range of social groups which led to the adoption of both traditionally Chinese and Western approaches to collecting Chinese art in the British colony.

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<sup>196</sup> Windsurfer Lee Lai Shan 李麗珊 (1970-) is still to date the only Olympic gold medallist representing Hong Kong. Raymond Tang, "Hong Kong Experience-Hong Kong Experiment," *Arts of Asia* 49, no. 6, (November-December 2019): 54-55.

## Chapter Three: The Cosmopolitan Dealer-Collector Edward T. Chow

The first collector to be examined is Edward T. Chow, whose life history will demonstrate the impact of Shanghai migrants in bringing their collections and expertise to Hong Kong, where they shaped the connoisseurship of Chinese art by developing new collecting trends (others of this group include J. M. Hu, T. Y. Chao, T. Y. King, P. C. Lu and Robert Chang). In mapping the trajectory of Chow's career and collecting activities in light of wider political, economic and social contexts, this chapter also exemplifies how Hong Kong provided opportunities for those like Chow to use his dual identity as collector and dealer to pursue business opportunities and secure social standing through cross-cultural methods. A chronological approach is adopted for ease of understanding, and reviews of existing sources will be woven into this reconstruction of Chow's biography, so as to address key discrepancies in related scholarship and point out areas which require further clarification. To this effect, unpublished documents from the Chow family archive and interviews with his family members and acquaintances have been invaluable in shedding light on previously unknown facts about Chow.

Known to his close friends and acquaintances as 'Eddie', he is now most commonly referred to as 'E. T. Chow'. Many other Hong Kong Chinese names were similarly abbreviated and reordered in the English fashion so that the last name follows the first name (such as T. T. Tsui for the full Chinese name Tsui Tsin Tong, Tsui being the last name) to enable easier pronunciation and more convenient writing in English, which was the official language of the crown colony. In the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, it was rare for a Hong Kong Chinese to have an English name, yet Chow had his English name Edward prior to his arrival in Hong Kong, hinting at the westernised way of life he had led in Shanghai. Although the initial 'T' in his name is almost never seen in its full form wherever Chow's name is mentioned, the certificate for Chow's naturalisation to become a British subject stored at the National Archives in Kew, dated to 8 July 1958, reveals that it stood for 'Tse', probably a phoneticised version of the second half of his Chinese first name 之.<sup>197</sup>

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<sup>197</sup> Naturalisation Certificate O26597 issued 8 July 1958, reference HO 334/309/26597, The National Archives, Kew.

## Early Years in Shanghai: Apprenticeship at Jingu Zhai, Mentorship of Melchior, Setting Up Business and Wartime Friendships

### Apprenticeship at Jingu Zhai

It is rumoured that Chow was a descendant of the famous Ming painter Qiu Ying 仇英 (ca. 1494-1552). The media perpetuates this lineage to add glamour to Chow's reputation, but there is no substantial proof for this apart from the fact that both Qiu and Chow originated from the Taicang region and share the same last name (which can be 'Qiu' or 'Chow' in English depending on different methods of transliteration). As Chow's son Franklin Chow 仇大雄 (1946-) once disclosed, this ancestry was 'never explained' and he did not question his father about it.<sup>198</sup>

In 1910, Chow was born in Yangzhou, a city steeped in rich cultural history which prospered under the salt trade in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Wealthy merchants became patrons of art, enabling the Yangzhou art market to flourish and sponsoring the development of new artistic innovations such as the expressive and individualist style of the Eight Eccentrics of Yangzhou 揚州八怪. However, the area suffered from a period of destruction when the Taiping Revolution swept through the city in 1853, and subsequent waves of political upheaval and natural disasters led to the decline of Yangzhou, prompting local artists and scholars to relocate to neighbouring Shanghai where foreign settlements and modernisation offered better prospects for the new generation.<sup>199</sup> As Chow did not enjoy school in his youth, he discontinued his education and became part of this wider migration trend as he moved to Shanghai in search of work opportunities.

At the age of thirteen, Chow started an apprenticeship in Shanghai in 1923 to learn under the dealer Zhu Heting 朱鶴亭 in his shop Jingu Zhai 晉古齋, which was famous for selling Song period Longquan celadon ware. Zhu Heting also originated from Yangzhou, and hired another Yangzhou apprentice Chen Yu Chieh 陳玉階 (1922-2012), otherwise known as Y. C. Chen, who

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<sup>198</sup> Lindy Poh, "Rambling (P)Rose: Interview with the Artist," in *Re.Turn: Recent Works of Franklin Chow*, eds. Wendy Cheong, Melody Gocheco, and Lindy Poh (Singapore: ArtPost Asia, 2009), 52.

<sup>199</sup> Antonia Finnane, *Speaking of Yangzhou: A Chinese City, 1550-1850* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004), 310-12.

worked in Jingu Zhai after Chow left the shop.<sup>200</sup> According to Chen, ‘Master Zhu’ smoked opium and didn’t rise before noon, and that his tasks included cleaning opium pipes and sweeping the floor.<sup>201</sup> Chow probably performed the same duties at Jingu Zhai, and also prepared tea for guests. Boode noted in his autobiography that:

*The assistant of one of my opium-smoking dealer friends, who, in his youth was severely rebuked for being dilatory in his serving tea, is now a prominent Antique dealer in Hong Kong. He has held an exhibition of old Chinese Art in New York and has twice made a trip around the world, accompanied by the eldest son of his concubine, staying in the most expensive hotel when in London.*

*Who could have thought 30 years ago that that Shanghai shop-assistant would have achieved such advancement in such troublous times by his own unaided efforts?<sup>202</sup>*

Although Boode did not name this individual, no one else but Chow seems to match this description which illustrates a dramatic rise to success as an international dealer. Chow had indeed held an exhibition of his collection in New York and travelled around the world by the time of Boode’s writing in 1967. In Chow’s unpublished memoir, it is revealed that he was acquainted with Boode and sometimes selected Song period celadon ware and Ming period (1368-1644) porcelains for Boode to sell to the European market.<sup>203</sup>

## Mentorship of Melchior

Although Chow is often perceived to be as an advocate of ‘Chinese taste’ and ‘Chinese perspectives’ on art, he actually befriended many Western collectors and dealers during his early training, and it may be suggested that he appropriated their methods of collecting and

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<sup>200</sup> Chen later became a dealer-collector himself and also moved to Hong Kong.

<sup>201</sup> Jonathan Stone, “Teacher and Mentor – Mr Yu Chieh Chen,” in *Pursuit of Refinement – A Legacy of the YC Chen Collection*, Christie’s Hong Kong, 29 May 2013, (Hong Kong: Christie’s Hong Kong, 2013), accessed 8 January 2017,

[http://www.christies.com/lotfinder/lot\\_details.aspx?intObjectID=5689668&from=salesummery&intobjectid=5689668&sid=4b7a2b3a-224d-4990-a223-5a04f824bf2f](http://www.christies.com/lotfinder/lot_details.aspx?intObjectID=5689668&from=salesummery&intobjectid=5689668&sid=4b7a2b3a-224d-4990-a223-5a04f824bf2f); Anthony Lin, “A Personal Tribute,” in *Pursuit of Refinement - A Legacy of the YC Chen Collection*, Christie’s Hong Kong, 29 May 2013, (Hong Kong: Christie’s Hong Kong, 2013), accessed 8 January 2017, [http://www.christies.com/lotfinder/lot\\_details.aspx?intObjectID=5689668&from=salesummery&intobjectid=5689668&sid=4b7a2b3a-224d-4990-a223-5a04f824bf2f](http://www.christies.com/lotfinder/lot_details.aspx?intObjectID=5689668&from=salesummery&intobjectid=5689668&sid=4b7a2b3a-224d-4990-a223-5a04f824bf2f)

<sup>202</sup> Boode, “Chinese Antique Dealer,” 99, SOAS Archive.

<sup>203</sup> Edward T. Chow, *Memoir*, 1979, 11, Chow Family Archive, Lausanne.

studying Chinese art.<sup>204</sup> In 1924, Chow met Jacob Emil Melchior (1879 -1944), a Danish Jew who had converted to Catholicism and worked for the Shanghai Maritime Customs Service (fig. 1). Melchior arrived in China in 1904 when he began to collect ceramics, specifically focusing on Han (206 BC-220 AD) and Song pieces.<sup>205</sup> Melchior advised Chow that dealing is not as important as collecting, thus Chow kept more pieces than he sold in his lifetime.<sup>206</sup> Chow often visited the dealer Zhang Zhongying 張仲英 (1899-1969), more widely known as the father of dealer-collector Robert Chang, in his shop Juzhen Zhai 聚珍齋, and Zhang's eldest son Zhang Yongfang 張永芳 (1925-) recalls how Chow worked very hard to learn English and gained Melchior's favour.<sup>207</sup> Although Zhang Yongfang's memoir cannot be relied on for complete accuracy, his first-hand account is useful for shaping our vision of Chow's environment at the time as one of the only sources which reveal details of Melchior's life.<sup>208</sup> Chow also learned French which opened up further business opportunities for him.<sup>209</sup> Whenever Chow had spare time he would visit Melchior's spacious house on Yuyuan Road where Melchior had lived since 1940. Here Melchior displayed his collection, and he also reserved space in a room on the second floor for Chow to house his collection. Unmarried with no children, Melchior gradually saw Chow as his own son; Chow himself had lost his father in 1932 when he was only 22 years old.

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<sup>204</sup> Beurdeley recalls that in 1954 his taste was 'based on Western criteria' and Chow introduced him to the notions of 'Chinese taste', which was reflected in Chow's collection; see Michel Beurdeley, "Foreword," in *The Edward T. Chow Collection: Part One Catalogue of Ming and Qing Porcelain* (Hong Kong: Sotheby Parke Bernet, 1980), 6. Jan Chapman also comments on how she was in awe of the 'Chineseness' of Chow's apartment in Geneva which could be described as a 'Chinese temple', where she was greeted by Chow wearing a long Chinese robe; see Jan Chapman, "Collecting and Connoisseurship," in *Rhinoceros Horn Carvings from the Edward & Franklin Chow Collection* (Hong Kong: Sotheby's, 2011), 12.

<sup>205</sup> Michel Beurdeley and Marie-Thérèse Lambert-Brouillet, *L'eunuque aux Trois Joyaux* (Fribourg: Office du Livre, 1984), 217-18.

<sup>206</sup> James Stourton, "E.T. Chow (1910-1980)," in *Playthings from the Collection of Edward T Chow, 27 May 2014, Sotheby's Hong Kong* (Hong Kong: Sotheby's), 12.

<sup>207</sup> Yongfang Zhang, "Zhuinian Qiu Yanzhi Xiansheng - Du Hu Yongyan Zhuwen Yougan" 追念仇焱之先生 - 讀胡永芳著文有感, *CANS Taipei* 61, (December 2002): 76-78.

<sup>208</sup> It is particularly difficult to trace Chinese records of Melchior as he did not seem to have a specific Chinese name; he is sometimes referred to as 邁力臣 and at other times 梅嘉.

<sup>209</sup> Frances Wood's research on Shanghai reveals the sense of segregation between the local and foreign communities, where foreigners rarely learned Chinese. See Frances Wood, *No Dogs and Not Many Chinese: Treaty Port Life in China, 1843-1943* (London: John Murray, 2000).

## Setting up Business

During his time in Shanghai, Chow was acquainted with a group of influential international dealers who undoubtedly made him aware of the global opportunities offered by the Chinese art trade. Chow recalls that Melchior and two other 'best friends' of his, Woo Chi Chou 吳啟周 (?-1960) and F. J. Abbott (?-1960?), encouraged him to leave Jingu Zhai and commence his own business.<sup>210</sup> Woo was the major business partner of the international dealer C. T. Loo and managed their company's branch in Shanghai, and Abbott was the main representative of the London-based dealer John Sparks in China. In June 1928, at the age of twenty, Chow had gained enough experience and funds to amass a small collection of Chinese art and open his business at 44 Sung Shan Road (also known as Rue Baron Gros) in the French Concession, where he rented a three-storey house. With spacious and tranquil tree-lined streets, the French Concession was a popular choice for the 'well-to-do Chinese'.<sup>211</sup> His shop was called Qiu Yanji 仇焱記, also known as Qiu Yanzhi Wenwan Hui 仇焱之文玩會 ('Antiques Club of Edward Chow'). In his house, the living room on the ground floor received guests, the first floor displayed antiques for business, and the bedroom was on the second floor. This idea of dealing at home was highly unusual in Shanghai, and in Zhang Yongfang's opinion this was a concept that Chow pioneered.<sup>212</sup> In fact, Chow's practice resembles the operations of 'gentlemen-dealers' at the time, as summarised by Boode:

*Besides the professional Chinese Antique dealers there were also a small number of amateurs, gentlemen-dealers... with whom one very seldom or ever came in personal contact as openly selling or bargaining with a European buyer would be below their dignity.*<sup>213</sup>

However, Chow was certainly not an amateur in the field, and he hardly worried about being seen in the company of Europeans. In 1930, Woo Chi Chou and Mr and Mrs Abbott invited Chow to accompany them to Peiping (Beijing) where he stayed for one month. Chow visited the Palace Museum a few times during this trip, which he considered to be an 'eye-opening

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<sup>210</sup> Chow, Memoir, 3, Chow Family Archive.

<sup>211</sup> Wood, *No Dogs*, 266.

<sup>212</sup> Zhang, "Zhuinian," 76.

<sup>213</sup> Boode, "Chinese Antique Dealer," 4, SOAS Archive.

experience'.<sup>214</sup> This experience would have given Chow an understanding of the collecting tastes of the Qing imperial court, a taste that he followed throughout his career as seen in his pursuit of the same items that Qing emperors collected, such as early Ming blue and white and Chenghua period *doucai* porcelain. During this trip they also dined with Monique Loo (1913-2006), daughter of C. T. Loo, who was in town to source objects for her father's business.<sup>215</sup> A photograph of the group was taken after the dinner (fig. 2), and this photograph was later labelled with the names of each individual present, framed and displayed in Chow's exhibition of Chinese art in 1946, perhaps showcasing his networks in the trade to legitimise his standing in the market (fig. 3).

During this time, Chinese art connoisseurship was gaining momentum in London, led by the Oriental Ceramic Society. Chow met three key players of the society at Sung Shan Road in 1930 – R. L. Hobson (1872-1941), Keeper of Oriental Antiquities and Ethnography at the British Museum and co-founder of the Oriental Ceramic Society; George Eumorfopoulos, a renowned Chinese art collector and also co-founder of the Oriental Ceramic Society; and Sir Percival David, a distinguished scholar and collector of Chinese art – when they were in China to arrange the International Exhibition of Chinese Art at Burlington House in London held in 1935-36.<sup>216</sup> Sometime between 1932 and 1933, Chow brought David to Zhang Zhongying's Juzhen Zhai, where David purportedly bought almost everything in the shop; Chow received a generous commission for this transaction.<sup>217</sup> In 1941, David travelled to Shanghai again just after the bombing of Pearl Harbour.<sup>218</sup> He met up with Chow several times, and they exchanged views on Chinese art produced from the early to late periods.<sup>219</sup> One afternoon, David visited Chow's collection and they became so absorbed in discussing the items in the collection that they forgot about the wartime curfew, which was from 8pm to 6am, so they continued their conversation through half of the night.<sup>220</sup> In his unpublished memoir written in the 1970s, Chow recalls that David had 'wonderful' judgment and they 'agreed on most things'.<sup>221</sup> Although a wealth of Chinese art was available in Shanghai, there was limited in-

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<sup>214</sup> Chow, Memoir, 4, Chow Family Archive.

<sup>215</sup> Chow, Memoir, 5, Chow Family Archive.

<sup>216</sup> Chow, Memoir, 7, Chow Family Archive.

<sup>217</sup> Zhang, "Zhuinian," 77.

<sup>218</sup> Pierson, *Collectors, Collections and Museums*, 164.

<sup>219</sup> Chow, Memoir, 7, Chow Family Archive.

<sup>220</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>221</sup> *Ibid.*

depth, systematic research on Chinese art history, which David was involved with in London. With his eagerness to learn, it is not difficult to see why Chow connected well with David. The two collectors shared an interest in imperial Ming ceramics, and both of them became famous for the rare early Ming pieces in their respective collections.

## Wartime Friendships

Chow continued his business as normally as possible throughout the Second Sino-Japanese War (1937-1945). As China descended into chaos following Japan's invasion of North China, refugees from provincial cities flooded into Shanghai, bringing more Chinese art collections to dealers who still had wealthy buyers for them. Around 1940, Melchior gifted Chow a Yuan period (1271-1368) Longquan celadon vase for his thirtieth birthday, which Chow cherished throughout his life.<sup>222</sup> Decorated with the phrase *fu shou kang ning* 福壽康寧 for good fortune, longevity, health and peace, this auspicious vase seemed a particularly suitable gift during times of political turmoil, and symbolises the close relationship between the two men.<sup>223</sup> As Chow continued to build his reputation in the art trade, his name became known as 'a label of quality'; however, as the Japanese forces took over the French Concession in 1941, the Shanghai antiques trade gradually turned downhill.<sup>224</sup>

As a survival method, Chow and five other Shanghai dealers set up the Six Companies 六公司 to pool their resources.<sup>225</sup> This alliance included Zhang Zhongying; Dai Fubao 戴福葆 (1910-1992), later known as J. T. Tai; Zhang Xuegeng 張雪耕 (1902-?); Hong Yulin 洪玉琳 (1909-?) and Guan Fuchu 管復初 (n. d.). Chow also befriended Helen D. Ling (1901-1982), an American dealer-collector who had lived in Shanghai since 1931 and ran the antiques shop the Green Dragon, located in the Central Arcade on Nanking Road, and which was 'oriented toward Western tastes' with very few Chinese customers.<sup>226</sup> Although the bond between Chow and Ling is rarely mentioned in writings on Chow, Martha Bari's research on Ling uncovers many

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<sup>222</sup> Chow, Memoir, 4, Chow Family Archive.

<sup>223</sup> The word for 'vase' in Chinese provides the homophone for 'peace'.

<sup>224</sup> Beurdeley and Lambert-Brouillet, *L'eunuque aux Trois Joyaux*, 218.

<sup>225</sup> Yongfang Zhang, *Zhongguo Diyi Guwan Jiazu Mishi* - 中國第一古玩家族秘史 (Hong Kong: Huanqiu Shiye Gongsì, 2007), 103.

<sup>226</sup> See the published memoir of Helen Ling's son James; James G. Ling, *Shanghai Occupied: A Boy's Tale of World War II* (USA: Outskirts Press, 2017), 129.

stories related to Chow, and through the lens of Ling we can explore the activities of their exclusive social network.<sup>227</sup>

Ling, Chow, Melchior and a German collector named Hans W. Siegel (n. d.) shared an interest in Chinese art and formed a small study group. In 1943 they started cataloguing Melchior's Chinese ceramics. *Early Chinese Potteries and Porcelains of the Shang, Chou, Chin, Han dynasties* and *Ying Ching Porcelains of the Tang and Sung Dynasties* by Siegel and Ling were published as manuscripts in 1945, one year after Melchior passed away in 1944. Since Chow's name does not feature as one of the authors, he probably participated in their research sessions but did not contribute to the cataloguing text. Besides learning from Melchior, Chow also obtained pieces from Melchior's collection after his death.<sup>228</sup> Furthermore, Chow and Melchior's methods of display were strikingly similar. When comparing photos of Melchior's collection in 1939 to photos of Chow's exhibition in 1946, both of them evidently used Western-style wooden cases and tall display tables, with some of the vessels containing decorative plants.<sup>229</sup> Chow also displayed objects on a mantelpiece above a European-style fireplace (fig. 5). This interior style can be identified as part of a larger trend in Shanghai at the time:

*Whether the inhabitants of such houses in Shanghai were compradors or simply Chinese who had acquired their wealth by other means, their houses were generally replete with heavy furniture in dark wood, potted plants, huge Chinese pots in porcelain or cloisonné, and glass-fronted cupboards filled with curios.*<sup>230</sup>

This style of display may also be associated with a new exhibition culture in China in the 1930s, when objects were displayed on walls or in glass cabinets for the first time, viewed by an

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<sup>227</sup> Martha Ann Bari, "Helen D. Ling: Dealer, Collector, and Connoisseur," in *The Helen D. Ling Collection of Chinese Ceramics*, ed. Jason C. Kuo (College Park, Md. Seattle: The Art Gallery in association with the Department of Art History and Archaeology, University of Maryland, 1995), 1–19.

<sup>228</sup> Zhang Yongfang states that Melchior had named Chow in his will so that half of his collection and bank savings went to Chow, while the other half went to the Danish government. See Zhang, "Zhuinian," 78. However, this contradicts with Ling's account which suggests that Ling, Chow and Siegel were allowed to purchase Melchior's collection from the estate and divide the objects between the three of them, as appreciation of their work on the catalogues. See Bari, "Helen D. Ling," 8.

<sup>229</sup> Compare figs 3-5 with photographs of Melchior's collection of Chinese ceramics, illustrated by Bari, "Helen D. Ling," 7.

<sup>230</sup> Wood, *No Dogs*, 258.

audience with no direct or personal connection with the objects, signifying ‘a sea change in the once-intimate relationship between art objects and their owners in imperial China’.<sup>231</sup>

Sometime between the late 1930s and 1940s, Chow shared a new home with his second wife Kao Van Gin (?-1992), later known as Virginia Chow, in an apartment in Eddington House on 195 Hart Road, Bubbling Well Road (now Nanking West Road). This European-style building with eight floors was built by an Italian in 1936. It was inhabited by upper-middle-class families, its most famous resident being the celebrated novelist Eileen Chang 張愛玲 (1920-1995), who wrote *Love in a Fallen City* 傾城之戀 (1943) when she lived there.<sup>232</sup> Helen Ling’s son, James Ling, visited the apartment and remembers that it was ‘very exquisitely decorated with Chinese art objects’.<sup>233</sup> Zhang Yongfang also visited this apartment twice and recalls that the interior was decorated in a completely Western fashion with glass cases displaying ceramics.<sup>234</sup>

At the time when Chow lived in Eddington House, the nightlife of Shanghai was flourishing, and the city gained a reputation as the ‘Paris of the Orient’ after Western-style cabarets, ballrooms and nightclubs became fashionable in the treaty port.<sup>235</sup> Bubbling Well Road boasted grand dance halls and entertainment institutions, including the nightclub *Ciro’s* 仙樂斯, built in 1936.<sup>236</sup> Financed and built by the Sassoon Company, incidentally owned by Sir Percival David’s family, this nightclub was designed by the British architectural firm Palmer and Turner, and became a popular haunt for the political and financial elites in Shanghai.<sup>237</sup> Chow partook in this exclusive circle, and it was at *Ciro’s* where he met Kao Van Gin. Evidently, Chow not only appropriated Western modes of collecting and displaying Chinese art; his private residence and social circles were also informed by the cosmopolitan way of life maintained by the affluent classes of Shanghai.

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<sup>231</sup> Chan, “Representations,” 71.

<sup>232</sup> Many of Chang’s stories, some of which are loosely autobiographical, captured the complex social contexts of war-torn Shanghai and Hong Kong in the 1930s and 1940s. Thanks to the fame of Eileen Chang, Eddington House is now a popular stop for tourists who are fans of her work.

<sup>233</sup> James G. Ling, interview by author, 19 May 2018.

<sup>234</sup> Zhang, “Zhuinian,” 77

<sup>235</sup> Field, *Shanghai’s Dancing World*, 83.

<sup>236</sup> *Ibid.*, 104.

<sup>237</sup> *Ibid.*, 104-106.

As the Second World War drew to a close, civil war between the Communists and the Nationalists resumed. Chow continued to ally with other dealers by joining the Shanghai Dealers' Union. He presented the first exhibition of his collection in 1946 at Sung Shan Road under his hall name *Kangxi Zhai* 抗希齋 (the Hall of Disciplined Learning), featuring mostly Ming ceramics. Chow was one of the earliest dealers to focus on studying and collecting Ming porcelain, when others were more preoccupied with Song ceramics. He started buying these objects before others did – he saw the business potential of this category and it was in his own interests to promote it, ensuring that they would appreciate in value. His efforts in shaping a market for Ming porcelain became part of a wider global movement in raising the status of Ming porcelain as an area of interest for collecting, academic scholarship and investment. In a survey on shifting market trends authored by dealer Roger Bluett (1925-2000), who worked for the family business Bluett & Sons, Bluett outlines how Gerald Reitlinger and Martin Button's articles in the *Burlington Magazine* in 1948, the Philadelphia Museum of Art's exhibition of Ming blue and white porcelain in 1949 and John Alexander Pope's work on the Ardebil Collection at Tehran in the 1950s reconsidered the dating of early Ming ceramics, heightening their significance as a category and indirectly pushing up their prices in the market as collectors sought to acquire them.<sup>238</sup> For example, in the catalogue of the Philadelphia exhibition, the museum curator Jean Gordon Lee notes how extensive 16<sup>th</sup> century copies of earlier Xuande period blue and white porcelain had previously caused a lot of confusion in differentiating between the two groups, thus the exhibition set out to catalogue and rearrange the exhibits in what the organisers saw as their 'proper chronological order' after considering the painting style and quality, the calligraphy of the marks, the finishing of the foot, and the shape, paste and glaze on each vessel in comparison to shards.<sup>239</sup> Eskenazi observes that early Ming blue and white wares dominated the art market in the 1960s, fetching record prices as their status rose.<sup>240</sup> Apart from his 1946 exhibition, Chow also promoted the category of Ming ceramics and shared his knowledge on the subject through other avenues, as will be discussed below.

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<sup>238</sup> Bluett, "Trends in Oriental Art," 97-99.

<sup>239</sup> Jean Gordon Lee, *An Exhibition of Blue-Decorated Porcelain of the Ming Dynasty at the Philadelphia Museum of Art, October 19 Through December 4 1949* (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art, 1949), 5.

<sup>240</sup> Eskenazi and Elias, *Dealer's Hand*, 28-30.

In 1948-1949, Chow and Ling met regularly for study sessions on ceramics and began to catalogue Chow's collection. The two dealer-collectors amassed and organised their collections in a very similar fashion, selecting items in good condition, keeping them in silk-covered boxes and displaying them on custom-made stands made by local craftsmen.<sup>241</sup> Other Shanghai collectors like J. M. Hu were also considered to have high standards in scrutinising the condition of porcelains, and spent a lot of time on designing stands and fitted boxes.<sup>242</sup> Their use of stands is in keeping with the tradition of displaying Chinese art, a practice which became particularly popular in the imperial court and elitist circles of the Qing period.<sup>243</sup> By creating a visual reference to the imperial style of collecting, Chow appeared to follow the same taste of the Qing imperial household, which may explain one of the reasons why he was often considered to uphold the traditions of 'Chinese taste', although as mentioned previously, he adopted Western methods of display too.

The above overview of Chow's years in Shanghai exemplifies the active role played by some Chinese dealers and collectors in advising and selling to foreign buyers at the time. By acknowledging the importance of Shanghai dealers and collectors in presenting ideas of China to the wider world, it may be possible to subvert the orthodox view of interpreting Western presence in Shanghai simplistically as an aggressive way of imposing a 'semi-colonial' system, which enabled Western buyers to exploit the weak political situation of China and acquire huge volumes of Chinese art objects. Historian Frances Wood follows a revisionist perspective in stressing that the treaty port's freedom outside of the controls of Chinese authorities and colonial governments had many positive outcomes which are often overlooked, including the ways that rich and powerful Chinese adopted Western ways to develop political modernisation, better education systems and manufacturing enterprises within China.<sup>244</sup> In a similar manner, instead of being passive figures in the art market, those like Loo and Chow actively appropriated Western practices of dealing in Chinese art and created their own cross-

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<sup>241</sup> Mary Tregear, ed., *Treasures from the Lakeside Pavilion: 14 October 1988-15 January 1989* (Geneva: Collections Baur, 1988), 2; Bari, "Helen D. Ling" 9.

<sup>242</sup> George Fan, "Jen Mou H. C. Hu," 44.

<sup>243</sup> Jan Stuart discusses the historic use of stands in displaying objects in China, outlining how this practice became particularly popular in the late Ming and Qing periods. See Jan Stuart, "Practices of Display: The Significance of Stands for Chinese Art Objects", in *Bridges to Heaven: Essays on East Asian Art in Honor of Professor Wen C. Fong vol. II*, eds. Jerome Silbergeld et al., (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2011), 693-712.

<sup>244</sup> Wood, *No Dogs*, 256.

cultural methods to organise their businesses and collections. Perhaps it can even be suggested that foreign buyers were sometimes exploited by Chinese agents who saw opportunities for monetary gain.

## **Chow's Activities in Hong Kong – Publishing, Exhibiting, Buying, Selling and Networking**

After the Communists took over Shanghai on 24 May 1949, sources of antiques became increasingly unavailable, and the Chinese art trade declined.<sup>245</sup> Loo, who was well-connected with the upper echelons of the Nationalist government and previously managed to bypass many regulations at customs, suffered a huge blow to his business in 1948 when 342 of his objects were confiscated by the Shanghai Customs Office.<sup>246</sup> As the Communists viewed the westernised lifestyles of wealthy Shanghai residents with suspicion, many established collectors and dealers decided to move to Hong Kong, including Chow. Existing texts recording the date of Chow's relocation are highly contradictory, with suggested dates including 1947, 1949 and 1950.<sup>247</sup> With reference to Helen Ling's diary entry, Bari notes that Chow had Christmas dinner with the Lings in Shanghai in December 1949; hence it is unlikely that he settled in Hong Kong before then.<sup>248</sup> Mary Tregear and Hu Yongyan state that Chow went to New York for two years before settling in Hong Kong; other writers do not mention this and suggest that he moved directly from Shanghai to Hong Kong.<sup>249</sup> With nine children from two wives, Chow's large family moved to Hong Kong in separate stages, making it more difficult to pinpoint an exact date.<sup>250</sup> The unpublished manuscript of Chow's memoir in the Chow family archive clarifies discrepancies in existing texts such as this. In Chow's own words, he

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<sup>245</sup> Mayuyama had to seek new sources in Europe and America, Zhang Zhongying moved back home to Suzhou and Ling's shop had almost no business at all. See Junkichi Mayuyama, *Mayuyama, Seventy Years = Ryūsen Shūhō: Sōgyō Shichijūshūnen Kinen*, vol. 1 (Tōkyō: Mayuyama Ryūsendō, 1976), iii; Zhang, *Zhongguo Diyi*, 26; Bari, "Helen D. Ling" 10.

<sup>246</sup> Géraldine Lenain. *Lu Qinzhai*, 173.

<sup>247</sup> Stourton, "Chow," 12; Beurdeley, "Foreword," 6; Tregear, *Treasures from the Lakeside Pavilion*, 1.

<sup>248</sup> Bari, "Helen D. Ling," 18.

<sup>249</sup> Tregear, *Treasures*, 1; Yongyan Hu 胡永炎, "Qiu Yanzhi He Jigangbei de Jianshang 仇焱之和雞缸杯的鑑賞," *CANS Taipei* (July 2002): 47.

<sup>250</sup> Franklin Chow recounts that when he was three 'my mother brought me and my younger brother to the Hong Kong border and handed us to friends. How she got back to Shanghai afterwards is still a mystery. She joined us sometime later with my elder brothers'; see Poh, "Rambling (P)Rose," 55. Zhang Yongfang also notes that Chow left Shanghai with his second wife and younger children first, then his first wife and elder children followed later; Zhang, "Zhuinian," 77.

left Shanghai in 1947 and found a temporary home in Hong Kong before visiting the United States in 1949 for an exhibition of his collection.<sup>251</sup> The New York dealer Mathias Komor (1909-1984) presented Chow's ninety-five pieces of Ming porcelain in his gallery at 38 East 51<sup>st</sup> Street in March 1951, entitled *Imperial Porcelains of the Ming Dynasty*. The connection between Komor and Chow once again demonstrates the international network that Chow had established in his Shanghai days – with Hungarian roots, Komor was an art dealer in China between 1931 and 1941, before moving to the United States where he became one of the founders of the Asia Society and a member of the corporation of the Metropolitan Museum of Art.<sup>252</sup> In Komor's exhibition catalogue, although Chow's name is not mentioned, the text and illustrations emphasise Chow's preference for Ming porcelain, determined by a particular taste for imperial wares in 'perfect' condition:

*The collection has been assembled slowly, over a period of twenty years or more. It has been assembled carefully, with love; great taste and expert knowledge being the sole judge of what might be included. Great stress was laid on the condition of each item, which had to be perfect whenever possible... Almost all pieces shown in this exhibition are imperial porcelains made in Ch'ing Te Chen (Jingdezhen).*<sup>253</sup>

The phrasing of the catalogue text suggests that the exhibits come from a private owner's collection rather than a dealer's stock for sale. The appeal of the exhibits is thus enhanced by emphasising that they were owned by a serious collector with purportedly refined taste and high standards who amassed his collection over a lengthy period, rather than a dealer who is often stereotyped as someone who would buy and sell anything deemed profitable within a short span of time. Chow probably had to resort to selling his private collection as he was unable to keep all of his pieces in Shanghai while relocating to Hong Kong.<sup>254</sup> It is also likely that he needed to raise cash to fund his move, and according to Chow's memoir, at least 20 items were already sold to the Freer Gallery of Art before the opening of the exhibition.<sup>255</sup>

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<sup>251</sup> Chow, Memoir, 5, Chow Family Archive.

<sup>252</sup> Sylvester Okwunodu Ogbechie, "Mathias Komor and the Market for African Art in New York," in *Acquiring Cultures: Histories of World Art on Western Markets*, eds. Benedicte Savoy, Charlotte Guichard and Christine Howald (Boston; Berlin: De Gruyter, 2018), 220-248; Davids and Jellinek, *Provenance*, 282.

<sup>253</sup> Mathias Komor, "Introduction," in *Imperial Porcelains of the Ming Dynasty, 1368-1644 A.D* (New York: Mathias Komor, 1951), 1.

<sup>254</sup> Beurdeley and Lambert-Brouillet, *L'eunuque aux Trois Joyaux*, 219.

<sup>255</sup> Chow, Memoir, 12, Chow Family Archive.

This sale is indeed mentioned in letter correspondence between John Alexander Pope (addressed in the letters as then Vice-Director of the gallery) and Komor dated between December 1950 and March 1951, now in the Freer and Sackler Archives.<sup>256</sup>

Chow returned to Hong Kong in 1950 before the exhibition opened. He settled into his new home in Happy Valley, while other Shanghai dealers and collectors also brought their expertise and art collections to the city. Chow's neighbour Eileen Chang, who also moved to Hong Kong in 1952 before immigrating to the US three years later, wrote about the tension and apprehension of crossing the border between China and Hong Kong in *Fu hua lang rui* 浮花浪蕊 (1983).

## Publishing and Exhibiting Chinese Art

In 1950, the catalogues of Chow's collection authored by Ling and Chow were privately printed in Hong Kong:

*Complete Collection of Ming Dynasty Kingtehchen (Jingdezhen) Porcelain from the Hall of Disciplined Learning*

*Complete Collection of King Dynasty Kingtehchen (Jingdezhen) Porcelain from the Hall of Disciplined Learning*

They also catalogued the collections of J. M. Hu and another banker M. C. Wang 王孟鍾 (n. d.), which were published in the same year:

*Collection of Chinese Ceramics from the Pavilion of Ephemeral Attainment (J. M. Hu)*

*Collection of Chinese Ceramics from the Hall of Leisurely Pastime (M. C. Wang)<sup>257</sup>*

The cover of these catalogues appear to be in Chinese style, with the titles written by Chinese calligrapher Deng Erya 鄧爾雅 (1883-1954) in vertical *zhuan* script, yet the texts inside are in English, reflecting a cross-cultural approach to catalogue production.<sup>258</sup> By choosing to publish his collection of Ming and Qing porcelains, Chow consciously branded himself as a

<sup>256</sup> Letter Correspondence between John Alexander Pope and Mathias Komor, 1950-1951, John Alexander Pope Papers, Series 6: Correspondence: Box 73, Folder 25, Mathias Komor, FSA.A1988.01, Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery Archives, Washington D. C.

<sup>257</sup> Copies of these rare volumes are currently scattered in private collections, and the two latter titles are often mislabelled as the catalogues of Chow's collection which makes it more difficult to trace them.

<sup>258</sup> The renowned Cantonese scholar, painter and calligrapher Deng Erya had lived in Hong Kong since the 1930s.

collector of this category; and by publishing under his hall name, he was willingly associating himself with these porcelains, in contrast to anonymising himself in the selling exhibition in New York. On close inspection of the catalogue of Chow's Ming porcelains, it is possible to identify at least six of the porcelains which were sold to the Freer Gallery. This suggests that while he was happy to publicise his collection, he was not willing to disclose that he had to sell some of his items to raise funds. This also demonstrates that the definition between what was for sale and what was reserved for his private collection is not always clear.

Apart from Cantonese scholars like Deng Erya, Chow evidently communicated with scholars of other backgrounds in Hong Kong too. In 1954, the University of Hong Kong *Journal of Oriental Studies* was founded, and Chow published an English article on Sui (581-618) and Tang ware with F. S. Drake, the Professor of Chinese at the university.<sup>259</sup> Drake was a well-known scholar of Chinese archaeology who had pioneered Chinese art courses at the university, and was invited to serve on the panel of advisers for the new City Hall Museum and Art Gallery ahead of the museum's founding in 1962.<sup>260</sup> Chow and Drake's first article was followed by a second one on Yongle (1403-1424) and Xuande blue and white 'pilgrim flasks', and a third one on the distinctions between 'Imperial' and 'provincial' ware.<sup>261</sup> These papers provide object-based analyses to categorise Chinese art, differentiating between Sui and Tang ware, Yongle and Xuande ware, and imperial ware and provincial ware respectively. Drawings and illustrations from Chow's collection are utilised to demonstrate central arguments solely based on Chow's personal judgement and experience, without further reference to other interpretations. This may explain why these articles do not seem to have made much of an impact on Chinese art scholarship at the time, and continue to be overlooked as a source of information on Chinese ceramics, only earning a brief mention in auction catalogues whenever a piece featured in these articles come up for sale.<sup>262</sup> Nevertheless, they show us

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<sup>259</sup> E. T. Chow and F. S. Drake, "Sui-T'ang: A Study of Sui and Early T'ang Porcellaneous Stoneware," *Journal of Oriental Studies* I, no. 2 (July 1954): 351-57.

<sup>260</sup> Memo, HKRS877-1-5 1951-1964, HKPRO. Drake is also known for leading excavation of Lei Cheng Uk Tomb after its discovery in 1955; see J. C. Y. Watt, *A Han Tomb in Lei Cheng Uk* (Hong Kong: City Museum & Art Gallery Hong Kong, 1970).

<sup>261</sup> E. T. Chow and F. S. Drake, "Yung-Lo and Hsuan-Te: A Study on Chinese Blue-and-White Porcelain," *Journal of Oriental Studies* IV, nos 1 & 2 (1958 1957): 108-16; E. T. Chow and F. S. Drake, "Kuan-Yao and Min-Yao: A Study on Imperial Porcelain and People's Porcelain from K'ang-Hsi to the End of the Ch'ing Dynasty," *Archives of the Chinese Art Society of America* 13 (1959): 54-74.

<sup>262</sup> Chow and Drake's articles are not mentioned in Roger Bluett's article summarising influential scholarly works on Ming porcelain during this time. See Bluett, "Trends in Oriental Art," 97-99.

that Chow, unlike many Chinese dealers at the time, was eager to share his knowledge through more academic and westernised avenues, using them as a tool for self-promotion and an opportunity to network with influential scholarly figures which helped him to establish his authority as a dealer-collector in Hong Kong. Chow's collaboration with the university can also be seen through his donation of a Warring States urn to the university museum in 1955, acknowledged as one of the important early gifts received by the museum during its formative years.<sup>263</sup>

Chow participated in further publications and exhibitions which featured pieces in his collection, including the *Sekai Toji Zenshu: Ceramic Art of the World* series published in 1956.<sup>264</sup> He met Jiro Enjoji, President of the Japanese economic newspaper *Nihon Keizai Shimbun* in 1959, and lent some of his Ming porcelains to him for exhibition between 1960 and 1961 in Japan, including his Yongle period blue and white 'dragon' flask as well as his Chenghua period 'chicken cups' and a Chenghua period stem cup, all decorated in the *doucai* technique.<sup>265</sup> By showcasing his collection to a wider audience, he was actively promoting the category of early Ming porcelain as well as that of Chenghua *doucai* porcelain. Apart from collaborating with Japanese agents in raising the profile of his collection, Chow also embraced Japanese aesthetics at home – it has been recorded that he built a *tokonoma*, a Japanese-style reception space, in his study.<sup>266</sup>

Evidently, although as a dealer Chow could not join the Min Chiu Society which organised many exhibitions and published catalogues on Chinese art, his own connections still enabled him to share his knowledge in the field through exhibitions and scholarly publications. While the Min Chiu Society made an exception in accepting the dealer-collector Harold Wong as a member, Chow was known first and foremost as a dealer; the fame of his private collection

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<sup>263</sup> Michael W. M. Lau, "The University Museum and Art Gallery: Past and Present" in *Art Treasures from Shanghai and Hong Kong* (Hong Kong: University Museum and Art Gallery, The University of Hong Kong, 1996), 17.

<sup>264</sup> Two Tang white glazed bowls are illustrated in vol. 9; see Seiichi Mizuno et al., *Sekai Tōji Zenshū: Zui Tō Hen = Sui and Tang Dynasties*, vol. 9 (Tokyo: Kawade Shobō, 1956), figs 53 & 56.

<sup>265</sup> *Chūgoku Meitō Hyakusen Ten = Chinese Ceramics: A Loan Exhibition on One Hundred Selected Masterpieces from Collections in Japan, England, France, and America* (Tokyo: Nihon Keizai Shinbunsha, 1960), no. 77; *Chūgoku Meitō Hyakusen Ten = Chinese Ceramics: A Loan Exhibition of One Hundred Selected Masterpieces* (Tokyo: Nihon Keizai Shinbunsha, 1961), nos 67 & 72.

<sup>266</sup> Hajni Elias, "The Chow Family Donation of Rhinoceros Horn Carvings in the Shanghai Museum," *Arts of Asia* 46, no. 1 (January-February 2016), 63.

was not enough to earn him a place with private collectors at the time.<sup>267</sup> Nonetheless, as many of his Shanghai acquaintances like J. M. Hu held positions of authority in Hong Kong collecting circles, Chow's reputation as an esteemed dealer in Shanghai continued in Hong Kong, giving him an advantage in establishing himself in the colony. In addition to publication and exhibition opportunities, Hong Kong also offered Chow a dynamic platform for buying and selling Chinese art as well as networking with other Chinese art connoisseurs.

## Buying, Selling and Networking

In terms of sourcing items, it is not clear whether Chow retained contacts in China to access objects from the mainland, as many other dealers did; Franklin Chow speculates that his father probably would not have risked buying from China directly as he was aware of the sensitive political climate at the time.<sup>268</sup> However, he undoubtedly purchased many items in Hong Kong. Cat Street was filled with antiques for sale, many of which were rumoured to be from the old officials of the Nationalist government who had escaped to Hong Kong.<sup>269</sup> It was a place where one could purchase good quality pieces at cheap prices compared to the pre-1949 Shanghai market. Chow famously found many of his treasured items here, including a Chenghua period 'chicken cup' which he purchased for \$1,000 HKD.<sup>270</sup> Both Anthony du Boulay, a Chinese art specialist who worked at Christie's auction house between 1949 and 1980, and Susan Chen 陳淑貞 (1940-2014), one of the few female collector-dealers at the time, recalled in interviews that Chow was very excited about this purchase and boasted to them about it.<sup>271</sup> Chow's obsession with 'chicken cups' further demonstrates how his collecting taste resembled that of the Qing emperors, who were known for celebrating the beauty and technical refinement of Chenghua chicken cups.

Using Hong Kong as his base, Chow took advantage of increased international jet travel to make visits to London, New York, Tokyo and Paris, where he purchased Chinese art objects from dealers and auction houses, not stopping until 1978. Du Boulay notes that Chow was

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<sup>267</sup> As recalled by Watt in an interview, Chow was always seen as a dealer rather than a collector at the time. See Watt, interview, "CCAHK" Project Archive.

<sup>268</sup> Franklin Chow, interview by author, 23 April 2017.

<sup>269</sup> Zhang, *Zhongguo Diyi*, 156.

<sup>270</sup> Jiade Yishu Zhongxin 嘉德藝術中心, *Zhang Zhongxian de Shoucang Jianghu 張宗憲的收藏江湖* (Beijing: Xinxing Chubanshe, 2017), 93.

<sup>271</sup> Anthony du Boulay, interview by author, 16 December 2016; Anthony Hardy and Susan Chen, interview by Jenny So and Ling-Yun Tang, 2 May 2011, "CCAHK" Project Archive.

one of the first few Chinese faces to appear in London auction rooms around the 1960s, and Jan Chapman, who worked at Bluetts when Chow once purchased ‘a very expensive bowl’ from the shop, recalls how Chow was greatly respected for his ‘wonderful taste’.<sup>272</sup> In fact, Chow went to London for the first time in 1950 when he visited an exhibition of Ming porcelains held at Bluett & Sons and organised by the Oriental Ceramic Society.<sup>273</sup> Here he introduced himself to Roger Bluett as a specialist in ‘early Ming pieces’.<sup>274</sup> The two examined a blue and white dish, and Chow upset Bluett by pointing out that it was dated wrongly as Xuande period when he believed it should be Yongle instead; he subsequently met Roger Bluett’s uncle Edgar Bluett, who understood Chow’s views after he had pointed out the differences between the two periods, but concluded that ‘English experts do not agree yet’.<sup>275</sup> In Chow’s own words (writing in 1980-1981):

*Until today, the experts in London say that the Chinese experts attribute the unmarked pieces of this period to Yung-lo (Yongle) and the marked ones to Hsuan-te (Xuande). With ‘Chinese experts’ they mean me, and this statement is an oversimplification. I can see a very big difference between the two periods and on the London market the pieces are now attributed to Yung-lo instead of Hsuan-te.*<sup>276</sup>

This episode with the Bluetts shows that Chow was very eager to convince other connoisseurs to agree with his thoughts on dating early Ming porcelain, which explains why he co-authored the aforementioned article with Drake to discuss how to differentiate between Yongle and Xuande ware. Apart from the Bluetts, Chow was also acquainted with Adrian Joseph, another connoisseur who shared his interest in early Ming porcelain. Joseph was a dentist by training who later became a dealer-collector in Hong Kong and published his research on Ming porcelain in 1971.<sup>277</sup>

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<sup>272</sup> Du Boulay, interview; Chapman, “Collecting and Connoisseurship,” 12.

<sup>273</sup> Chow, Memoir, 9, Chow Family Archive.

<sup>274</sup> Chow, Memoir, 9, Chow Family Archive.

<sup>275</sup> Ibid.

<sup>276</sup> Chow, Memoir, 9-10, Chow Family Archive.

<sup>277</sup> As recounted by Adrian Joseph’s widow, Joseph was ‘quite friendly with Eddie’; Joseph, interview, 2020. See Adrian M. Joseph, *Ming Porcelains: Their Origins and Development* (London: Bibelot Publishers Limited, 1971).

On Chow's third trip to London, Sir Percival David and Lady David invited Chow, Peter Sparks and Peter Vaughan (of John Sparks) to their home for dinner, located above the newly established Percival David Foundation in Gordon Square.<sup>278</sup> Chow recounted this visit:

*Sir Percival had found out that I owned nine Cheng-hua chicken cups and was rather envious about that fact.... He told me how extremely difficult it was to recognize to which period the chicken cups belong... I asked to have a look at two pieces, one of each period, with their marks sealed. Everybody was very excited, and my good friend Peter Sparks was very worried about me risking my reputation. It was a challenge for me. After a short look at it, I could attribute each one to the right period. Sir Percival made everybody laugh by saying that he does not want me in London anymore.<sup>279</sup>*

To borrow the words of Baudrillard, this presents a classic case of collectors whose 'passion for objects climaxes in pure jealousy'; they gain 'fullest satisfaction' of possessing objects due to 'the prestige the object enjoys in the eyes of other people, and the fact that they cannot have it'.<sup>280</sup> As both competitors and companions, Chow and David continued to enjoy their discussions on dating Chinese art; on Chow's next trip to London he made an effort to see David 'as often as possible'.<sup>281</sup>

In the 1950s-1960s, when Chow was sourcing for John Sparks in London, he also sent frequent shipments to Paris as he conducted business with the French dealer Michel Beurdeley (1911-2012) after they had met in Hong Kong.<sup>282</sup> To Westerners like Beurdeley, Chow represented 'authentic Chinese taste', bringing knowledge of traditional Chinese practices of dealing and collecting to the wider world. Beurdeley notes how Chow explained to him that business between Chinese dealers was conducted discreetly in the tea houses of Shanghai or Beijing, unlike noisy auction houses.<sup>283</sup> The buyer would slip his hand into the seller's sleeve and signify the amount of the offer through placing subtle finger pressure on the seller's hand; nothing would be spoken out loud until a price has been agreed and both parties were satisfied with the transaction.<sup>284</sup> Such stories fascinated Western connoisseurs like Beurdeley

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<sup>278</sup> Chow, Memoir, 7-8, Chow Family Archive.

<sup>279</sup> Chow, Memoir, 8, Chow Family Archive.

<sup>280</sup> Baudrillard, "The System of Collecting," 18.

<sup>281</sup> Chow, Memoir, 8-9, Chow Family Archive.

<sup>282</sup> Poh, "Rambling (P)Rose," 56.

<sup>283</sup> Beurdeley and Lambert-Brouillet, *L'eunuque aux Trois Joyaux*, 220.

<sup>284</sup> Ibid.

and undoubtedly helped Chow to gain respect from his international buyers and business partners as he styled himself as someone who stood for genuine 'Chinese taste'. In reality, Chow manipulated imaginings of different cultural tastes to benefit his business and networks. Chow purportedly split his items into those for his private collection and those for sale, which were further separated into stock deemed suitable for British, French or Japanese tastes.<sup>285</sup> By separating his stock into different cultural tastes, he was not only following what he perceived as distinctive collecting trends based on his experience and judgment, he was also actively taking part in shaping these markets. Apart from working with Sparks and Beurdeley, Chow also sold ceramics through the introductions of Helen Ling, who had moved to Singapore by then, demonstrating his far-reaching business network.<sup>286</sup>

Although Chow was close to the group of Shanghai dealers and collectors who had also relocated to Hong Kong, he did not restrict himself to this group and was very independent in the way he bonded with individuals from a wide range of social and cultural backgrounds. He spoke fluent Shanghainese, English and French, yet his knowledge of Cantonese was limited; this did not stop him from establishing himself in the colony, demonstrating that it was possible for people from different backgrounds to gain social standing in the cosmopolitan society of Hong Kong. In the family archive of Chow, a selection of invitation cards and letters kept by Chow before his death shed further light on the local and global connections that he cherished during his stay in Hong Kong.

For example, the Hong Kong governor Alexander Grantham invited Chow and his wife to several lunches and dinners between 1954 and 1956 at Government House and the governor's box at the racecourse of Jockey Club, a British import that profited from horseracing to fund the construction of local hospitals and schools as well as other causes.<sup>287</sup> It is unclear how the governor came into contact with the Chows – Grantham was involved with planning the building of Hong Kong's own museum of art, but there are insufficient

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<sup>285</sup> Tregear, *Treasures*, 3.

<sup>286</sup> These included transactions in July 1952 which were worth about 14,000 HKD. See Bari, "Helen D. Ling," 12.

<sup>287</sup> Invitation from His Excellency the Governor and Lady Grantham to Mr and Mrs Chow for Lunch at Government House, 12 January 1954; Invitation from His Excellency the Governor and Lady Grantham to Mr and Mrs Chow for Dinner at Government House, 20 November 1954; Invitation from His Excellency the Governor and Lady Grantham to Mr and Mrs Chow for Dinner at Government House, 22 May 1956; and Invitation from His Excellency The Governor and Lady Grantham to Mr and Mrs Chow to Luncheon at His Excellency's Box at the Race Course, 5 November 1955, Chow Family Archive.

records to indicate that he was particularly interested in Chinese art; on the other hand the Chows didn't seem to concern themselves with politics. From Grantham's memoir, it can be understood that dinner parties were arranged for 'interesting people' visiting the colony to meet local residents that the governor considered 'suitable for the occasion'.<sup>288</sup> Perhaps Chow's knowledge of Chinese art made him one of these 'interesting' locals who could stimulate conversation and aid the governor's efforts in entertaining his guests, although he was a recent arrival in the city himself. In recent years the memoir of Grantham's American wife Maurine Grantham (1891-1970) has also been published, an underrated biography which offers further insight into these occasions:

*There were people of many nationalities living in Hong Kong: the consular crowd, bankers, heads of big companies and business firms; Americans, French, Dutch, German, Swiss, Italian and others; some charming people of each nationality. At gatherings such as race meetings, tennis parties, dances, teas and dinners, there was usually a piquant, international flavor... Alex and I made a point of having a mixture, not only of nationalities but of government people and non-government as well... In these circumstances it is not easy to talk shop and we found conversation less personal and more stimulating and interesting.*<sup>289</sup>

The Chows, who had enjoyed a glamorous lifestyle in Shanghai, probably appreciated these prestigious occasions which required dressing up. They probably helped the Granthams entertain their guests while enjoying the prestige of socialising with the crème de la crème of Hong Kong society and could even meet potential buyers of Chinese art in return.

Apart from the Hong Kong governor, Chow was also in correspondence with members of European royal families. Chow visited Stockholm during his travels, and on his first visit (probably during the early 1960s) the director of the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities, Bo Gyllensvärd (1916-2004), introduced him to King Gustav VI of Sweden (1882-1973). The king was an avid collector of Chinese art, and he discussed art with Chow for a long time during their first encounter.<sup>290</sup> Chow evidently maintained contact with both the museum and the

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<sup>288</sup> Alexander Grantham, *Via Ports*, 122-123.

<sup>289</sup> Maurine Grantham, *Happy Exiles: My Life As a British Colonial Administrator's Wife* (California: iStreet Press, 2015), 23.

<sup>290</sup> Chow, *Memoir*, 12, Chow Family Archive.

king, as he was invited by his majesty as a guest to visit the Chinese Pavilion in Drottningholm on 20 May 1963, and in July 1964 he received a letter from Stockholm thanking him for a gift he had presented to the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities in 1963.<sup>291</sup> Furthermore, Chow had exchanges with the King and Queen of Belgium, Baudouin (1930-1993) and Fabiola de Mora y Aragón (1928-2014), and knew Prince Doan Vinh Thuan (n. d.) of the Kingdom of Champasak through his wife Barbara Hutton (1912-1979), the wealthy American socialite who was a collector of Chinese art and a client of Chow's. On 6 July 1963, Prince Doan Vinh Thuan wrote to Chow from Paris to express regret for not seeing him when he was in Paris, as Hutton had fallen ill; and in the same letter he recalls seeing Chow's 'lovely' collection of porcelain, and thanks Chow for a seal that he had gifted him.<sup>292</sup> On 28 April 1964, Chow wrote to Hutton to congratulate her on her wedding to the prince.<sup>293</sup> Evidently, Chow often gave gifts as a way to maintain his international networks – he also presented du Boulay a small porcelain figurine of the Hehe Erxian twins on the occasion of du Boulay's wedding.<sup>294</sup>

## Moving to Geneva and Selling at Auction

### The Anonymous Sale of 1967

After Mao's Cultural Revolution went underway in 1966, corpses were washed ashore on the Hong Kong coastline, and there were reports of artworks being destroyed on a large scale. In 1967 leftist riots broke out in Hong Kong, with links to the political campaign in China. Although the Hong Kong police kept rioting under control, the disruptions caused by the riots were severe enough to scare Chow into leaving Hong Kong for Switzerland, which he thought was 'the only safe place in the world'.<sup>295</sup> It is hardly surprising that Chow made the decision to move to Geneva after narrowly escaping persecution in Shanghai – as recalled by Lally, during the riots Chow was 'very afraid' of the situation in Hong Kong, 'having just escaped with the skin of his teeth from the revolution in the 40s'.<sup>296</sup> Many of Chow's acquaintances who remained in Shanghai suffered greatly under the new Communist regime. In 1955, while

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<sup>291</sup> Thank You Note from Stockholm, July 1964, Chow Family Archive.

<sup>292</sup> Prince Doan Vinh Thuan, Letter from Prince Doan Vinh Thuan to Edward Chow, 6 July 1963, Chow family archive.

<sup>293</sup> Edward Chow, Letter from Edward Chow to Barbara Hutton, 28 April 1964, Chow family archive.

<sup>294</sup> Du Boulay, interview.

<sup>295</sup> Stourton, "Chow," 14.

<sup>296</sup> Lally, interview, "CCAHK" Project Archive.

Chow was living his comfortable life in Hong Kong, three of the Shanghai dealers that Chow had partnered with under the Six Companies – Dai Fubao, Zhang Xuegeng and Hong Yulin – were targeted by the Shanghai Police, labelled as three of ‘the Four Vajrapanis’ 四大金剛 and accused of smuggling and selling national treasures to foreigners.<sup>297</sup> Dai Fubao fled Shanghai after his assets were frozen and his employees were detained for questioning; his name was changed to J. T. Tai and his compatriots joked that he ‘swam across the Taiwan Strait with one Song dynasty vase clutched under each arm’.<sup>298</sup> He settled in America and those who later worked with him in New York reveal that he never talked about his Shanghai days to anyone.<sup>299</sup> Zhang Xuegeng, who did not manage to escape in time, received a sentence of 15 years in prison at the age of 53 and died before his release; Hong Yulin became penniless after his stock was completely confiscated by the Shanghai Museum, and he committed suicide by jumping off a building.<sup>300</sup> The fourth ‘Vajrapani’ was Ye Shuzhong 葉叔重 (1903-1976) who had worked as a representative of Loo’s company. He was sentenced to hard labour in Qinghai where he allegedly suffered a fatal fall from a cart; when his family went to collect his body there they found that it had already been cremated.<sup>301</sup> According to Ye Shuzhong’s wife Xia Peiqing 夏佩卿 (n. d.), she had given her eldest son some ceramics of the Kangxi 康熙 (r. 1662-1722), Yongzheng 雍正 (r. 1723-1735) and Qianlong reigns before 1949 to bring to Hong Kong; these ceramics later fell into Chow’s hands, and were allegedly included in the Chow sales of the early 1980s.<sup>302</sup> As for Chow’s other two business partners under the Six Companies, Zhang Zhongying survived the ordeals of the 1950s but was targeted during the Cultural Revolution and died from a heart attack after sustaining repeated beatings by the Red Guards at the age of 70; Guan Fuchu, a specialist in paintings and calligraphy, managed to seek refuge in Hong Kong like Chow and maintained a low profile.<sup>303</sup> Another one of Chow’s friends from his Shanghai days, Woo Chi Chou, also fled to Hong Kong in 1951, but he left in

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<sup>297</sup> Lu, “Seizing Civilization,” 76-77.

<sup>298</sup> Ibid., 52.

<sup>299</sup> Lu, “Seizing Civilization,” 51 & 80.

<sup>300</sup> Lu, “Seizing Civilization,” 78-79; Zheng Zhong, *Hai Shang*, 414; Zheng Zhong, *Shou Cang*, 519.

<sup>301</sup> Lenain, *Lu Qinzhai*, 182; Lu, “Seizing Civilization,” 79; Zheng Zhong, *Hai Shang*, 414; Zheng Zhong, *Shou Cang*, 517.

<sup>302</sup> Zheng Zhong, *Hai Shang*, 415; Zheng Zhong, *Shou Cang*, 522.

<sup>303</sup> Zhang, *Zhongguo Diyi*, 78.

such a rush that he was not able to bring any valuable assets with him and resorted to relying on his friends' assistance for survival until he died in 1960.<sup>304</sup>

Once Chow had decided to leave Hong Kong, he offered 123 lots for sale at Christie's London on 27 November 1967 to fund his move to Geneva.<sup>305</sup> The auction specialist in charge was du Boulay, who revealed that Chow chose to remain anonymous in the sale as he feared he would attract the attention of the mainland Chinese authorities.<sup>306</sup> He did not offer the most commercial selection from his collection for sale, and less than half of the items sold, which was a very low selling rate compared to other similar sales of this period. For example, the 180 lots offered in the *Chinese Porcelain and Works of Art* auction held on 26 July 1967, and the 174 lots offered in the *Oriental Ceramics and Works of Art* auction held on 22 January 1968, both at Christie's London, were mostly successfully sold.<sup>307</sup> Chow also donated part of his ceramic collection to the HKMoA in 1967, including a Qing Dynasty vase decorated with an iron-red dragon.<sup>308</sup> His motivation behind this donation is unclear; perhaps he saw this as a way of maintaining good relationships with Hong Kong as he left the colony.

By 1968 Chow had moved to Geneva with the help of Gilbert Zuellig (1918–2009), one of the Zuellig brothers who owned the Meiyintang Collection of Chinese porcelain.<sup>309</sup> Chow probably met the Zuelligs through the introduction of Helen Ling's husband, who had business dealings with them.<sup>310</sup> In Geneva, Chow named his home 'the Lakeside Pavilion' 湖畔軒, as his residence overlooked Lake Geneva. As he had learned French during his Shanghai days, it was probably not difficult for him to settle in French-speaking Geneva. Here he increasingly focused on advising collectors and managing his personal collection. Apart from the Zuellig

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<sup>304</sup> Lenain, *Lu Qinzhai*, 181.

<sup>305</sup> Apart from twenty-two pieces of metalwork, stone carvings or lacquerware, the pieces offered were mostly Ming, Qing or Song ceramics. Only two of the Qing pieces were catalogued as 'imperial'. See *A Celebrated Oriental Collection, 27 November 1967, Christie's London* (London: Christie's, 1967).

<sup>306</sup> Du Boulay, interview.

<sup>307</sup> *Chinese Porcelain and Works of Art, 26 July 1967, Christie's London* (London: Christie, Manson & Woods Ltd., 1967); *Oriental Ceramics and Works of Art, 22 January 1968, Christie's London* (London: Christie, Manson & Woods Ltd., 1968).

<sup>308</sup> Museum Collection no. C1967.01.09, see Maria Lam, "The Best of Both Worlds: How Acquisitions and Donations Have Contributed to the Chinese Antiquities Collection of the Hong Kong Museum of Art," *Arts of Asia* 49, no. 6 (November-December 2019): 67.

<sup>309</sup> Regina Krahl, *Dawn of the Yellow Earth: Ancient Chinese ceramics from the Meiyintang Collection* (New York: China Institute Gallery, 2000); Regina Krahl, *Chinese Ceramics from the Meiyintang Collection, vol. 1 & 2* (London: Azimuth, 1994).

<sup>310</sup> Chow, interview.

brothers, he was consulted by the Japanese collector Eiichi Ataka (1901-1994) who bought many high-value items from the Chinese art market of the early 1970s.<sup>311</sup> Chow also continued to connect with notable figures in the Chinese art world, and became acquainted with the chairman of Sotheby's Asia, Julian Thompson.

From Geneva, Chow remained engaged with exhibitions and scholarly publications to promote his collection and his reputation as a collector. A Chinese art exhibition was held in Tokyo in 1973, with the catalogue illustrating nine entries of Ming porcelain from the Chow collection.<sup>312</sup> In 1974, 29 of Chow's pieces ranging from Song to Qing were illustrated in Michel and Cecile Beurdeley's book *Chinese Ceramics*.<sup>313</sup> In 1979, he started working on a manuscript for a catalogue of 100 pieces in his collection, assisted by his daughter-in-law Doris Pache (1947-). Thompson closely worked with Chow on this project and had even secured a publisher for the catalogue. However, this catalogue never came to fruition as Chow died unexpectedly from a heart attack before it was published.

### **The Auction of the E. T. Chow Collection in 1980-1981**

When Chow died in Geneva in 1980, there were over 8,000 items in his collection. He kept records of every piece, noting down the dimensions, where he sourced the item from, and the price; he also added personal descriptions to them – 'The skin of the jade is as soft and rich as mutton fat'; 'The shape is a beauty and unique'.<sup>314</sup> His coding system was created with the use of ten small seals representing the numbers one to ten, and each item had a round label with a metal rim and a knotted string for attachment to the custom-made box.<sup>315</sup>

According to Beurdeley, Chow followed three criteria for collecting: top quality, extreme rarity and pristine condition.<sup>316</sup> This is very similar to the three criteria that other Shanghai collectors followed – J. M. Hu advocated *zhen* 真 (authenticity), *jing* 精 (quality or rarity) and

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<sup>311</sup> Ataka's collection, which consisted of mostly Song, Yuan and Ming ceramics, became the backbone of the collection at the Museum of Oriental Ceramics in Osaka when it opened in 1982.

<sup>312</sup> *Chugoku Sanzennen Bi No Biten = Exhibition of Select Works of Ancient Chinese Art (Bronzes, Sculpture, Ceramics)* (Tokyo: Nihon Keizai Shinbunsha, 1973), nos 72-80.

<sup>313</sup> Cécile Beurdeley and Michel Beurdeley, *Chinese Ceramics*, trans. Katherine Watson (London: Thames and Hudson, 1974).

<sup>314</sup> Tregear, *Treasures*, 3. For specific discussion on Chow's notes regarding his rhinoceros horn carvings, see Elias, "Chow Family Donation," 63-71.

<sup>315</sup> Tregear, *Treasures*, 3.

<sup>316</sup> Beurdeley, "Foreword," 6.

*xin* 新 (condition as good as new), a criteria still reiterated by dealers and collectors active in Hong Kong today.<sup>317</sup>

Tregear noted that Chow endeavoured to collect ‘every art form’ to reflect the richness of Chinese civilisation.<sup>318</sup> He seemingly held a disciplined and methodical approach to organising his business and collection, as reflected and declared in the hall name he chose – the Hall of Disciplined Learning. His systematic mentality is also evident in the way he ran his household; he was very serious about organising the aesthetics of the living space at home, and named his sons in alphabetical order: Anthony, Benjamin, Charles, David, Evan, Franklin and George. He often ordered his children to stand in an assembly line to clean the pieces in his collection, along with the fitted stands and boxes, before putting them away for storage.<sup>319</sup> Like J. M. Hu, whose methods of display impressed Hong Kong curators such as Watt, Chow was also perceived to uphold ‘traditional Chinese aesthetics’ in his concern over the display of Chinese art. Jan Chapman, who visited Chow’s apartment in Geneva many times, recalled:

*The walls were lacquered in Chinese red, and there was much use of gold. The sitting room contained a number of huge glass display cases and I found that not only were the contents of each shelf simply perfect, but so too was the manner in which they were displayed. Franklin told me that his father used to go to the cabinets late at night when he couldn’t sleep and re-arrange the different porcelains on the shelves time after time.*<sup>320</sup>

The description of his display, with the installation of glass cases, seems not too different from his exhibition methods back in his Shanghai days, which were likely to be an appropriation of Western display methods; it is thus an oversimplification to see Chow as a traditional Chinese connoisseur who perpetuated ‘Chinese taste’, an image that Chow himself was keen to promote in legitimising his authority and status as both a Chinese dealer and collector. Franklin Chow’s recollection of his father rearranging porcelains also suggests that he sought

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<sup>317</sup> George Fan, “Jen Mou H. C. Hu,” 45. William Chak 翟健民(1961-) is one of the many active Hong Kong dealers today who continue to cite these three criteria when judging a piece of Chinese art; see “The Review with William Chak | Yangcai Coral-ground ‘Floral’ Bowl 大點評 x 翟健民 | 雍正御碗上的「真、精、新」,” *The Value*, 25 October 2017, accessed 13 April 2021, <https://hk.thevalue.com/articles/the-review-william-chak-blanc-xiamen-fall-sale-2017-yangcai-coral-ground-floral-bowl-yongzheng>.

<sup>318</sup> Tregear, *Treasures*, 2.

<sup>319</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>320</sup> Chapman, “Collecting and Connoisseurship,” 12.

comfort from objects, in addition to using them as commodities for business. Collecting theorists have adopted psychoanalytical techniques to explain how collecting can stem from a primal urge to possess and categorise in childhood, which may be augmented by a response to loss. Baudrillard, for example, suggested that man 'invests in objects all that one finds impossible to invest in human relationships'; this passion for objects is an 'escapist' one since man seeks out the company of objects when he seeks recuperation.<sup>321</sup> Chow, who had left his family at the tender age of thirteen and lost his father nine years later, was forced to uproot himself from Yangzhou, Shanghai and Hong Kong throughout his life, enduring multiple stages of displacement. In his unpublished memoir, he confesses to feeling nostalgic about his parents, relatives and friends, and he wanted to publish a book in their memory.<sup>322</sup> Chow's collecting behaviour may be interpreted as the 'souvenir' mode of collecting, as coined by Pearce, acquired with a sense of nostalgic longing for a romanticised past.<sup>323</sup> Such souvenirs act as part of an attempt to make sense of one's personal history, 'to create an essential personal and social self centred in its own unique life story, and to impose this vision on an alien world'.<sup>324</sup> On the other hand, Chow's highly disciplined manner of collecting, as well as his obsession with exerting control in his household, suggest that his collecting took on a 'fetishistic' form involving what Pearce describes as 'a deployment of the possessive self'.<sup>325</sup>

After his death, it was easier for his family to sell the collection at auction instead of dividing up the pieces. Thompson and Beurdeley were entrusted with this exercise, and they organised the 'E. T. Chow sales' which contained mostly ceramics and were split into three parts, sold between 1980 and 1981.<sup>326</sup> Before examining the results of these auctions, it is important to consider the wider development of the auction market for Ming porcelain which had grown exponentially in Hong Kong during the last decades of Chow's life – in 1973, when Sotheby's held their first sale in Hong Kong, the Japanese dealer Mayuyama purchased a Ming 15<sup>th</sup> century blue and white foliate bowl (lot 135) for a price of £190,000 GBP, reported by

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<sup>321</sup> Baudrillard, "The System of Collecting," 11.

<sup>322</sup> Chow, Memoir, 6, Chow Family Archive.

<sup>323</sup> Pearce, "Collecting: Shaping the World," 72.

<sup>324</sup> *Ibid.*, 73.

<sup>325</sup> *Ibid.*, 81.

<sup>326</sup> *The Edward T. Chow Collection: Part One Catalogue of Ming and Qing Porcelain, 25 November 1980, Sotheby's Hong Kong* (Hong Kong : Sotheby Parke Bernet, 1980); *The Edward T. Chow Collection: Part Two Catalogue of Early Chinese Ceramics and Ancient Bronzes, 16 December, 1980, Sotheby's London* (London: Sotheby's, 1980); *The Edward T. Chow Collection: Part Three Catalogue of Ming and Qing Porcelain and Various Works of Art, 19 May 1981, Sotheby's Hong Kong*, (Hong Kong : Sotheby Parke Bernet, 1981).

Reuters to be the world's second highest price for a piece of Chinese porcelain at the time.<sup>327</sup> Results like this proved that it was a good business decision for Chow to invest in Ming porcelain very early on in his career. As noted by Sotheby's in 1993:

*By 1977 the Hong Kong buyers had clearly gained the upper hand in the field of early Ming blue and white, and the first piece sold to a local collector for more than a million Hong Kong dollars was the great Xuande blue and white ritual stem bowl in May that year (no. 65), which fetched HK\$1,265,000, followed by the large Islamic metal-shaped Yongle blue and white ewer in November 1978 (no. 50) sold for HK\$2,200,000. Since then the Hong Kong collectors, soon to be joined by the collectors from Taiwan, have dominated the market, challenged only by the Japanese for the most exceptional pieces.*<sup>328</sup>

Parts I and III of the Chow sales were held in Hong Kong, offering Ming and Qing items, while Part II was held in London, presenting earlier pre-Ming pieces and bronzes. Bidding was heavily dominated by Hong Kong buyers throughout all three sales, demonstrating that Chow's collection was highly sought after in Hong Kong. Part I took place on 25 November 1980 at the Furama Hotel, and the items which sold for the highest prices included the Chenghua *doucai* stem cup (lot 28) and the Chenghua *doucai* 'chicken cup' (lot 31), both of which had been promoted heavily by Chow through exhibitions and publications.<sup>329</sup> The 'chicken cup' sold for \$4.8 million HKD to banker Ma Kam Chan 馬錦燦 (1909-1984) and was later illustrated in *Catalogue of Late Yuan and Ming Ceramics in the British Museum*.<sup>330</sup> As it is rumoured that this was the cup that Chow had originally bought for \$1,000 HKD from Cat Street, the huge profit made from selling the cup in 1980 is often cited by other collectors as evidence of Chow's 'good eye' which enabled him to discover this piece which was dismissed by others.<sup>331</sup> What should also be mentioned, in fact, is his efforts in drawing attention to

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<sup>327</sup> "Hong Kong: Japanese Dealers Pay World's Second Highest Price For Chinese Ming Bowl. 1973," British Pathe, Reuters Historical Collection, accessed 8 June 2020, <https://www.britishpathe.com/video/VLVA1S8MWDIF0B2AER1DQO2TYPW18-HONG-KONG-JAPANESE-DEALERS-PAY-WORLDS-SECOND-HIGHEST-PRICE-FOR/query/hong+kong>.

<sup>328</sup> Sotheby's Hong Kong, *Sotheby's Hong Kong Twenty Years, 1973-1993* (Hong Kong: Sotheby's Hong Kong Ltd, 1993), 9.

<sup>329</sup> *The Edward T. Chow Collection: Part One Catalogue of Ming and Qing Porcelain, 25 November 1980, Sotheby's Hong Kong* (Hong Kong: Sotheby Parke Bernet, 1980).

<sup>330</sup> Jessica Harrison-Hall, *Catalogue of Late Yuan and Ming Ceramics in the British Museum* (London: The British Museum, 2001), 159, figs 2 & 3.

<sup>331</sup> Hardy and Chen, interview, "CCAHK" Project Archive.

these cups and raising their status and desirability within collecting circles, which contributed to its increased market value. For Part II, held on 16 December 1980 at the Sotheby's saleroom on New Bond Street, despite the location being in London, Hong Kong buyers continued to hold a strong presence in the auction and took on a leading role in the bidding process. Au Bak Ling 區百齡 (1927-2019) and T. Y. Chao competed for the two highest value lots, a Song Dynasty Geyao square cup (lot 293) and a Song Dynasty Geyao brushwasher (lot 289). During Part III, which was held on 19 May 1981 again at the Hong Kong Furama Hotel, T. Y. Chao purchased the Yongle blue and white moon flask decorated with dragons (lot 403), and another Chenghua chicken cup (lot 429) was sold to Au Bak Ling for \$3.8 million HKD, which was later included in the exhibition *100 Masterpieces of Imperial Chinese Ceramics from the Au Bak Ling Collection* held at the Royal Academy of Arts in London in 1998.

Other prominent buyers in Hong Kong like Robert Chang, K. S. Lo, T. Y. King, C. P. Lin 練松柏 (1933-) and Richard Kan 簡永楨 (n. d.) also participated in the sales. Dr Ip Yee, who will be discussed in the following chapter, purchased a miniature Peking glass vase bearing the mark of Emperor Yongzheng from the Part III sale; this piece was later listed as lot 85 in the sale of Ip's estate in 1984.<sup>332</sup> It has often been said that the E. T. Chow sales and the aesthetic tastes they represent inspired many other collectors, such as Ko Shih Chao 葛士翹 (1911-1992), also known as S. C. Ko, who owned the Tianminlou Collection. Ko acquired items from both the E. T. Chow and T. Y. Chao collections through auction; the large selection of early Ming porcelain in his collection is reminiscent of the collecting taste of Chow.<sup>333</sup>

Apart from fuelling a new generation of Hong Kong collectors and dealers, the Chow sales also enabled institutions to acquire new pieces for their collections, including a Cizhou pillow shaped in the form of a child which was sold to the Chinese University of Hong Kong for £80,000 GBP (lot 232).<sup>334</sup> The HKMoA also purchased a 15<sup>th</sup> century wine cup, a pair of late 18<sup>th</sup> century glazed dishes and a 17<sup>th</sup> century decorated water pot; there was one other

<sup>332</sup> The Sotheby's Hong Kong sale of *Fine Chinese Ceramics, Jades and Works of Art: Property of the Estate of Dr. Ip Yee*; see following chapter.

<sup>333</sup> Anthony Lin, "Ko Shih Chao Obituary," *Orientalism* 23, no. 8 (August 1992): 62.

<sup>334</sup> *The Edward T. Chow Collection Part Two: Catalogue of Early Chinese Ceramics and Ancient Bronzes*, 16 December 1980, Sotheby's London (London: Sotheby's, 1980).

item they wished to acquire but the price was beyond the museum's reach.<sup>335</sup> In a HKMoA meeting, it was suggested that 'it was worthwhile to acquire the important items at higher costs because of prestige attached to the Edward T. Chow's collections.'<sup>336</sup> The Chow sales not only reflected Chow's success in building the reputation of his collection which drew bidders to the auctions, they also testify to the increase in market value of Chinese art and the importance of auctions in the construction of new collections, both private and public, in Hong Kong during this time period. Furthermore, they also indirectly prompted a revision of museum acquisition policies; in a 1980 letter from Philip Wen-Chee Mao to the museum's upper management, Mao criticises existing acquisition policy, citing the museum's failure in acquiring more items at the Chow sales to petition for more acquisition funds:

*Our policy has been to allocate expenditure spread over the whole financial year, accumulation from one year to the next being not allowed. We can never be flexible enough, to spend when we have the need to spend to take advantage of the market when good pieces appear, as happened recently with the recent sale in Hong Kong of the valuable and superlative E. T. Chow collection of Ming & Qing ceramics. Such sales are few & far between... Time is not on our side. If we want to attain international status for our museum, we must be prepared to pay top prices for outstanding objects on the open market in competition with other buyers. We cannot and should not need to depend on donors or lenders of quality pieces to fill our gaps... our policy should be one of aggressively buying anywhere in the world for good pieces.<sup>337</sup>*

A report by *South China Morning Post* reveals two contrasting reviews of the Chow sales, one provided by Laurence Tam, representing the museum perspective, and the other offered by Julian Thompson, representing the view of the art trade.<sup>338</sup> While Tam suggested it was a shame that the Chow collection was divided up – 'It would have been much better if such an

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<sup>335</sup> "Museum Bids to Fill Gaps," *South China Morning Post*, 22 May 1981, 16, accessed 18 June 2020:

<https://search.proquest.com/docview/1535933485/abstract/32602E318FD54A8EPQ/9?accountid=16710>.

<sup>336</sup> Museums Select Committee, Committee Minutes MUS/3(C)/81, 18 May 1981, HKRS1124-2-175 1978-1984. HKPRO.

<sup>337</sup> Letter from Philip Wen-Chee Mao to Fa-kuang Hu, (Chairman of the Cultural Services Select committee and Chairman for the Subcommittee for Hong Kong Museum of Art Purchases), Memorandum, Committee Paper CS/203/80, HKRS1104-1-19 1980-1981, HKPRO.

<sup>338</sup> "Museum Bids to Fill Gaps," 16.

important collection could have been kept together in a museum... The public could then have seen a whole series of fine Chinese antiques all together' – the museum was pleased to acquire pieces which the museum has been trying to source for 20 years, and Tam was eager to place the acquired items on display the week after.<sup>339</sup> On the other hand, Thompson asserted that Chow would have been happy to see his collection sold to mostly private collectors, stating:

*He (Chow) considered collecting very important whereas if pieces were in a museum they would be out of circulation forever. They would not be appreciated in the same way. Porcelain has a very tactile attraction. It is a very poor substitute to merely see it behind a glass case.*<sup>340</sup>

It is difficult to verify Thompson's claims about Chow's opinion on the matter, especially since Thompson held a biased view as an auctioneer who profited from the circulation of Chinese art on the open market; however, this does offer one explanation as to why Chow rarely donated to museums compared to the other three collectors discussed in this thesis, other than the obvious fact that he made a living out of his pieces and could not easily part with them during his lifetime.<sup>341</sup> Thompson's view is actually shared by many other Hong Kong collectors – Simon Kwan 關善明 (n. d.) thought it is regrettable that one is unable to touch the works on display in museums, as 'you can only really learn what things look like, not their content'.<sup>342</sup> Harold Wong also felt that viewing a work in a museum was 'too impersonal' compared to understanding objects by handling them at home.<sup>343</sup> These views seem to perpetuate conservative Chinese attitudes towards collecting, understood as a pursuit of exclusive circles who reserved the privilege of handling them. The divergence in opinion between Tam and Thompson reflects contrasting attitudes towards the building of private and museum collections, at a time when both types of collections expanded rapidly and competed against each other to acquire items from the same sources.

Compared to the anonymous and rather unsuccessful 1967 sale of Chow's collection at Christie's London, the high-profile 1980-1981 Sotheby's sales provided much more detailed

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<sup>339</sup> Ibid.

<sup>340</sup> Ibid.

<sup>341</sup> Ibid.

<sup>342</sup> Wear, "Patterns," 185, 316.

<sup>343</sup> Ibid., 188-189.

provenance information, giving clues as to where Chow sourced his items from. There were 24 lots in total which have auction histories specified, most of which were from Sotheby's London between the 1960s and 1970s. From these catalogues it is also possible to extract a list of previous owners of Chow's pieces:

Mr R. H. R. Palmer (1898-1970) and Mrs Lena Palmer (n. d.)  
Mrs Otto Harriman (1903-1970)  
N. H. P. Huth (n. d.)  
Sir Percival David (1892-1964)  
V. W. Shriro (n. d.)  
Tauno Nevalainen (n. d.)  
Mrs Enid Lodge (n. d.) and the late F. Brodie Lodge (1880-1967)  
Malcolm Collection (n. d.)  
Mrs Alfred Clark (1890/1-1976)  
Mrs Walter Sedgwick (1883-1967)  
F. W. J. Scovil, Esq. (n. d.)  
Brigadier General Sir Gilbert Mellor, K. B. E. (n. d.)  
Melchior  
C. T. Loo  
Reverend J. F. Bloxam (1873-1928)  
Madame Maurice Solvay (n. d.)

This list of mostly Western names includes Chinese ceramics collectors who were active members of the Oriental Ceramic Society in London and clients of British dealers like Bluett's; known as some of the 'greatest' British collectors of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, most of their collections were sold through Sotheby's auctions.<sup>344</sup>

After these sales, Sotheby's also sold Chow's remaining collection in separate stages, dispersing his items to more buyers around the world.<sup>345</sup> Chow never seemed to have

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<sup>344</sup> Eskenazi and Elias, *Dealer's Hand*, 120-121; for further biographical details for the majority of these collectors, see Davids and Jellinek, *Provenance*.

<sup>345</sup> For example, his snuff bottles were sold on 25 June 1981 at Sotheby's York Avenue Galleries and on 5 May 1994 at Sotheby's Hong Kong; his rhinoceros horn carvings were sold on 8 April 2011 at Sotheby's Hong Kong, and various other materials including jades and snuff bottles were sold on 27 May 2014 at Sotheby's Hong Kong. See *Fine Chinese Snuff Bottles, 5 May 1994, Sotheby's Hong Kong* (Hong Kong: Sotheby's, 1994); *Rhinoceros Horn Carvings from The Edward and Franklin Chow Collection, 8 April 2011, Sotheby's Hong Kong*

reconnected with mainland China after moving out of Shanghai, although his children have made donations to the Shanghai Museum as well as the Baur Foundation in Switzerland, continuing Chow's efforts in promoting Chinese art through exhibitions and extending his legacy as a distinguished dealer and collector of his time.<sup>346</sup>

## Conclusion

As a representative figure of the group of Shanghai dealers and collectors who relocated to Hong Kong in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, Chow's case study exemplifies how migration brought Chinese art collections as well as expertise on the subject to the colonial city. Hong Kong was a place of refuge which provided an open platform for cosmopolitan and multilingual art connoisseurs like Chow to gain positions of authority in local collecting circles, where they promoted their connoisseurship standards characterised by a concern for the display and storage of objects with fitted stands and boxes, and adherence to three criteria for collecting – *zhen*, *jing* and *xin*. The multicultural environment of Hong Kong also allowed them to extend their global network and adopt cross-cultural approaches in promoting Chinese art and shaping collecting fashions both locally and internationally; this is exemplified by Chow's efforts in advising other connoisseurs and promoting his private collection through exhibitions and publications, which helped to develop a trend for collecting early Ming blue and white porcelain while he also promoted the collecting of Chenghua *doucai* porcelains in keeping with the taste of Ming and Qing emperors.

Despite spending only 17 years in Hong Kong between 1950 and 1967, Chow's careful manipulation of his interchangeable roles as collector and dealer, his self-promotion as a connoisseur upholding imagined 'traditional Chinese' collecting tastes and methods (even though he embraced European, American and Japanese approaches to Chinese art), and his ability to cater to a wide range of buyers, all enabled him to gain fame and prestige as one of the most widely respected Chinese art dealer-collectors in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. While recognition of his private collection boosted his credibility as a dealer and an arbiter of 'good taste', his

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(Hong Kong: Sotheby's, 2011); *Playthings from the Collection of Edward T. Chow, 27 May 2014, Sotheby's Hong Kong* (Hong Kong: Sotheby's 2014).

<sup>346</sup> For example, in 1988 the Virginia & Edward Chow Foundation and the Collections Baur presented an exhibition of Chow's remaining collection, entitled *One Man's Taste: Treasures from the Lakeside Pavilion*; see exhibition catalogue, Tregear, *Treasures*. For discussion on the donation of the Chow family's collection of rhinoceros horn carvings to the Shanghai Museum in 2015, see Elias, "Chow Family Donation," 63-71.

business contacts gave him more opportunities to acquire items for his own collection. As Bourdieu argues, for those who 'live on the sale of cultural services to a clientele', 'the accumulation of economic capital merges with the accumulation of symbolic capital, that is, with the acquisition of a reputation for competence and an image of respectability and honourability that are easily converted into political positions as a local or national *notable*'.<sup>347</sup> The popularity of the Sotheby's Chow auctions, demonstrated by intense competition between collectors and museums who bid for lots from the sales, exemplify the high esteem attached to his name. The Chow Collection continues to be cited by collectors, dealers and auction houses as desirable provenance for items circulating in the trade today.<sup>348</sup> A recent example of 'chicken cups', reputedly from Chow's collection, was sold at Sotheby's Hong Kong on 8 April 2014 to Chinese billionaire collector Liu Yiqian (1963-) for a record-breaking price of 281.24 million HKD.<sup>349</sup> Although no formal documentation proves that it had passed through the hands of Chow, it was kept in one of Chow's distinctive custom-made boxes – the box alone helped to promote the sale of the cup, as this was perceived as a guarantee of authenticity and good provenance.

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<sup>347</sup> Bourdieu, *Distinction*, 291.

<sup>348</sup> One recent example is a Kangxi mark and period peachbloom-glazed seal paste box and cover which was sold at Sotheby's New York on 22 September 2020, lot 102; "A Peachbloom-glazed Seal Paste Box and Cover, Kangxi Mark and Period," Sotheby's New York, accessed 26 September 2020, <https://www.sothebys.com/en/buy/auction/2020/kangxi-porcelain-a-private-collection/a-peachbloom-glazed-seal-paste-box-and-cover>.

<sup>349</sup> *The Meiyintang "Chicken Cup", 8 April 2014, Sotheby's Hong Kong* (Hong Kong: Sotheby's, 2014).

## Chapter Four: The Scholarly Adviser-Collector Dr Ip Yee

For the second case study, Dr Ip Yee's collecting biography is analysed as a representation of Cantonese collectors and the rise of Western-educated middle-class professionals who came to dominate the Hong Kong collecting scene in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. These professionals included doctors (apart from Ip, Drs Philip Wen-Chee Mao, Adrian Joseph, S. Y. Kwan, P. P. Chiu, Hu Shih-chang, Leo K. K. Wong, S. Y. Yip and S. C. Tso etc.), lawyers (such as Justice T. L. Yang 楊鐵樑 (1929-), C. P. Lin, Richard Mills-Owens Q. C. (n. d.) and McElney) and bankers (such as J. M. Hu and Low Chuck-Tiew, who will be discussed in the next chapter) who were actively engaged in the activities of collector groups, museums and the art market. It is significant that Ip was one of many local collectors who was inspired to collect under the new collecting environment of this time, rather than as a continuation of family tradition which is represented by a much smaller number of local collectors such as Christopher Mok 莫華釗 (n. d.), grandson of Mok Kon Seng, and Joseph Hotung, grandson of Robert Hotung (who were also propelled to develop their collections because of this environment in addition to inheriting familial practice). Most importantly, Ip represents a select group of collectors, considered to be 'experts' in certain categories of Chinese art, who developed their own private collections while aiding the efforts of Hong Kong museums in expanding their collections, effectively raising the prestige of the museums as well as that of the collectors and their collections. Through organising exhibitions and publications, they shaped new scholarship and connoisseurship standards for specific categories of Chinese art.

To offer this analysis, Ip's collecting is considered through a chronological examination of his collecting activities, covering early stages of his collecting in the 1950s-1960s to the period between the 1970s and early 1980s when he played multiple roles as collector, scholar as well as sponsor, adviser and donor to museums. His contributions to developing new scholarship on Chinese art are specifically exemplified through investigating how he promoted the category of Chinese bamboo carving, in light of the historiography of the subject. The posthumous auction of his collection is also studied to consider the provenance of his collection, the wider reception of his collecting taste and his legacy in Hong Kong collecting circles.

Published information on Ip is scarce, almost none of which extends beyond journalistic anecdotes to give more in-depth analysis of his collecting; information on Ip has hence been mostly gathered from interviews, exhibition catalogues and documents in the Hong Kong Public Records Office for this chapter.

## Introduction to Collecting: 1950s and 1960s

Ip is the only collector discussed in this thesis who was born and raised in Hong Kong, an apt reflection of how locals were often outnumbered by new immigrants and expatriates in Chinese art collecting circles at the time. In 1919, Ip was born into a wealthy family that originated from Guangdong province. His father Dr Ip Kam-wah (also known as Ip Kam-wa) 葉錦華 (1895 -1961) was a medical practitioner of considerable social standing who founded Kam Wah Sanatorium 錦華療養院 and was the Medical Officer in Charge at Kwong Wah Hospital as well as Chairman of the Chinese Medical Association of Hong Kong.<sup>350</sup> According to the Carl Smith index card records, Ip Kam Wa lived in Ho Man Tin and died in 1961 at the age of 66.<sup>351</sup> A service was held at All Saints Church after his death, and from a list of names provided in his obituary, it appears that he was extremely well-connected with influential figures of Hong Kong society at the time.<sup>352</sup> The Carl Smith index cards also record that Dr Ip Yee had four siblings – sisters Ip Yuen Han, Ip Yuen Cheng (Chinese names unknown) and brothers Ip Lai 葉禮 and Ip Che 葉智 (all dates unknown).<sup>353</sup> Ip Che was also a collector of Chinese art who was occasionally mentioned as a lender to museum exhibitions in Hong Kong, but not much appears to have been written about him, thus it is difficult to ascertain the relationship between his collecting and that of Ip Yee's.<sup>354</sup> The name of the other brother Ip Lai also appears on a list of Min Chiu Society members, but not much is recorded about him either.<sup>355</sup> Ip Yee studied medicine at the University of Hong Kong, and moved to mainland

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<sup>350</sup> "Vacancy on Board: The Rejection of Dr. Ip's Nomination: Representations Made," *South China Morning Post*, 24 May 1935, 12, accessed 19 June 2020:

<https://search.proquest.com/docview/1759655333?accountid=16710>.

<sup>351</sup> Carl Smith Collection Card nos 17403 & 17405, HKPRO.

<sup>352</sup> Carl Smith Collection Card no. 17405, HKPRO.

<sup>353</sup> Carl Smith Collection Card nos 17403 & 17405, HKPRO.

<sup>354</sup> For example, Ip Che was mentioned as a lender to the OCSHK Exhibition *Jingdezhen Wares: the Yuan Evolution*, held from 23 March to 31 May 1984. See *Jingdezhen Wares: The Yuan Evolution* (Hong Kong: Oriental Ceramic Society of Hong Kong, 1984), 6.

<sup>355</sup> See List of Members in *Min Chiu Society Thirtieth Anniversary Exhibition*, (Hong Kong: Min Chiu Society, 1990), IV.

China to continue his studies at the National Central University Medical College (now known as the Medical College of Shanghai) when Japanese troops invaded Hong Kong in 1941. Existing publications only mention that Ip studied in Shanghai during this period, but a closer look at the history of this college reveals that he actually spent a lot of this time in Chongqing – the Shanghai-based college relocated to Chongqing between 1940 and 1946, moving back to Shanghai after the end of the war.<sup>356</sup> Although the specific dates given by existing sources vary, it can be established that Ip furthered his studies in Edinburgh sometime between the late 1940s and early 1950s, when he studied alongside the Shanghai-born Philip Wen-Chee Mao. Ip and Mao maintained a close friendship throughout their lives, and both of them became heavily involved with collectors' societies and museums in Hong Kong as they developed their respective collections in the following decades.<sup>357</sup> Unlike Chow who dropped out of school at a young age, Ip received higher education from prestigious institutions and was perceived as a sophisticated intellectual who 'spoke Oxford English with a perfect accent'.<sup>358</sup>

Ip used his family wealth to begin collecting Chinese art during the 1950s, after he had returned to Hong Kong and opened his private practice.<sup>359</sup> Dr Kenneth Mao, the son of Philip Wen-Chee Mao, recounted in an interview that Ip lived in a big house by St Teresa hospital where his father had worked for many years, then moved to Shatin Valley in the 1950s.<sup>360</sup> Carl Smith's records confirm this, noting that Ip purchased a house on Tai Po Road in 1959 which boasted 'spectacular views across Shatin Valley' and lived there until his death in 1984.<sup>361</sup>

Kenneth Mao further recalled that Ip was married to an Australian named Ricky who died in a car accident sometime in the 1950s-1960s; in an attempt to 'cheer him up', Philip Wen-Chee Mao took Ip to visit some dealers' shops on Hollywood Road, and this allegedly inspired Ip to

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<sup>356</sup> For sources which mention Ip's study in Shanghai, see Peter Y. K. Lam, "Min Chiu," 40-41; Xiaocong He 何笑聰, "Dang Shou Cang Cheng Wei Shi Ye - Juan Xian Da Jia Ye Yi Yi Sheng De Jing Shen Zhui Qiu 當收藏成為事業-捐獻大家葉義醫生的精神追求", *Zi Jin Cheng 紫禁城*, no. 2 (2008): 26.

<sup>357</sup> Kenneth Mao, interview by author, 22 November 2018.

<sup>358</sup> Craig Clunas interview by author, 18 June 2018.

<sup>359</sup> "Press Release: Museum of Art to Exhibit Carved Bamboo Artefacts," Hong Kong Museum of Art, 13 March 2015, accessed 12 May 2017, <https://www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/201503/13/P201503120634.htm>.

<sup>360</sup> Kenneth Mao, interview.

<sup>361</sup> Carl Smith Collection Card no. 17865, HKPRO.

begin collecting Chinese art seriously.<sup>362</sup> It was also during this period when Ip lost his father to lung cancer in 1961, when Ip was 42.<sup>363</sup> It is difficult to confirm whether this bereavement sparked or intensified his interest in Chinese art, especially since Ip was already a member of the Min Chiu Society at its founding in 1960. However, it does not seem entirely coincidental that he was most actively collecting and participating in activities of collecting societies and art institutions after experiencing the loss of his wife and his father. This echoes studies in collecting which suggest that collectors dedicate themselves to collecting as a response to loss, as mentioned in the above chapter with reference to Baudrillard. Through Chinese art, Ip was able to nurture friendships with Mao and many other collectors such as T. L. Yang. Ip did not have any children; him and his wife were godparents to Yang's eldest son.<sup>364</sup>

Ip acquired many items in his collection from Cat Street, just as Chow and many other collectors did. He purchased bamboo carvings, rhinoceros horn carvings, furniture, ceramics and paintings from different dealers around the world, including Friendship Stores in mainland China. He did not seem to have been exclusively advised by any specific dealer in particular, although he was more closely acquainted with dealers like Grace Wu Bruce 伍嘉恩 (1949-) and K. Y. Ng. While most Hong Kong collectors focused on collecting ceramics and paintings, Ip became interested in bamboo carving which was mostly ignored by others. As bamboo carving was not as sought after on the market, there was a wide variety of items available for him to purchase at lower prices compared to other categories. Laurence Tam, who accompanied Ip on many of his trips to dealers' shops both local and abroad, recalled that there was an understanding between Ip and some dealers that if a piece of Chinese bamboo carving became available, they would notify him immediately.<sup>365</sup> Ip's collecting taste for bamboo carvings gradually became so well-known that dealers actively sought out sources of bamboo and raised prices for the category, showing how the taste of just one collector could cause shifts in the market. Tam suggests that Ip did not mind paying a higher price for

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<sup>362</sup> Kenneth Mao, interview.

<sup>363</sup> Carl Smith Collection Card no. 17405, HKPRO.

<sup>364</sup> Trevor Yang, "Paintings and Calligraphy from the T. L. and Barbara Yang, Trevor and Dominica Yang Collection," in *Chinese Art: Displayed for the Opening of the Dickson Poon University of Oxford China Centre Building, 8-9 September 2014* (Oxford: St Hugh's College, 2014), 46.

<sup>365</sup> Laurence Tam, "Dr Ip Yee and the Art of Chinese Bamboo Carving," in *In Pursuit of Antiquities: 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Exhibition of the Min Chiu Society*, ed. Hong Kong Museum of Art (Hong Kong: Leisure and Cultural Services Department, 2001), 57.

pieces which he considered to be of high quality.<sup>366</sup> McElney believes that he was fortunate to have purchased three bamboo carvings before Ip started buying this material, as Ip was 'very wealthy', making it difficult to compete with him as a rival.<sup>367</sup> As McElney purchased his first bamboo carving in 1975, it can be assumed that Ip only started collecting bamboo carving during or after 1975. Ip quickly gained a reputation as 'a very knowledgeable expert in the field', and was acknowledged by museum practitioners as the owner of 'the largest collection of bamboo carvings in Hong Kong' by 1977.<sup>368</sup>

## Collecting, Studying and Promoting Chinese Art: 1970s to early 1980s

### Collecting Societies and Elegant Gatherings

Apart from collecting himself, Ip enjoyed sharing his collecting interests with others and even convinced them to collect bamboo carvings.<sup>369</sup> The two doctor-collectors Ip and Mao both took on leading roles in local collecting societies. As noted previously, Mao was a founder of the OCSHK, acting as its first president from 1974 to 1977. Ip followed suit a couple of years afterwards, being society president from 1979 to 1981. In the Min Chiu archives, a list written by J. M. Hu indicates that Ip was one of the fifteen voting members of the Min Chiu Society when it was founded in 1960; Ip was exceptional in being one of the few non-Shanghaiense founding members of the society.<sup>370</sup> Mao joined the society shortly after, becoming chairman of the society in 1969-1971, then again in 1974-1975; Ip also took on this position for a brief period from 1980 to 1981. This means Ip held two responsibilities as both Chairman of the Min Chiu Society and President of the OCSHK between 1980 and 1981, at the same time when the well-attended E. T. Chow sales at Sotheby's signified a strong demand for Chinese art in the Hong Kong market.<sup>371</sup> Ip often brought his bamboo carvings to Min Chiu Society meetings which took place twice a month, and even invited bamboo collectors who were not society

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<sup>366</sup> Tam, "Dr Ip Yee," 57.

<sup>367</sup> McElney, interview.

<sup>368</sup> Museums Select Committee Minutes MUS/15/77, for meeting held on 1 February 1978, HKRS 438-4-39 1977-1978, HKPRO; Memorandum for Members of Museums Select Committee, Committee Paper MUS/89/77, HKRS438-4-46 1977-1978, 29 December 1977, HKPRO.

<sup>369</sup> Tam, "Dr Ip Yee," 59.

<sup>370</sup> Lam, "Min Chiu," 40-41.

<sup>371</sup> *Ibid.*, 41-42.

members to attend society meetings as his personal guests, so that he could discuss, appraise and promote bamboo carving at these gatherings.<sup>372</sup> As noted in Chapter Two, the Min Chiu Society and the OCSHK respectively catered to slightly different types of art collectors and enthusiasts; the former was heavily influenced by Shanghai connoisseurship and the latter accommodated more English-speaking expatriates and westernised locals. As a leader of both societies, Ip evidently bonded with and commanded respect from collectors of diverse cultural backgrounds.

Building upon the networks he developed through these societies, Ip furthered his relationships with collectors through hosting meetings at home, reminiscent of traditional Chinese literati gatherings. Fan Chai 范甲 (n. d.) recalled the ‘happy’ occasions when collectors bonded over ‘mutual love of Chinese art’ in Ip’s home – ‘Every time he acquired a good object, he would invite his fellow members to his Shatin residence to a viewing, to be followed by a delectable dinner’.<sup>373</sup> As Ip is often remembered as a confident, well-informed collector who did not appear to rely on dealers when it came to seeking advice on collecting, perhaps society gatherings and meetings at home had a greater impact on shaping his opinions on Chinese art.<sup>374</sup> Adrian Joseph often visited Ip with his wife Phyllis Joseph after they had moved to Hong Kong in the 1970s.<sup>375</sup> According to Phyllis Joseph, Ip selected a different group of objects for display each time they visited, including bamboo and porcelain, which were often recent purchases from dealers such as Lai Tak.<sup>376</sup> Occasionally there would be a group discussion, including other collectors like McElney, who was a close acquaintance of Ip and also an active member of collecting societies.<sup>377</sup> McElney also confirmed in a recent interview that he visited Ip’s house on ‘half a dozen occasions’, when it was common for Min Chiu Society members, dealers and scholars to meet in each other’s private residences or in restaurants to handle and discuss recently acquired items.<sup>378</sup>

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<sup>372</sup> Tam, “Dr Ip Yee,” 59.

<sup>373</sup> Fan Chai, “The Min Chiu Society: Reminiscences of Things Past,” in *In Pursuit of Antiquities: 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Exhibition of the Min Chiu Society*, ed. Hong Kong Museum of Art (Hong Kong: Leisure and Cultural Services Department, 2001), 29.

<sup>374</sup> Clunas remembers him as someone who was very much his own advisor and made his own decisions; Clunas, interview.

<sup>375</sup> Phyllis Joseph, interview by author, 7 February 2018.

<sup>376</sup> Joseph, interview, 2018.

<sup>377</sup> Ibid.

<sup>378</sup> McElney, interview.

Ip also befriended the scholar Wang Shixiang, who was the nephew of the distinguished bamboo carver Jin Xiya 金西厓 (1890-1979) and a fellow advocate of Chinese bamboo carving. In 1983, when Wang visited the UK at the invitation of the Victoria and Albert Museum, Ip met up with him in London and the two explored the possibility of organising an exhibition on bamboo carvings in consultation with local collectors and dealers. Although the exhibition did not go ahead, they later successfully organised an exhibition in America instead. During this trip in London they discovered a brushpot by Wu Zhifan 吳之璠 carved with figures in a landscape, and Ip purchased it as commemoration of their trip, showing the sentimental value he attached to artworks.<sup>379</sup> Ip and Wang both promoted not just the traditional art of Chinese bamboo carving, but also its contemporary practice; they contacted bamboo carvers in mainland China and actively supported their work. Ip made two trips up north to visit Bai Shifeng 白士風 (1919?-?), Xu Bingfang 徐秉方 (1945-), Fan Yaoqing 范遙青 (1943-) and other bamboo carvers, encouraging them to continue the tradition of Chinese bamboo carving, and offering both material and moral support to them.<sup>380</sup> In a publication documenting the letters sent from Wang to Fan Yaoqing (according to Fan, he had met Wang through Ip's introduction), a letter dated 3 January 1984 mentions that Wang had passed on a piece of bamboo carving made by Fan to Ip, showing that Ip collected contemporary as well as antique Chinese bamboo carvings.<sup>381</sup>

### Advising the Hong Kong Museum of Art

In addition to the collectors, scholars and artists mentioned above, Ip was also closely acquainted with local museum curators. James Watt and Laurence Tam both attended 'antique viewings' in Ip's home, and Ip worked particularly closely with Tam as an adviser to the HKMoA from 1963 until the last years of his life.<sup>382</sup> The museum's practice of appointing collectors as its advisers was a mutually beneficial one – while the museum gained the expertise of collectors and attracted donations or financial support from them, collectors

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<sup>379</sup> Shixiang Wang 王世襄, *Ye Yi Yi Sheng Yu Zhu Ke* 葉義醫生與竹刻 (Beijing: Ren Min Mei Shui Chu Ban She 人民美術出版社, 1991), 175.

<sup>380</sup> He, "Dang Shou Cang Cheng Wei Shi Ye," 31.

<sup>381</sup> Fan Yaoqing 范遙青, "Xu: Huang Nian Wang Shixiang Xian Sheng 序 懷念王世襄先生," in Shixiang Wang, *Zhu Mo Liu Qing* 竹墨留青, ed. Rong Hongjun 榮宏君 (Beijing: Joint Publishers, 2015) 2; Wang, *Zhu Mo Liu Qing*, 10.

<sup>382</sup> Lam, "Best," 70.

were able to boost their reputation and polish the provenance of items that they loaned to the museum. The minutes of museum staff meetings and other records in the archive of the Hong Kong Public Records Office reveal many of Ip's interactions with the HKMoA. These documents show that as one of the advisers for the category of 'Chinese antiquities', Ip worked alongside other advisers including J. M. Hu, Mao, McElney, Nigel Cameron (1920-2017), and Cheng Te-k'un (father-in-law of Robert Chang's sister Alice Cheng 張永珍 (1932-) who is also a collector) to provide support to the museum in expanding its collection and staging exhibitions.<sup>383</sup> In the late 1970s and early 1980s, Ho Ping-chung 何秉聰 (1918-1999), Raymond Li (n. d.) and Hu Shih-chang also joined the advisory panel when demand for more acquisitions grew.<sup>384</sup> These were mostly the same individuals that Ip was already in close contact with through the activities of collecting societies, showing the small network of authoritative figures in the Chinese art field of Hong Kong. These advisers were mostly middle-class professionals such as medical doctors, lawyers, academic scholars, art dealers, artists and businessmen. The majority of them were collectors themselves, and some of them were considered 'experts' in specific categories. For example, Hu Shih-chang was respected as a connoisseur of Chinese lacquer, Cheng Te-k'un was seen as an expert of early Chinese pottery and jade carvings, and Ho Ping-chung was known as an expert of Shiwan pottery.<sup>385</sup>

According to the 'terms of reference' for advisers, they were expected to advise on the development of the 'Chinese Antiquities' section with reference to the acquisition of items, their documentation and related exhibition preparations.<sup>386</sup> From the archival records it is clear that Ip's advice was sought on a broad range of items across different periods of Chinese history, from the Neolithic to the Qing. Types of material included Ming and Qing porcelain, Yixing and Shekwan pottery, jade and other hardstone carvings, ivory carvings, snuff bottles,

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<sup>383</sup> Memorandum for Members of Museum & Art Gallery Select Committee, Committee Paper MAG/80/69, 12 February 1970, HKRS877-1-50 1970-1974, HKPRO; Memorandum for Members of Museum and Art Gallery Select Committee, Committee Paper MAG/12/71, 24 July 1971, HKRS877-1-50 1970-1974, HKPRO; Memorandum for Members of Museums Select Committee, Committee Paper MUS/20/79, 1 June 1979, HKRS1104-1-2 1979-1980, HKPRO.

<sup>384</sup> Memorandum, Committee Paper MUS/20/79, HKRS1104-1-2 1979-1980, HKPRO; Memorandum for Members of the Museums Select Committee, Committee Paper MUS/101/83, 5 September 1983, HKRS1104-1-9, HKPRO.

<sup>385</sup> Memorandum Committee Paper MUS/101/83, HKRS1104-1-9, HKPRO; Memorandum for Members of the Cultural Services Select Committee, Committee Paper CS/53/80, 20 June 1980, HKRS1104-1-18 1980-1981, HKPRO.

<sup>386</sup> Memorandum, Committee Paper MUS/20/79, HKRS1104-1-2 1979-1980, HKPRO; Memorandum, Committee Paper MUS/101/83, HKRS1104-1-9, HKPRO.

painted enamel ware, metalwork including archaic and later bronzes, lacquerware, textiles and Buddhist sculpture. He also advised on Southeast Asian ceramics and sculpture, which reflects his broad interests as well as a lack of specialised experts in the museum's pool of advisers. Although he was particularly known as an expert on bamboo carvings, this category only constituted a minor section of the vast range of materials he advised on.

Ip's contributions towards shaping the museum's development are evident in two main ways. Firstly, as an adviser for the category of 'Chinese Antiquities', his opinion on items was often key to the museum's decision on acquisitions. He sometimes even became involved in sourcing items for the museum personally and provided the museum with his own insight on collecting fashions, market trends and price fluctuations to inform their acquisition process and policies. Secondly, in his interchangeable roles as collector, *quasi*-scholar and adviser, items on loan from his private collection and the collections of his friends provided the museum with exhibits to display, and his knowledge aided the museum's efforts in organising exhibitions and publications as he actively participated in, if not led, the curating, research and publishing process for the museum. In turn, the museum provided Ip with the ideal platform to promote his collection and personal reputation as an 'expert' collector, which raised the prestige and consequently the market value of his collection.

### **Acquisitions, Collecting Fashions and Market Prices**

In terms of his contributions in aiding the museum's acquisition processes, throughout the 1970s to early 1980s, he filled out rating sheets to provide his comments on items that the museum considered acquiring. Alongside other advisers and the acting curator at the time (Warner followed by Tam), they rated the item in question based on artistic merit ('high', 'great', 'fair', or 'average'), authenticity ('definitely genuine' or 'believably genuine'), price ('exceptionally cheap', 'very reasonable', 'reasonable' or 'high'), physical condition ('acceptable', 'good' or 'excellent'), durability ('moderately durable', 'very durable', 'durable under controlled conditions'), availability ('rare', 'not too rare'), display value ('not very attractive but may be exhibited', 'quite attractive', 'average attraction', 'very attractive') and reputation of artist ('unknown').<sup>387</sup> At the end of each rating sheet, there was a section for

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<sup>387</sup> Memorandum for Members of The Museums Select Committee, Committee Paper MUS/87/77, 29 December 1977, HKRS438-4-46 1977-1978, HKPRO; Memorandum for Members of Museums Select Committee, Committee Paper MUS/101/77, 27 February 1978, HKRS438-4-46 1977-1978, HKPRO; Minutes of

any additional comments. Ip occasionally added his comments which tended to be brief. Although most of the judgement criteria was highly subjective, Ip's answers generally aligned with that of his peers, with only very minor differences discernable. For instance, regarding a late 19<sup>th</sup> century white jade carving of two deers, Ip thought it was 'definitely genuine' while McElney and Tam considered it to be 'believably genuine'.<sup>388</sup> It is unusual to see evidence of disagreement between the advisers. One rare example is provided by a record dated to December 1979, documenting how Ip recommended a Shang dynasty tripod 'Li' for museum acquisition and commented that it 'fills an important gap' in the museum's collection; yet Mao disputed the dating, questioning if it should be dated to the early Zhou (ca. 11<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> century BC) rather than the Shang Dynasty.<sup>389</sup> Apart from exceptions like this, the fact that the advisers and the curator usually shared similar views on potential acquisitions suggests that they had common reference points when making their judgements, such as published research on dating Chinese art, market prices based on auction results or personal exchanges with dealers and knowledge of what was available on the market. Bourdieu's approaches are useful here in understanding the link between social strata and collecting preferences – this particular group of mostly middle-class professionals shared similar social positions and connoisseurship networks which shaped their opinions on Chinese art, dictated by the same sources of reference.

Apart from his concerns over filling gaps in the museum's collection, records also reveal that Ip's opinions were driven by a motivation to develop new or existing areas in the collection, and he particularly favoured objects inscribed with the date of production or bearing marks of famous makers. He also considered an item's display value, preferring ones which he believed would present well aesthetically in a museum exhibition. For instance, In 1980, Ip recommended a Chinese bronze lobed censer in the form of a fruiting melon, stating that 'we want to form an important collection of later bronzes. This has the mark of Ch'ung Cheng

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Museums Select Committee Minutes MUS/4/79, 4 July 1979, HKRS1104-1-2 1979-1980, HKPRO; Memorandum for Members of Museums Select Committee, Committee Paper MUS/80/79, 28 December 1979, HKRS1104-1-2 1979-1980, HKPRO; Memorandum for Members of the Museums Select Committee, Committee Paper MUS/88/79, 26 January 1980, HKRS1104-1-2 1979-1980, HKPRO; Memorandum for Members of the Museums Select Committee, Committee Paper MUS/99/79, HKRS1104-1-2 1979-1980, 28 February 1980, HKPRO.

<sup>388</sup> Memorandum for Members of the Museums Select Committee, Committee Paper MUS/56/78, HKRS1104-1-1 1978-1979, 31 July 1978. HKPRO.

<sup>389</sup> Memorandum, Committee Paper MUS/80/79, HKRS1104-1-2 1979-1980, HKPRO.

(Chongzhen 崇禎, r. 1627-1644), the last Ming Emperor, and is of the period. Price is very reasonable', and a Chinese bamboo brushpot carved with Seven Sages of the Bamboo Grove with the mark of Du Shiyuan 杜士元 (n. d.), dated to 1710, commenting that 'Bamboo carving with dating of a particular year in the early period is extremely difficult to come by'.<sup>390</sup> That same year, Ip also advised on the acquisition of a Szechuan bamboo carving with the inscription and signature of P'u-chu chu-jen (Bu zhu zhu ren) 補竹主人, dated to 1824, commenting that he recommended it 'because it is datable and would make a useful addition to our bamboo collection'.<sup>391</sup> Lastly, it was recorded in 1983 that regarding a Yongzheng period Canton enamel ruby-backed dish, he commented: 'This piece is of a good size and has an interesting design. In spite of the repair, it will make a show piece'.<sup>392</sup>

Ip's influence on the museum also extended to the development of its acquisition policies. Towards the end of his advisory period, in 1982 he expressed concern that the museum might 'lose some good pieces' under the existing policy which only approved purchases of items which have been unanimously recommended by all advisers and the curator.<sup>393</sup> The Chairman agreed with Ip that the museum might 'lose some good pieces' under the existing rules, and it was agreed that in future they would invite advisers specialising in a specific field to comment on relevant items, or the majority opinion would be accepted for approving acquisitions.<sup>394</sup> This shows that the museum was more concerned about 'missing' pieces rather than acquiring unsuitable items, which indicates that the market offered many items deemed desirable to the museum at the time and there was less of a concern over fakes in the market which have made museums more cautious and reliant on provenance when making acquisitions in the present day.

Ip's advisory role was valuable to the museum not only in recommending items for acquisition, but also in providing insight on collecting fashions and shifts in market prices based on his personal experience and observations as a private collector. For example, it was recorded in

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<sup>390</sup> Memorandum, Committee Paper MUS/99/79, HKRS1104-1-2 1979-1980, HKPRO.

<sup>391</sup> Memorandum for Members of the Cultural Services Select Committee, Committee paper CS/40/80 issued by Urban Council Chambers on 21 May 1980, HKRS 1104-1-18 1980-1981, HKPRO.

<sup>392</sup> Memorandum, Committee Paper MUS/92/83, 10 August 1983, HKRS1104-1-9, HKPRO.

<sup>393</sup> Museums Select Committee, Committee Minutes MUS/2/82, 14 May 1982, HKRS1124-2-175 1978-1984, HKPRO.

<sup>394</sup> Museums Select Committee Minutes, MUS/2/82, HKRS1124-2-175 1978-1984, HKPRO.

1979 that Ip ‘strongly recommended’ a group of 72 items of Ming and Ch’ing Chinese bronzes for acquisition, commenting that: ‘It will be difficult and will take years to form such a big collection. Most museums have only a few pieces. Interest in this field is growing rapidly’.<sup>395</sup> On another occasion in 1983, in a rating sheet for a lacquer dish, Ip commented: ‘Works of art of this rarity and quality is very difficult to come by. The price of carved lacquer is going up rapidly’.<sup>396</sup> In a meeting held on 27 November 1979, when discussing ceiling bids for an upcoming Sotheby’s sale in Hong Kong, Ip stated that ‘the prices in Hong Kong were generally high when compared with similar auctions in London and New York’.<sup>397</sup> These comments reflect the strength of the Hong Kong markets for Chinese art in 1979 compared with that of London and New York, and demonstrate Ip’s market awareness. In light of these comments, the museum approved two extra bids for items in the Sotheby’s Hong Kong sale to maximise the museum’s chances of winning the items.<sup>398</sup>

Regarding the Sotheby’s Hong Kong May 1981 E. T. Chow Part III auction, the Honorary Advisers including Ip and Mao reminded the Council it should bear in mind that it is ‘spending public funds and therefore should not offer high prices to compete with private collectors; that although certain ceiling bids were on the low side, there were (was) still a chance that the Council might acquire some of the selected items’; lots 411, 412 and 442 were recommended as a result of their concerns.<sup>399</sup> This demonstrates that the advisers were fully aware of the strength of private collectors (many of whom they were personally acquainted with) in competing against the museum to win items at auction, revealing the small, interconnected nature of the Chinese art field in Hong Kong. Regarding lot 689, the Honorary Advisers including Ip and Mao remarked that it was an ‘excellent piece of its kind and that the proposed ceiling bid of \$2m HKD was far below the expected bidding price by private collectors’; they estimated that the item could in fact reach \$4-5m HKD.<sup>400</sup> The Chairman

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<sup>395</sup> Memorandum for Members of the Museums Select Committee, Committee paper MUS/2/79, issued by Urban Council Offices 17 April 1979, HKRS1104-1-2 1979-1980, HKPRO.

<sup>396</sup> Memorandum for Members of the Museums Select Committee, Committee Paper MUS/58/83, 4 June 1983, HKRS1104-1-9, HKPRO.

<sup>397</sup> Museums Select Committee, Committee Minutes MUS/9/79, 27 November 1979, HKRS1124-2-175 1978-1984, HKPRO.

<sup>398</sup> Museum Select Committee Minutes, Committee Paper MUS/9/79, 27 November 1979, HKRS1104-1-2 1979-1980, HKPRO.

<sup>399</sup> Museums Select Committee Minutes MUS/3(C)/81, HKRS1124-2-175 1978-1984, HKPRO.

<sup>400</sup> Museums Select Committee Minutes MUS/3(C)/81, HKRS1124-2-175 1978-1984, HKPRO.

responded that 'as Members were not as expert as the Hon. Advisers, the committee should accept the proposed ceiling bids recommended'<sup>401</sup>. It was subsequently agreed that 'bids for Lot Nos. 411, 412 (if the bid for Lot. No. 411 was successful, Lot No. 412 should not be bidden for) and 442 be made up to the proposed ceiling bids plus one extra bid; that in the event that the bidding for these three items was unsuccessful, the Department should proceed to bid for the other items bearing in mind that the total sum of expenditure could not exceed \$2m.'<sup>402</sup> It is thus conceivable that museum advisers not only played an important role in updating the museum on global market trends and fashions, they also gave very specific advice about the pricing of the items for acquisition which were accepted by the museum management, as the advisers were acknowledged to have more 'expert knowledge' to make an informed judgement.

Museum advisers sometimes even bargained for the museum, and their reputation and networks in the art market opened up opportunities for the museum to source items for acquisition. It was recorded in June 1983 that a Warring States Period archaic bronze 'he', circa 3<sup>rd</sup> century B. C., had an asking price of approximately \$295,000 HKD; but because of the recommendation of museum advisers, the owner agreed to offer 'a special museum discount of 10%'.<sup>403</sup> It was also recorded in the same month that Gammon Art Gallery Ltd. offered for acquisition a 14<sup>th</sup> century carved black lacquer dish with floral and bird design with an asking price of \$450,000 HKD; but 'upon request by Museum Advisers, the owner has agreed to offer a 7.5% discount'.<sup>404</sup>

The above examples show how much the museum depended on collectors like Ip to shape its collection, and did not distance itself from them as much as present day museums do in fear of conflict of interest. As many of these collectors were forming their own collections while helping to expand the museum collection simultaneously, they often purchased items for their private collections from the same dealers and auctions where the museum acquired their objects from. The museum requested its advisers to declare 'any personal/commercial

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<sup>401</sup> Ibid.

<sup>402</sup> Ibid.

<sup>403</sup> Memorandum for Members of the Museums Select Committee, Committee Paper MUS/58/83, 4 June 1983, HKRS1104-1-9, HKPRO.

<sup>404</sup> Memorandum, Committee Paper MUS/58/83, HKRS1104-1-9, HKPRO.

interests which may be in conflict with their duties as Museum Advisers'.<sup>405</sup> At a meeting held to discuss the Sotheby's Hong Kong auction in May 1980, Ip remarked on the recommended lots and commented on suitable bidding levels; for lot 110, Ip declared 'his interest in also acquiring this piece', with no further comments recorded.<sup>406</sup> For lot 275, an early rhinoceros horn bowl, Ip remarked that he would like to acquire this for his own collection, thus he requested for permission to bid on this if the bidding exceeded the Council's approved ceiling bid of \$80,000 HKD; this was agreed by the Members with no further discussion on this noted.<sup>407</sup> This implies that Ip would give the museum priority to purchase the lot, but if another competitor outbids the museum then Ip would participate in the bidding up to his maximum limit which was more than \$80,000 HKD. In other records, it is unclear how conflict of interest was resolved. For example, it was reported in a museum meeting that the museum was interested in acquiring items from the May 1979 Antiques Fair in Hong Kong.<sup>408</sup> Two Museum advisers, Ip and Mao, would be serving on an advisory panel of the Fair to inspect all the items before the opening of the Fair.<sup>409</sup> It was questioned whether Ip and Mao's involvement with the fair would affect the Council's interests in the acquisition of items at the Fair, bearing in mind the profit motive of the fair.<sup>410</sup> It was thus agreed that items should be selected for acquisition, but 'bearing in mind the Council's role in the acquisition of antiques and the responsibilities of the Museum Advisers'.<sup>411</sup> Documents show no further indication on how Ip and Mao's dual roles as advisers to both the fair (the seller) and the museum (the potential buyer) were balanced. All of these records demonstrate the enmeshed character of Hong Kong collecting circles during this period, with blurred lines between private collectors, museums and the art market.

### **Exhibiting and Publishing Bamboo Carvings**

Ip's second main contribution to the HKMoA was his involvement in organising museum exhibitions and publications. According to Tam, Ip wished to put together 'high quality

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<sup>405</sup> Memorandum, Committee Paper MUS/101/83, HKRS1104-1-9, HKPRO.

<sup>406</sup> Cultural Services Select Committee, Committee Minutes CS/3/80, 19 May 1980, HKRS1104-1-18 1980-1981, HKPRO.

<sup>407</sup> Cultural Services Select Committee Minutes CS/3/80, HKRS1104-1-18 1980-1981, HKPRO.

<sup>408</sup> Museums Select Committee Minutes MUS/1/79, 2 May 1979, HKRS1104-1-2 1979-1980, HKPRO.

<sup>409</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>410</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>411</sup> *Ibid.*

exhibitions' that would attract the attention of scholars, collectors and cultural organisations both locally and overseas, as he was motivated by a desire to promote Chinese culture and revive the ancient traditional art of China, and ultimately see Hong Kong become a centre for research on Chinese art where the traditional arts of China may be promoted.<sup>412</sup> His motivations exemplify the sense of nationalism and civic responsibility shared by many wealthy Hong Kong Chinese collectors, who embraced Western-style exhibitions and publications to promote Chinese culture through presenting its art forms to the public, at a time when collectors in China were unable to do so due to political and financial restrictions.

Ip was a lender to the first exhibition held by the OCSHK, presented at the City Museum and Art Gallery (later HKMoA) in February 1975 – *Chinese Blue and White Porcelain and Related Underglaze Red*.<sup>413</sup> Two years later, the OCSHK and the Fung Ping Shan Museum at the University of Hong Kong jointly presented an exhibition on Qing polychrome porcelain, including items lent by Ip.<sup>414</sup> The selection of items for the exhibition and the writing of the descriptions were completed by a subcommittee which included McElney, Mao and Ip.<sup>415</sup> That same year, the exhibition *Monochrome Ceramics of Ming and Ch'ing Dynasties* jointly presented by the Min Chiu Society and the Urban Council was held at the HKMoA, with Ip listed as a lender under his pseudonym Feng-lo Chu-jan 豐樂主人 (Master of Abundance and Happiness).<sup>416</sup> This was the first of many exhibitions that Ip worked on with Tam, and Tam recalled that the exhibition was so successful that it became fashionable to collect monochrome porcelains for a few years afterwards.<sup>417</sup>

In the late 1970s, Ip worked with the HKMoA to organise what many considered to be the first comprehensive exhibition on Chinese bamboo carving.<sup>418</sup> According to Tam, Ip had

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<sup>412</sup> Tam, "Dr Ip Yee," 54.

<sup>413</sup> John Addis, *Exhibition of Chinese Blue and White Porcelain and Related Underglaze Red*, (Hong Kong: Oriental Ceramic Society of Hong Kong, 1975), 96.

<sup>414</sup> *Ch'ing Polychrome Porcelain: Catalogue of An Exhibition Held in the Fung Ping Shan Museum, University of Hong Kong, 5 February - 6 March 1977* (Hong Kong: The Oriental Ceramic Society of Hong Kong, 1977).

<sup>415</sup> P.W.C. Mao, "Foreword," in *Ch'ing Polychrome Porcelain: Catalogue of An Exhibition Held in the Fung Ping Shan Museum, University of Hong Kong, 5 February - 6 March 1977* (Hong Kong: The Oriental Ceramic Society of Hong Kong, 1977), vii.

<sup>416</sup> *Monochrome Ceramics of Ming and Ch'ing Dynasties, Hong Kong Museum of Art, 8 February - 10 April 1977* (Hong Kong: Urban Council and Hong Kong Museum of Art, 1977), 21.

<sup>417</sup> Tam, "Dr Ip Yee," 54.

<sup>418</sup> Wan-go Weng, "Acknowledgements," in *Bamboo Carving of China*, Shixiang Wang and Wan-go Weng (New York: China House Gallery, China Institute in America, 1983), 6.

initially suggested the idea of the exhibition during a meeting at Ip's residence.<sup>419</sup> Ip had also invited Tam to co-author a handbook on Chinese bamboo carving with him, as there was no comprehensive book on the subject at the time.<sup>420</sup> Throughout the second half of 1977, Tam contacted local collectors privately as well as through the Min Chiu Society and the OCSHK to locate examples of bamboo carving dating to the Ming and Qing Dynasties for the exhibition.<sup>421</sup> Ip made a preliminary survey of overseas museum collections with important bamboo carvings which were not available in Hong Kong on his trip to North America in 1977.<sup>422</sup> Another trip was then planned for Tam to pay official visits to study and select possible exhibits from these museums and arrange their loan for exhibition in Hong Kong in April 1978.<sup>423</sup> Through their efforts, in addition to items from Ip's collection and the museum's collection which were heavily featured in the exhibition, overseas museums and private collectors also lent items to the exhibition which broadened the international network of the museum.

The exhibition was approved by the Museums Select Committee on 4 January 1978, with the cost of the exhibition recoverable through sales of the exhibition catalogues.<sup>424</sup> It was reported in 1978 that about 100 exhibits were selected, including the loan of about 30 items from overseas museums.<sup>425</sup> The museum later decided to present the bamboo carving exhibition from 15 October 1978 to 7 January 1979.<sup>426</sup> The number of exhibits were expanded to about 150 items, including works by famous Ming and Qing masters.<sup>427</sup> Subjects included 'figures, animals, brush-holders, arm-rests, boxes and miscellaneous items'.<sup>428</sup> The cost of arranging this exhibition was estimated to be \$24,000 HKD, to cover insurance, packing, freight and supporting materials.<sup>429</sup> The publication of a handbook to accompany the

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<sup>419</sup> Tam, "Dr Ip Yee," 55.

<sup>420</sup> *Ibid.*, 56.

<sup>421</sup> Memorandum, Committee Paper MUS/89/77, HKRS438-4-46 1977-1978, HKPRO.

<sup>422</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>423</sup> Memorandum for Members of Museums Select Committee, Committee Paper MUS/101/77, 10 January 1978, HKRS438-4-46 1977-1978, HKPRO.

<sup>424</sup> Memorandum for Members of Museums Select Committee, Committee Paper MUS/100/77, 27 January 1978, HKRS 438-4-46 1977-1978, HKPRO.

<sup>425</sup> Museums Select Committee Minutes MUS/14/77, 4 Jan 1978, HKRS438-4-39 1977-1978, HKPRO.

<sup>426</sup> Memorandum for Members of Museums Select Committee, Committee Paper MUS/39/78, 3 July 1978, HKRS1124-2-162 1978 1979, HKPRO.

<sup>427</sup> Memorandum, Committee Paper MUS/39/78, HKRS1124-2-162 1978 1979, HKPRO.

<sup>428</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>429</sup> *Ibid.*

exhibition was in comparison more costly, with an estimate of \$60,000 HKD for 2,000 copies.<sup>430</sup> The handbook was to provide illustrations of the bamboo exhibits, articles on analytic study of bamboo carvings of different periods, biographical notes of bamboo carvers and a bibliography.<sup>431</sup> It would be published in two parts to cover more comprehensive research, with part one scheduled to be published in late October 1978, containing around 400 illustrations; part two would offer the historical context and further information as well as an index on the carvings.<sup>432</sup> Some concerns were raised over the 'high cost' of the handbook, but it was decided in a meeting in February 1979 that this cost was 'justified' considering that 'the exhibition itself was world-rank'.<sup>433</sup> This reflects the importance attributed to this exhibition, revealing how it was highly regarded by staff members of the museum. Part I of the Handbook was published in 1978, followed by Part II in 1982. The exhibition received a considerable amount of international attention and media coverage; it was noted that Readers Digest wished to publish 'a condensed version' of the handbook on bamboo carving as well as some photographs of the exhibits in their international edition, which gave good publicity for the museum to its worldwide readers.<sup>434</sup> On 21 November 1978, Ip also personally gave a lecture on the topic to members of the OCSHK.

To further contextualise why this exhibition and its accompanying two volumes on bamboo carving were considered to be pioneering efforts in promoting the category, it is necessary to situate them within the historiography of Chinese bamboo carving.<sup>435</sup>

### **Chinese Bamboo Carving: Literature and Exhibitions**

Before 1978, scholarly works on the subject of bamboo carving were mostly produced by scholars in China, with few references in Western scholarship which extended beyond a brief mention of the category as part of the wider field of Chinese art. Ji Ruoxin criticises how Western scholars of Chinese art tended to focus on categories such as painting, calligraphy, bronze, jade or ceramics, with bamboo carving only considered as a 'minor art', a now

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<sup>430</sup> Ibid.

<sup>431</sup> Ibid.

<sup>432</sup> Museums Select Committee Minutes MUS/10/78, HKRS1104-1-1 1978-1979, HKPRO.

<sup>433</sup> Museums Select Committee, Committee Minutes MUS/15/78, 7 February 1979, HKRS 1124-2-175 1978-1984, HKPRO.

<sup>434</sup> Museums Select Committee Minutes MUS/12/79, 6 February 1980, HKRS 1104-1-2 1979-1980, HKPRO.

<sup>435</sup> Memorandum for Members of the Museums Select Committee, Committee Paper MUS/45/84 (11.5.84), 8 May 1984, HKRS1104-1-13 1984-1985, HKPRO.

somewhat outdated term which was previously used to refer to decorative arts – for example, Soame Jenyns and William Watson mentioned bamboo in their 1963 publication *Chinese Art: the Minor Arts*.<sup>436</sup> However, Ji Ruoxin argues that to the Chinese, bamboo carving is highly regarded as an art form which is unique in its own right.<sup>437</sup> Early Chinese texts discussing bamboo art include *Tuhua jianwen zhi* 圖畫見聞誌 (Record of Paintings Seen and Heard) by Guo Ruoxu 郭若虛 of the 11<sup>th</sup> century, in which finely carved pictures and calligraphy on Tang period bamboo brush handles are mentioned; Tao Zongyi's 陶宗儀 (1329-1410) 14<sup>th</sup> century publication *Chuogeng lu* 輟耕錄 (Essays Written in between Farm Work) notes the master craftsman Zhan Cheng 詹成 who carved fine bird cages under the reign of the Song Emperor Gaozong 宋高宗 (r. 1127-1129); an essay written by Lou Zirou 婁子柔 (1567-1631) about the Ming period bamboo carver Zhu Ying 朱纓 (1520-1587) entitled *Xianyou Zhu Qingfu xiansheng zhuan* 先友朱清甫先生傳 (Biography of my Late Friend Zhu Qingfu); and a book edited and published in 1941 by Li Xiqing 李錫卿 (n. d.) in Shanghai, entitled *Jiaoxuelu ziwan zhuke* 嚼雪廬自玩竹刻 (Snow Chewing Studio Collection of Bamboo Carving for Personal Enjoyment) which mentions a little veneered bamboo screen by Fang Jie 方絜 (1800-1839).<sup>438</sup> Apart from these short, mostly anecdotal works on select artists and carvings, it was only in the Qing period when a more comprehensive record of Chinese bamboo carvers was offered by Chinese scholars. *Zhu Ren Lu* 竹人錄 (Biographies of Bamboo Artists), compiled and authored by Jin Yuanyu 金元鈺 (?-1831) of the Jiaqing period, provides the first known record of bamboo carvers and their hometowns. Jin's publication was significant in classifying the three generations of famous carvers from the Zhu family – Zhu He 朱鶴 (1505-1567), Zhu Ying and Zhu Zhizheng 朱稚征 (n. d.) – as the 'Jiading 嘉定 School', while Pu Cheng 濮澄(1582-?) and other artists were defined as the 'Jinling School'. This dichotomous classification, similar to the categorisation of painting styles, has been upheld by scholars ever since, and *Zhu Ren Lu* is now considered a classic on the subject. *Zhu Ren Lu* was followed by the publication of *Zhu Ren Xu Lu* 竹人續錄 (Continued Biographies of Bamboo artists) in 1930. Authored by Chu

<sup>436</sup> Ruoxin Ji 嵇若昕, *Jiang Xin Yu Xian Gong: Ming Qing Diao Ke Zhan Zhu Mu Guo He Pian* 匠心與仙工: 明清雕刻展 竹木果核篇 (Taipei: National Palace Museum Taipei, 2009), 3. Also see Soame Jenyns and William Watson, *Chinese Art: the Minor Arts* (London: Oldbourne, 1963).

<sup>437</sup> Ji, *Jiang Xin*, 3.

<sup>438</sup> As summarised by Shixiang Wang, "The Art of Chinese Bamboo Carving," in *Bamboo Carving of China*, Shixiang Wang and Wan-go Weng (New York: China House Gallery, China Institute in America, 1983), 16-51.

Deyi 褚德彝 (1871-1942), this record included artists not mentioned in *Zhu Ren Lu*, and also added modern artists active in the Republic period.

Other than these biographical accounts, Jin Xiya wrote the first draft of *Ke Zhu Xiao Yan* 刻竹小言 in 1948. His nephew Wang Shixiang later compiled his work to give an insightful summary of the traditions of Chinese bamboo carving, introducing the material and analysing carving techniques with reference to preparatory steps and utensils used. However, this seminal work was only published in 1980 after the 1978 bamboo exhibition in Hong Kong. When the HKMoA opened its doors to the *Bamboo Carving* exhibition on 15 October 1978, not only did it represent the first comprehensive exhibition on the subject, it was also a pioneering effort to promote bamboo carving to a global audience. Part I of the catalogue was the first major study of Chinese bamboo carving in English, which also surpassed existing studies in Chinese in its comprehensiveness in surveying the history of bamboo carving.

In November 1979, the established London dealer Spink & Son Ltd. mounted the exhibition *Bamboo and Wood Carvings of China and the East*, which is remembered as one of the first major exhibitions dedicated to the subject in the UK.<sup>439</sup> The exhibition catalogue states that values for Chinese bamboo carvings have ‘until recently, been relatively modest compared with other Oriental works of art such as archaic bronzes, jades, lacquers and ceramics’, but as these carvings were gaining more interest and became more popular, it was predicted that their prices will rise accordingly.<sup>440</sup> In the short bibliography for this catalogue, only six works related to the subject were listed, with *Chinese Bamboo Carving* authored by Ip and Tam as the only book entirely dedicated to discussion on Chinese bamboo carving.<sup>441</sup>

In the fall of 1979, the Denver Art Museum presented the exhibition *Selections from the Lutz Bamboo Collection*, which included Chinese bamboo carvings as well as those from other cultures. The 1978-1979 Hong Kong and the 1979 Denver exhibitions were seen as ‘forerunners’ of the exhibition *Bamboo Carving of China*, organised by the China Institute of America and held in America from 1983 to 1984.<sup>442</sup> The travelling exhibition, ‘the first in the Western world devoted exclusively to Chinese bamboo carving’, was presented at the China

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<sup>439</sup> Scott, interview, 24 June 2019.

<sup>440</sup> *Bamboo & Wood Carvings of China and the East: An Exhibition of Bamboo and Wood Carvings of China and the East* (London: Spink & Son Ltd. 1979), 5.

<sup>441</sup> *Ibid.*, 83.

<sup>442</sup> Weng, “Acknowledgements,” 6.

House Gallery, China Institute of America in New York, then at the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art in Kansas City, and finally at the Asian Art Museum of San Francisco.<sup>443</sup> The President of the China Institute of America at the time was renowned Chinese paintings collector Wan-go H. C. Weng 翁萬戈 (1918-), friend of Wang Shixiang (then Senior Member of the Research Institute for Conservation of Cultural Properties in Beijing). Wang recalled that when the two of them discussed plans for this exhibition, he recommended that Weng contact Ip for his input, as he knew Ip would be keen to help any initiative that promoted the art of bamboo carving.<sup>444</sup> Ip gladly lent his support to the exhibition, assisting in the organisation of the exhibition and placing at least 36 items from his own collection on loan which were illustrated in the exhibition catalogue, including a bamboo carving of a toad which was featured on the cover.<sup>445</sup> Furthermore, he coordinated loans from other collectors in Hong Kong, such as J. S. Lee, and generously covered the shipping and insurance costs for these items from Hong Kong to America.<sup>446</sup> Ip's involvement with museums was evidently valued not only for his collection, knowledge and networks, but also for his financial support. During the exhibition opening, Ip travelled to New York to give a lecture on an introduction to Chinese bamboo carving, targeted towards a Western audience.<sup>447</sup> In contrast to Chow, who relied on those like Ling and Drake to publish works in English, Ip's fluency in English enabled him to give lectures and write scholarly articles independently, which significantly contributed to the establishment of his reputation as a scholar and expert of Chinese art.

Thanks to these exhibitions and publications which shed further light on the category of bamboo carving, closer examination of the subject gave rise to new perspectives that challenged orthodox interpretations. For example, Wang Shixiang argues that although the regional classification of bamboo carving suggested by Jin Yuanyu 'was based upon justifiable reasons during his lifetime', the differentiation between Jiading and Jinling Schools is too limiting and proposed that the history of bamboo carving development should instead be studied through chronological distinctions: middle to late Ming period circa 1520-1644, first half of the Qing period from 1644-1795, second half of the Qing period from 1796-1911, and

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<sup>443</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>444</sup> He, "Dang Shou Cang Cheng Wei Shi Ye," 32.

<sup>445</sup> Shixiang Wang and Wan-go Weng, *Bamboo Carving of China* (New York: China House Gallery, China Institute in America, 1983).

<sup>446</sup> Weng, "Acknowledgements," 6.

<sup>447</sup> He, "Dang Shou Cang Cheng Wei Shi Ye," 32.

the contemporary period from 1911 onwards.<sup>448</sup> In 2000, the collector Simon Kwan exhibited over 170 items of bamboo carving from his collection at the University Museum and Art gallery at the University of Hong Kong. In the exhibition catalogue, he praised his late friend Ip's dedication to the study of bamboo carving, and expressed his wish to encourage greater appreciation of this art form in order to continue what Ip had started.<sup>449</sup>

### **Supporting Other Exhibitions: Presenting 'The Taste of Hong Kong Collectors'**

After the 1978-1979 exhibition on bamboo carving, Ip continued to support many other exhibitions in Hong Kong through selecting items for exhibition, lending objects from his own collection for display, or authoring articles for publication in exhibition catalogues. In 1979, the OCSHK and the Urban Council presented an exhibition on Southeast Asian and Chinese trade ceramics at the HKMoA.<sup>450</sup> As a member of the Exhibition Committee, Ip loaned items from his own collection to the exhibition, and contributed an essay on 'Southern Chinese Kilns' in the exhibition catalogue.<sup>451</sup>

When Ip was Chairman of the Min Chiu Society, the society presented the exhibition *An Anthology of Chinese Ceramics* with the Urban Council to celebrate the society's 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary.<sup>452</sup> This exhibition was originally named *The Hong Kong Collector*, in which society members would 'present the cream of their collections of Chinese ceramics, jade, Chinese painting and calligraphy and other forms of Chinese antiquities', reflecting 'the taste of Hong Kong collectors in their pursuit of antiquity'.<sup>453</sup> This is significant in showing that since its conception in 1960, the Min Chiu Society had developed a strong identity by 1979 as a group of Hong Kong collectors defined by a distinctive taste representative of their geographic location, despite being dominated by Shanghai collectors at its founding. As one of the lenders to the exhibition, Ip was also part of the Selection Committee responsible for choosing the

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<sup>448</sup> Wang, "The Art of Chinese Bamboo Carving," 18.

<sup>449</sup> Simon Kwan, "Preface," in *Ming and Qing Bamboo* (Hong Kong: University Museum and Gallery, 2000), 11.

<sup>450</sup> *South-east Asian and Chinese Trade Pottery Exhibition: An Exhibition Catalogue, Hong Kong Museum of Art, 26 January to 2 April 1979* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong Museum of Art, Oriental Ceramic Society of Hong Kong, 1979).

<sup>451</sup> *South-east Asian*, vii-vi; Ip Yee, "Southern Chinese Kilns" in *South-east Asian and Chinese Trade Pottery Exhibition: An Exhibition Catalogue, Hong Kong Museum of Art, 26 January to 2 April 1979* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong Museum of Art, Oriental Ceramic Society of Hong Kong, 1979), 14-17.

<sup>452</sup> *An Anthology of Chinese Ceramics, Hong Kong Museum of Art, 21 October 1980 to 21 December 1980* (Hong Kong: Urban Council, 1985).

<sup>453</sup> Memorandum for Members of Museums Select Committee, Committee Paper MUS/33/79, 27 June 1979, HKRS 1104-1-2 1979-1980, HKPRO.

exhibits, which included 160 ceramics dating from the Han to Qing Dynasties.<sup>454</sup> Ip compiled the exhibition catalogue and also wrote a foreword to it, noting that Ming and Qing wares were a more popular category to collect compared to earlier earthenwares.<sup>455</sup> Under the list of lenders published in the exhibition catalogue, Ip again uses his pseudonym Feng-lo Chu-jan.<sup>456</sup> A guided tour of the exhibition was arranged for the HKOCS, and a lecture by Ip was organised.<sup>457</sup> Apart from this lecture, it is also recorded that in 1980 he gave a talk on 'A Discussion of Blue-and-white Porcelain' with James Watt, and in 1983 the lecture 'On Dehua Ware', both for the Min Chiu Society.<sup>458</sup> Evidently, apart from advising on a broad range of items as the adviser of the HKMoA, Ip also lectured on many different topics related to Chinese art, imparting his knowledge on these subjects to a wider audience.

When Ip was President of the OCSHK, the society presented the exhibition *Transitional Wares and Their Forerunners* with Urban Council, held at the MoA to feature 17<sup>th</sup> century Chinese ceramics, with a focus on blue and white vessels.<sup>459</sup> Lenders to the exhibition, apart from the Fung Ping Shan Museum and the HKMoA, included collectors predominantly based in Hong Kong or Britain, such as Selwyn Alleyne 程尚文(1930-), Deputy Financial Secretary of the Governor Sir David Wilson from 1984-1987; his wife Ellie Lynn Alleyne 程王蘅 (1930-); Grace Ho 何楊展翹 (1929-2007), Chairman of the Museums Select Committee and wife of Eric Peter Ho 何鴻鑾 (1927-2015), a member of the prominent Hotung family; J.M. Hu; Hu Shih-Chang, Sir Michael Butler (1927-2013); Richard de la Mare (1901-1986), the brother of Julian Thompson; Richard Kilburn; Mr and Mrs Duncan Macintosh (n. d.), Mrs R. H. Palmer, McElney, Mao, Ip and his brother Ip Che.<sup>460</sup> In the exhibition catalogue's foreword authored by Ip, he acknowledged the assistance of Julian Thompson of Sotheby's, Margaret Medley (1918-2000)

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<sup>454</sup> Laurence Tam, "Introduction," in *An Anthology of Chinese Ceramics, Hong Kong Museum of Art, 21 October 1980 to 21 December 1980* (Hong Kong: Urban Council, 1985), 15; Yee Ip, "Foreword" in *An Anthology of Chinese Ceramics, Hong Kong Museum of Art, 21 October 1980 to 21 December 1980* (Hong Kong: Urban Council, 1985), 8.

<sup>455</sup> Yee Ip, "Foreword," 8.

<sup>456</sup> *An Anthology of Chinese Ceramics*, 22-23.

<sup>457</sup> Memorandum for Members of the Festival of Asian Arts Organising Committee, Committee Paper (FAA)/52/80, 18 November 1980, HKRS1124-2-181 1980-1981, HKPRO.

<sup>458</sup> *The Grandeur of Chinese Art Treasures: Min Chiu Society Golden Jubilee Exhibition*, (Hong Kong: Hong Kong Leisure and Cultural services Department, 2010), 75.

<sup>459</sup> The exhibition was held from 29 January to 29 March 1981. See Memorandum for Members of Museums Select Committee, Committee Paper MUS/82/79, 28 December 1979 HKRS1104-1-2 1979-1980, HKPRO.

<sup>460</sup> "Contributors to the Exhibition," in *Transitional Wares and Their Forerunners: An Exhibition Presented by the Oriental Ceramic Society of Hong Kong and the Urban Council, Hong Kong at the Hong Kong Museum of Art, 29 January to 29 March 1981* (Hong Kong: The Oriental Ceramic Society of Hong Kong 1981), 6.

of the Percival David Foundation, Mary Tregear of the Ashmolean Museum, and London dealer Richard Marchant (1936-) in organising the exhibition.<sup>461</sup> It is thus discernible that this exhibition incorporated the collecting and curatorial tastes of both Hong Kong and British connoisseurs. Collaboration between a mixture of private and public, commercial and non-profit entities further evidences the porous boundaries between different units of the Chinese art world in Hong Kong during this period.

In 1983, the Urban Council and the Min Chiu Society presented another major exhibition, *Chinese Jade Carving*. Compared to bamboo carving, jade was a much more popular material for Chinese art collectors in Hong Kong. Tam wrote at the time that 'Jade carving is so popular in Hong Kong that almost all Chinese art collectors, no matter what their special interests are, possess some jade objects of one form or the other.'<sup>462</sup> Ip contributed significantly to the exhibition catalogue, writing an introduction to jade carving, providing a list of terminology of archaic jade and acting as Chairman of the Exhibition Committee.<sup>463</sup> This exhibition also involved multicultural expertise – Tam recalled that 291 jade carvings were chosen for exhibition after consultation with experts from China, Europe and America, intended to cover the entirety of the history of Chinese jade carving from the Neolithic period to the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>464</sup> Apart from curating the exhibition and publishing members' research on the subject, the society offered financial support for completing the catalogue in full colour. As the museum only had an approved budget of \$80,000, the society paid for the additional cost of up to \$60,000.<sup>465</sup> Again, this demonstrates that the involvement of collectors benefitted museums in terms of significant financial sponsorship.

Under the list of contributors provided in the exhibition catalogue, it can be deduced that Ip lent 36 items for this exhibition and his brother Ip Che lent 7 items.<sup>466</sup> The Ip brothers were two out of the total number of 19 lenders, with Ip Yee providing the second highest number

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<sup>461</sup> Yee Ip, "Foreword," in *Transitional Wares and Their Forerunners, Hong Kong Museum of Art, 29 January to 29 March 1981* (Hong Kong: The Oriental Ceramic Society of Hong Kong 1981), 9.

<sup>462</sup> Laurence C. S. Tam, "Preface by the Curator, Hong Kong Museum of Art," in *Chinese Jade Carving*, Yee Ip (Hong Kong: Urban Council, 1983), 12.

<sup>463</sup> K. S. Lo, "Preface by the Chairman, Min Chiu Society," in *Chinese Jade Carving*, Yee Ip (Hong Kong: Urban Council, 1983), 10.

<sup>464</sup> Tam, "Preface by the Curator," 12.

<sup>465</sup> Memorandum, Committee Paper MUS/91/83, HKRS1104-1-9, HKPRO.

<sup>466</sup> Ip Yee, *Chinese Jade Carving*, (Hong Kong: Urban Council, 1983), 16.

of items.<sup>467</sup> In the exhibition catalogue Ip once again used his pseudonym Feng-lo Chu-jan, whereas his brother was identified simply by his name Ip Che.<sup>468</sup>

## Ip's Legacy: Museum Donations and Posthumous Auction

In February 1984, Ip passed away at the age of 63. Different accounts of the circumstances of his death have been offered. Phyllis Joseph dismissed claims that Ip took his own life, saying he had a medical condition but being a doctor he 'brushed it off and didn't get treated'.<sup>469</sup> McElney also revealed that Ip suffered from strangulated hernia for about 20 years without ever receiving treatment.<sup>470</sup> The news of Ip's passing came as a shock to Chinese art circles. In a Museums Select Committee meeting on 9 March 1984, the Chairman of the committee expressed appreciation to the late Ip 'who had dedicated himself to his work which was outstanding'.<sup>471</sup> The year 1984 marked the tenth anniversary of the OCSHK, but celebrations were overshadowed by the deaths of Ip and Sir John Addis.<sup>472</sup> In the report for that year's society *Bulletin*, Duncan Macintosh stated that Ip would be remembered for 'his scholarship, his charm, his courtesy to all he met and unfailingly sound advice'.<sup>473</sup> After the society gained charity status, the Ip Yee Foundation for the Promotion of Oriental Art was established in the late 1980s to host an annual Dr Ip Yee Memorial Lecture.<sup>474</sup> Lecturers are awarded the Ip Yee Medal, 'the highest honour that OCSHK can grant for scholarship'.<sup>475</sup>

Ip left a will with specific instructions on the dispersal of his collection, detailing the bequeathment of his items to various Chinese museums. Standard Chartered Bank executed this will, and specific individuals were appointed to choose items from his collection for the museums, resulting in the donation of 200 bamboo carvings to the HKMoA, 81 rhinoceros horn carvings to the Beijing Palace Museum, 7 paintings to the Chinese University of Hong Kong, and 130 Chinese and Southeast Asian ceramics to the National Palace Museum in

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<sup>467</sup> Ip, *Chinese Jade Carving*, 16-17.

<sup>468</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

<sup>469</sup> Joseph, interview, 20 May 2020.

<sup>470</sup> McElney, interview.

<sup>471</sup> Museums Select Committee, Committee Minutes MUS/15/83, 9 March 1984, HKRS1124-2-175 1978-1984, HKPRO.

<sup>472</sup> Pang, "A Passion for Collecting," 52.

<sup>473</sup> Duncan Macintosh, "President's Report for the Year 1983-1984," in *Bulletin of the Oriental Ceramic Society of Hong Kong*, no. 6 (1982-84): 7.

<sup>474</sup> Pang, "A Passion for Collecting," 53.

<sup>475</sup> *Ibid.*, 53.

Taipei.<sup>476</sup> The reasons why Ip selected these specific museums for his donations remain unclear, although it seems only natural that he continued to support the same museums in Hong Kong that he had worked closely with throughout his life.

Records show that as early as May 1984, only three months after Ip's death, the HKMoA was already planning an exhibition of the bamboo collection he had donated to the museum.<sup>477</sup> The mounting of the exhibition was to be 'an appropriate gesture' in memory of Ip, who was noted as 'a fervent patron' of the museum.<sup>478</sup> However, due to legal matters concerning Ip's donation, the department had to delay the exhibition to a later date.<sup>479</sup> Nevertheless, the speed in which the museum planned this exhibition in honour of Ip testifies to the significance and respect he held in the museum.

Subsequent exhibitions dedicated specifically to Ip's collections include an exhibition of his rhinoceros horn carvings – named Exhibition of Rhinoceros Horn Cups Donated by Mr Ip Yee 葉義先生捐獻犀角杯展覽 – which opened in May 1985 at the Beijing Palace Museum, and *A Gentleman's Companion: Chinese Bamboo Carving* 高節逸伴: 葉義醫生捐贈中國竹刻珍品 featuring around 130 bamboo carvings from Ip which opened at the Hong Kong Museum of Tea Ware in early 1986. Ip's items have continued to fuel exhibitions of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, one example being *The Wonders of Bamboo: Chinese Bamboo Carving Donated by Dr Ip Yee* 竹觀萬象—葉義捐贈竹刻藝術選 which was held in 2015 at the HKMoA, showing over 150 of his bamboo carvings. In the press release for this exhibition, the museum acknowledged that Ip's donation made the museum 'the custodian of one of the most comprehensive and representative collections of Chinese bamboo carving'.<sup>480</sup> In November 2017, Hong Kong Post released a set of stamps featuring six bamboo carvings donated by Ip to the HKMoA, presenting them as highlights of the collections of Hong Kong museums, suggesting that the collection is still highly regarded by the Hong Kong government in the present day.<sup>481</sup>

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<sup>476</sup> Brian McElney and Laurence Tam were appointed to choose the rhinoceros horn carvings for the Beijing Palace Museum, while K. Y. Ng worked on appraising Dr Ip's bamboo carvings for the HKMoA.

<sup>477</sup> Memorandum, Committee Paper MUS/45/84 (11.5.84), 8 May 1984, HKRS1104-1-13 1984-1985, HKPRO.

<sup>478</sup> Ibid.

<sup>479</sup> Memorandum for Members of the Museums Select Committee, Committee Paper MUS/77/84 (13.7.84) 1 July 1984, HKRS 1104-1-13 1984-1985, HKPRO.

<sup>480</sup> HKMoA, "Press Release."

<sup>481</sup> Hong Kong Post, accessed 11 November 2018,

<https://stamps.hongkongpost.hk/eng/newsletter/2017/10/20171018a.htm>

Apart from museum donations, Ip's collection was also dispersed through auction. His collection was sold by Sotheby's Hong Kong in November 1984, and his Tai Po Road residence was also later auctioned in March 1985, with proceeds going to charity.<sup>482</sup> Local dealer Elegant Wong 黃少棠 (n. d.), who worked at Sotheby's at the time, was part of the team that visited Ip's house to list the items in his collection before making a selection for sale.<sup>483</sup> He recalls that in accordance with Ip's will, Sotheby's picked the best pieces for sale and the rest of them went to the smaller auction house Lammert Brothers Ltd.<sup>484</sup> Wong remembers that there were so many pieces in Ip's house that the listing took around a month to complete.<sup>485</sup> During this period he met individuals who were well-acquainted with Ip, such as the nurse in Ip's clinic, Ip's driver and servants who recounted stories about Ip. From conversations with these individuals, Wong gathered the impression that Ip was very serious and diligent when it came to studying his collection, sometimes staying up late at night to do so. When handling his collection, Wong was impressed by not only the sheer volume of items, but also the systematic way in which he kept them, with most items accompanied with custom-made boxes and handwritten notes (in both Chinese and English) to record his opinion on each piece.<sup>486</sup> This detailed manner of arranging his collection seems similar to the way Chow managed his collection, as noted in the previous chapter.

Items from the Ip collection listed in the Sotheby's auction catalogues offer a glimpse into the luxurious life Ip led, ranging from Chinese ceramics, jades, metalwork, lacquerware, bamboo carvings, rhinoceros horn carvings, furniture, paintings and calligraphy to contents in his wine cellar and a Rolls-Royce.<sup>487</sup> The Sotheby's sales raised a total of \$22 million for the relief of natural disasters in China and charities for children, the sick and the elderly in developing

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<sup>482</sup> *Fine Chinese Ceramics, Jades and Works of Art: Property of the Estate of Dr. Ip Yee, 19 November 1984, Sotheby's Hong Kong* (Hong Kong: Sotheby's, 1984); *Fine Chinese Painting: Property of the Estate of Dr. Ip Yee, 21 November 1984, Sotheby's Hong Kong* (Hong Kong: Sotheby's, 1984); *Chinese Ceramics, Jades and Works of Art: Property of the Estate of Dr. Ip Yee Sold for Benefit of Charity, 22 November 1984, Sotheby's Hong Kong* (Hong Kong: Sotheby's, 1984); Carl Smith Collection Card no. 17865, HKPRO.

<sup>483</sup> Elegant Wong, interview by author, 26 August 2020.

<sup>484</sup> Ibid.

<sup>485</sup> Ibid.

<sup>486</sup> Ibid.

<sup>487</sup> *Fine Chinese Ceramics, Jades and Works of Art: Property of the Estate of Dr. Ip Yee, 19 November 1984, Sotheby's Hong Kong* (Hong Kong: Sotheby's, 1984); *Fine Chinese Painting: Property of the Estate of Dr. Ip Yee, 21 November 1984, Sotheby's Hong Kong* (Hong Kong: Sotheby's, 1984); *Chinese Ceramics, Jades and Works of Art: Property of the Estate of Dr. Ip Yee Sold for Benefit of Charity, 22 November 1984, Sotheby's Hong Kong* (Hong Kong: Sotheby's, 1984).

countries and Hong Kong.<sup>488</sup> Provenance information provided in the auction catalogues shows that Ip purchased many items through auction houses and dealers (such as Bluett & Sons and Spink & Son) which originated from prominent named collections, many of them British family collections:

A.D. Brankston (1911-1941)

Sir Harry Garner (1891-1977) and Lady Garner (n. d.)

W.W. Winkworth (1897-1991)

Lord Cunliffe (1899-1963)

De Menasce (probably referring to Georges F. J. B. de Menasce, 1890-1967)

Mrs L. Dreyfus (n. d.)

Eumorfopoulos

Chow<sup>489</sup>

It is possible to summarise from the provenance documented in these auction catalogues that Ip purchased items from auctions in Hong Kong, London, New York, San Francisco and Los Angeles from 1969 to 1981, frequenting many of the same salerooms that Chow visited in the same period; both collectors evidently built significant parts of their collections from old established British and American collections. While both the Chow and Ip sales had illustrious provenance, Ip's lots also boasted extensive exhibition histories, with many items previously featured in museum exhibitions and published in catalogues that he personally organised or supported during his lifetime. Citing such exhibition and publication information in the auction catalogue undoubtedly increased the desirability of the items, as this indicates that they were not only deemed collectible in the eyes of one collector, but were accepted by exhibition selection panels made up of other respected collectors, scholars and curators to be important or meaningful enough to be included in exhibitions and/or publications. The practice of using museums as a platform to boost a collection's reputation and commercial value is frowned upon today, as this can be considered as a form of object laundering, but this appeared to be acceptable in Hong Kong at the time.

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<sup>488</sup> "Dr's Collection Raises \$22m," *South China Morning Post*, 23 November 1984, 18, accessed 18 June 2020: <https://search.proquest.com/docview/1537855662?accountid=16710>.

<sup>489</sup> *Fine Chinese Ceramics, Jades and Works of Art, Property of the Estate of Dr. Ip Yee, 19 November 1984, Sotheby's Hong Kong* (Hong Kong: Sotheby's, 1984); *Fine Chinese Paintings: Property of the Estate of Dr. Ip Yee, 21 November 1984, Sotheby's Hong Kong* (Hong Kong: Sotheby's, 1984).

The reputation of Ip and his collection drew in a significant crowd for the auctions, among them members of the Min Chiu Society and the HKOCS who purchased many of the lots offered. The most expensive lot in the *Fine Chinese Ceramics, Jades and Works of Art* auction was a Chenghua period blue and white 'lotus' bowl (lot 184) which sold for \$1.485 million HKD, and the most expensive lot in the *Fine Chinese Paintings* auction was an 'imperial' album of Song and Yuan landscapes with accompanying calligraphy by the Qianlong Emperor and stamped with his seals (lot 2); these two lots show the continued popularity of Ming blue and white ceramics and the 'imperial Qing taste' respectively.<sup>490</sup> The HKMoA showed interest in purchasing items from these auctions too; it is noted that the museum advisers had a VIP viewing of the auction lots, and held a 'lengthy discussion' on the items prior to the sale (see the following chapter for Low Chuck Tiew's comments on items in the Ip paintings sale).<sup>491</sup> McElney gave lucid comments on the value of the items, and shared his 'insider' knowledge on how much Ip had originally paid for them based on McElney's previous conversations with dealers.<sup>492</sup> Taking McElney's comments into account, the museum advisers narrowed down a list of items to bid on.<sup>493</sup> McElney himself purchased some bamboo carvings from the sale which are now at the Museum of East Asian Art in Bath, and maintained that the prices were sometimes much lower than what Ip had paid originally, which seems to suggest that prices of bamboo carvings dropped as Ip became absent from the market.<sup>494</sup>

Ip's Chinese paintings ranged from Song dynasty examples to contemporary ones. His paintings collection was largely overshadowed by other categories in his collection, probably because he did not dedicate as much time or effort on publishing or promoting this category. However, it was reported that his paintings were sold to Hanart Gallery, Robert Chang and other local collectors; the fact that his paintings were sought after by some of the most respected connoisseurs in the field indicates that his taste in paintings was acknowledged by

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<sup>490</sup> *Fine Chinese Ceramics, Jades and Works of Art: Property of the Estate of Dr. Ip Yee, 19 November 1984, Sotheby's Hong Kong* (Hong Kong: Sotheby's, 1984), lot 184.

<sup>491</sup> Museums Select Committee, Committee Minutes MUS/11/84, 17 November 1984, HKRS 1104-1-15 1984-1985, HKPRO.

<sup>492</sup> Museums Select Committee Minutes MUS/11/84, HKRS 1104-1-15 1984-1985, HKPRO.

<sup>493</sup> Ibid.

<sup>494</sup> McElney, interview.

his contemporaries, which again demonstrates that connoisseurs who moved in the same collecting circles of Hong Kong often shared the same views on Chinese art.<sup>495</sup>

After Ip's death, the HKMoA began to consider filling his vacancy on the Chinese antiquities advisory panel. It was proposed that since Ip's expertise covered a wide range of Chinese art, he could not be replaced by one single person; it was hence proposed that his vacancy is filled by Drs S. Y. Kwan and P. P. Chiu who were recognised as experts on jade and bronze respectively.<sup>496</sup> Like Ip, Kwan was also born into a medical family in Hong Kong and acted as Chairman of the Min Chiu Society from 1985-1987; he was also an active member of the OCSHK and the Kau Chi Society.

## Conclusion

This case study has shown that in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, local Hong Kong-born Cantonese collectors like Ip worked closely with new immigrants from mainland China, such as Shanghai connoisseurs, and Western expatriates and visitors to promote Chinese art and support the development of collecting societies, museums and the art market in Hong Kong. Ip represents the rise of multilingual, Western-educated middle-class professionals who utilised their knowledge, networks and financial wealth to establish Hong Kong's status as a centre for research on Chinese art as a reflection of a desire to cultivate a Hong Kong identity, while gaining social prestige for themselves as scholar-collectors and 'experts' in particular categories of Chinese art. Under a multicultural environment, Ip used Western platforms like museums, English publications and lectures to promote Chinese art while following Chinese connoisseurship practices such as using pseudonyms when identifying his collection. Out of his many contributions to Chinese art scholarship, the new interest he generated in the subject of Chinese bamboo carving is widely considered as his most important legacy, which has been examined in this chapter in reference to the historiography of the subject. The 1978-1979 exhibition of bamboo carvings he organised with the HKMoA and the publication of its corresponding two-part handbooks signified a watershed moment for scholarship on the

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<sup>495</sup> "Emperor's Imperial Album Steals The Show: South China Morning Post ARTS," *South China Morning Post*, 23 November 1984, 18, accessed 18 June 2020:

<https://search.proquest.com/docview/1537856629?accountid=16710>.

<sup>496</sup> Memorandum for Members of the Museums Select Committee, Committee Paper MUS/82/84, 12 July 1984, HKRS1104-1-15 1984-1985, HKPRO.

subject, attracting attention from connoisseurs in mainland China as well as those in Europe and America.

While the previous chapter has revealed how Chow navigated his interchangeable roles as dealer and collector, this chapter has demonstrated that Ip's overlapping roles as collector, museum adviser, antiques fair adviser, collecting society leader, exhibition lender and museum donor were no less complicated. The fact that he was able to take on so many positions of influence and cross over different organisations indicates how interconnected Chinese art circles in Hong Kong were, at this specific time when collector groups, museums and the art market sought resources and support from the same group of collectors, thus conveniently overlooking issues regarding conflict of interest, issues which would have been more carefully scrutinised under different circumstances.

## Chapter Five: The Nationalistic ‘Literati’ Collector Low Chuck-Tiew

The third case study of Low provides another example of a collector with a Cantonese background and a middle-class profession who became an ‘expert’ adviser to the HKMoA. However, Low differs from Ip in representing two other important dimensions of Hong Kong collecting. Firstly, Low represents the Cantonese diasporic community in Southeast Asia (other collectors of this group include K. S. Lo and Tan Tsze Chor 陳之初 (1911-1983)) that was driven by a sense of anti-imperialist nationalism to preserve Chinese art; by tracing Low’s biography from Chaozhou to Singapore, Shanghai and eventually Hong Kong, this chapter illustrates how this nationalistic sentiment was shared through transnational links between Chinese communities in these regions.

Secondly, Low represents collectors of painting and calligraphy in Hong Kong (others include J. S. Lee and Ho lu-kwong), specifically artist-collectors who practiced as well as collected the art form, exemplifying a more traditional type of collector following Chinese literati connoisseurship practices. As observed by Wear, while there were modern artist-collectors like Zhang Daqian and C. C. Wang 王己千 (1907-2003), contemporary ones are relatively few – as artists themselves, they seem to demonstrate a more ‘genuine interest’ in the subject, and are respected in Hong Kong for countering ‘the philistine understanding’ of collecting as only an ‘economic pursuit of status’.<sup>497</sup> Low’s more traditional approach to collecting is also reflected in his extensive use of hall names when promoting his collection. As a result, his personal name remains relatively unknown in Chinese art circles compared to the other collectors examined in this thesis.<sup>498</sup> Besides Xubaizhai, Low also used the hall names Zhu Ying He Xiang Shu Wu 竹影荷香書屋 (Studio of Bamboo Shadow and Lotus Fragrance) and Fei Yun Ge 飛雲閣 (Pavilion of Flying Clouds).

It is significant to note here that since the category of painting and calligraphy has been ranked as superior to other categories within the traditional Chinese hierarchy of art forms, it is sometimes referred to as ‘fine art’ in Hong Kong rather than ‘decorative art’ in Western

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<sup>497</sup> Wear, “Sense,” 191.

<sup>498</sup> Lai Ping Hui 許禮平, *Ming Jia Han Mo 32: Xubaizhai Cang Hua Te Ji (Shang)* 名家翰墨 32: 虛白齋藏畫特集 (上) (Hong Kong: Han Mo Xuan Publishing Co. Ltd, 1992), 24.

art historical classification. In Hong Kong museums and auctions, painting and calligraphy are almost always separated from other categories within Chinese art – such as ceramics, jade carvings, bamboo carvings, furniture and textiles – which are referred to as ‘antiquities’, ‘ceramics and works of art’ or ‘minor art’ (an appropriation of Western terminology). The distance between collectors of painting and calligraphy and that of other categories of Chinese art is characteristic of Hong Kong collecting, with the former group often noted for being dismissive of the latter group. For instance, Wear records how a paintings collector argued that it is easier to master authentication and valuation techniques for ceramics compared to paintings, hence ceramics became popular among new, ‘uncultivated collectors’.<sup>499</sup>

Following the previous chapter’s analysis of the mutually beneficial relationship between collectors and museums, exemplified by Ip’s contributions to museum exhibitions and Chinese art scholarship, the current chapter reveals more clearly the importance and distinctiveness of Hong Kong museums in supporting the wishes and aspirations of collectors in return. This is achieved through investigating how Low gifted his collection of Chinese painting and calligraphy to the HKMoA where a ‘memorial’-style gallery was specially designed to house his collection. Understanding how he eliminated the options of donating to other institutions in China, Taiwan and Singapore before entrusting his collection with the HKMoA enables us to understand why Hong Kong stood out as a favourable environment for the preservation of Chinese art.

Although Low’s collection of painting and calligraphy has been fairly well documented by exhibition catalogues and connoisseurship publications, his personal biography has only been superficially examined and requires further analysis. Other than archival sources, the dealer Hui Lai Ping 許禮平 (1952- ) has provided valuable information on Low for this chapter. As a close acquaintance of Low for many years, Hui’s recollections of Low have been recorded in recent Chinese publications and a recent interview with the present author, which helped to demystify previously unknown or misrepresented facts about Low.<sup>500</sup> However, it is also

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<sup>499</sup> Wear, “Sense,” 199.

<sup>500</sup> Lai Ping Hui 許禮平, “Xubaizhai Zhu Er San Shi 虛白齋主二三事,” in *Ming Jia Tan Shou Cang - Wen Hua Pian (Shang)* 名家談收藏 – 文化篇(上) (Shanghai: Dongfang Publishing, 2009), 163-167; Lai Ping Hui, interview by author, 19 November 2018.

important to take into account that Hui's recollections of Low may be celebratory due to his subjective perspective as a close friend of Low.

## Painting and Collecting in Singapore and Shanghai

Low was born in Longhu of Chao'an, part of Chaozhou in Guangdong province, the third of fifteen children in the family. He lived with his mother and spent his childhood in a traditional Ming-style mansion which had belonged to Low's ancestor Low Zixing 劉子興 (n. d.), a Ming civil official of the Jiajing reign (1522-1567).<sup>501</sup> Low grew up surrounded by classical architecture and cultural relics in Longhu municipality, and it was in this environment that he developed an appreciation of Chinese art and heritage. Low's father Low Chia Heng 劉正興 (1872-1941), also known as Low Jia-heng, was a prominent businessman who founded the Youxin Bank 有信銀行 in Swatow.<sup>502</sup> He traded in grains, textiles and sugar, and ran a currency exchange and remittance service.<sup>503</sup> He pursued his business ventures in Singapore, which had been administratively brought together with Penang and Malacca in 1826 to form the Straits Settlements under the rule of the British colonial government of Bengal. Chinese migrants mostly from Fujian and Guangdong had settled there in large numbers after Singapore became a trading post for the British East India Company in 1819, and in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Chinese became the largest ethnic group in Singapore.

Within circles of Chinese art collectors in Singapore in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century were wealthy merchants who had worked closely with the Qing court. Some of the earliest recorded Chinese art collectors in Singapore include Khoo Seok Wan 邱菽園 (1873-1941) and Lim Nee Soon 林義順 (1879-1936), both collectors of Chinese painting and calligraphy and influential political figures in the Chinese Singaporean community.<sup>504</sup> Singapore, like Hong Kong, was an important cradle for political movements which heightened the Chinese community's sense

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<sup>501</sup> Christina Chu, "A Gift of Heritage: Selection from the Xubaizhai Collection of Chinese Painting and Calligraphy", in *A Gift of Heritage: Selection from the Xubaizhai Collection of Chinese Painting and Calligraphy* vol. 1 古萃今承: 虛白齋藏中國書畫選 1, (Hong Kong: Urban Council, 1992), 32.

<sup>502</sup> Chu, "A Gift of Heritage," 32.

<sup>503</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.

<sup>504</sup> Nanfa Du 杜南發, "Zhong Guo Shu Hua Zai Xin Jia Po De Shou Cang Mai Luo, Fu, Xin Jia Po Zhong Yao Cang Jia Jian Jie 中國書畫在新加坡的收藏脈絡(附)新加坡重要藏家簡介," in *Ming Jia Tan Shou Cang - Wen Hua Pian (Shang)* 名家談收藏 – 文化篇(上) (Shanghai: Dongfang Publishing, 2009), 71.

of identity and nationalism, driven by anti-imperialist sentiment.<sup>505</sup> Khoo Seok Wan founded the *Thien Nam Sin Pao* 天南新報 (1898-1905) which promoted Confucian revivalist activities and the reform movement in China.<sup>506</sup> He invited and sponsored Kang Youwei 康有為 (1858-1927), who led the Royalists and supported Emperor Guangxu's (r. 1875-1908) reform movement, to visit Singapore in 1900.<sup>507</sup> Sun Yat-sen, who had developed his ideas for revolution during his studies in Hong Kong, also visited Singapore during this period to rally for support.<sup>508</sup> Lim Nee Soon was a leading figure of Sun Yat-sen's revolutionary alliance Tung Meng Hui 同盟會 (Chinese United League) and the Ee Hoe Hean Club 怡和軒俱樂部, which actively supported Sun Yat-sen's revolution against the Qing empire.<sup>509</sup> He also led the Teochew Poit Ip Huay Kuan 潮州八邑會, otherwise known as the Teochew Association, a notable Chinese clan association dedicated to Chaozhou (Teochew being a local phoneticisation of Chaozhou) culture in Singapore which was founded in 1929. Low Chuck Tiew's father Low Chia Heng was an active member of this association, moving within elitist political and cultural circles. Like Khoo Seok Wan and Lim Nee Soon, Low Chia Heng collected Chinese art and had a sizeable collection of painting, calligraphy and ceramics, particularly favouring the calligraphy of the Ming painter Dong Qichang (1555-1636). He often invited fellow collectors to his house to view and discuss Chinese art. After Low Chuck-Tiew reunited with his father in Singapore when he was 9 years old, he often listened to their conversations on Chinese art which furthered his interest in the subject.<sup>510</sup> Despite leaving China at a young age, Low was educated at the heart of the Chaozhou community in Singapore where Cantonese and wider Chinese art and culture were advocated. He attended Tuan Mong

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<sup>505</sup> For in-depth discussion on Chinese overseas nationalism in Singapore and Hong Kong, see Huei-Ying Kuo, *Networks Beyond Empires: Chinese Business and Nationalism in the Hong Kong-Singapore Corridor, 1914-1941* (Leiden: Brill, 2014).

<sup>506</sup> Ching-hwang Yen, "Confucianism Revived in Early Singapore and Malaya, 1899-1911," in *A General History of the Chinese in Singapore*, eds. Kwa Chong Guan and Kua Bak Lim (Singapore: Singapore Federation of Chinese Clan Association, 2019), 284-286.

<sup>507</sup> Yen, "Confucianism Revived," 287.

<sup>508</sup> How Seng Lim, "Social Structure and *Bang* Interactions," in *A General History of the Chinese in Singapore*, eds. Kwa Chong Guan and Kua Bak Lim (Singapore: Singapore Federation of Chinese Clan Association, 2019), 128.

<sup>509</sup> Yue Pak Au, "Chinese Social Clubs," in *50 Years of the Chinese Community in Singapore*, ed. Pang Cheng Lian, (Singapore, World Scientific Publishing Co. Pte. Ltd., 2016), 117-128.

<sup>510</sup> Chuck Tiew Low 劉作籌, "Xubaizhai Cang Zhong Guo Shu Hua Guan Kai Guan Gan Yan 虛白齋藏中國書畫館開館感言," in *Ming Jia Han Mo 33: Xubaizhai Cang Hua Te Ji (Xia) 名家翰墨 33: 虛白齋藏畫特集(下)*, ed. Lai Ping Hui 許禮平, (Hong Kong: Han Mo Xuan Publishing Co. Ltd, 1992), 22; Hui, "Xubaizhai Zhu Er San Shi," 163.

Primary School 端蒙小學, a Chinese school founded in 1906 by Ngee Ann Kongsi 義安公司, another Chaozhou clan organisation which worked closely with the Teochew Poit Ip Huay Kuan to promote traditional Chinese education.<sup>511</sup> At this school he was inspired by his art teacher Sun Peigu 孫裴谷 (1891-1944), a Singaporean painter of bird and flower designs who had trained under famous painter Pan Tianshou 潘天壽 (1897-1971). Sun previously founded the Lingdong painting style in Chaozhou and later became head of the Overseas Chinese Art Academy 華僑美術學院 in Singapore.<sup>512</sup> Evidently, although he was physically separated from China, Low's distinctively Chinese-style education in Singapore ensured that he maintained his Chinese, specifically Chaozhou, identity, which came to inform his collecting activities later on in his life.

After the fall of the Qing Dynasty, many Singaporean students studied in Shanghai while a large number of Chinese artists travelled to Singapore to mount exhibitions and sell artworks. Like many of his contemporaries, Low left Singapore in 1926 to study in Shanghai, just three years after Edward Chow also arrived there to work in the antiques trade. Low read Economics at Jinan University 暨南大學, which was founded by the renowned art collector Duan Fang 端方 (1861-1911). Many other students from Southeast Asia were also welcomed there, and they were collectively and affectionately referred to as *nanyang zidi* 南洋子弟 (the Southeast Asian younger generation).<sup>513</sup> The principal of Jinan University in 1920s-1930s was Zheng Hongnian 鄭洪年 (1876-1958), a respected intellectual who followed the educational vision of Cai Yuanpei 蔡元培 (1868-1940) in advocating the synthesis of Chinese and Western thinking in the modernisation of China.<sup>514</sup>

As mentioned in Chapters Two and Three, 1920s Shanghai was a metropolis where artistic development and art patronage thrived alongside commercial success.<sup>515</sup> During his leisure

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<sup>511</sup> Cheng Lian Pang, "Singapore Federation of Chinese Clan Associations," in *50 Years of the Chinese Community in Singapore*, ed. Pang Cheng Lian, (Singapore: World Scientific Publishing Co. Pte. Ltd., 2016), 47.

<sup>512</sup> Chuck Tiew Low, "Foreword," in *A Gift of Heritage: Selection from the Xubaizhai Collection of Chinese Painting and Calligraphy vol.1* 古萃今承: 虛白齋藏中國書畫選 1 (Hong Kong: Urban Council, 1992), 13; Han Wue Teo, "The Story of Art in Singapore," in *A General History of the Chinese in Singapore*, eds. Kwa Chong Guan and Kua Bak Lim (Singapore: Singapore Federation of Chinese Clan Association, 2019), 546.

<sup>513</sup> Hui, interview.

<sup>514</sup> As the president of Peking University and founder of Academia Sinica, Cai Yuanpei was an influential revolutionary figure in modern Chinese politics and education.

<sup>515</sup> For further discussion on the open art market in Republican Shanghai and the commodification of *guohua*, see Chan, "Modern Art World," 186-259.

time in Shanghai, Low practiced how to paint flowers under the tutelage of Xie Gongzhan 謝公展 (1885-1940), then learned landscape painting under Huang Binhong 黃賓虹 (1865-1955). Compared to other painters like Xu Beihong 徐悲鴻 (1895-1953) and Lin Fengmian who had studied in France and incorporated elements of Western realism or Impressionism in their works, Huang was considered a ‘traditionalist’ who promoted and drew inspiration from classical painting styles.<sup>516</sup> Trained in formal Confucian thought, he had aspired to become a scholar-official before the imperial civil service examinations were abolished by the Qing government in 1905.<sup>517</sup> He collected engravings on metal and stone, calligraphy and painting.<sup>518</sup> As a respected *guohua* 國畫 (national painting) artist, art theorist and connoisseur, Huang was a ‘cultural celebrity’ who was elected to a committee for authenticating paintings in the Palace Museum in Beijing in 1936.<sup>519</sup> At a time when traditional Chinese culture became threatened by rapid modernisation and intellectual communities questioned China’s place in the world, Huang and many others dedicated themselves to the promotion of *guoxue* 國學 (national studies) as an expression of anti-Manchu nationalism and a desire to forge a new national unity and cultural identity.<sup>520</sup> While Japanese, European and American collectors and museums acquired Chinese artworks from the markets in Beijing and Shanghai, Huang was purportedly driven by a commitment to ‘rescue’ artworks from falling into the hands of foreign buyers.<sup>521</sup>

As noted in Chapter Three, individuals like Chow embraced foreign presence in China for the business opportunities it brought, and actively cooperated with international collectors and dealers. Contrastingly, nationalistic collectors like Huang viewed foreign dominance in China with disdain. Low’s attitude towards the collecting and later donating of Chinese art mirrored Huang’s protectionist ideals of keeping Chinese art within Chinese communities. According to his own account, Low was inspired by Huang’s methods of understanding, authenticating and collecting Chinese painting and calligraphy, particularly Huang’s analysis of brush and ink

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<sup>516</sup> John Serjeant, “Combining Other Ideas,” *South China Morning Post*, 27 October 1995, accessed 20 June 2020, <https://search.proquest.com/docview/1554575724?accountid=16710>.

<sup>517</sup> Claire Roberts, *Friendship in Art: Fou Lei and Huang Binhong* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2010), 51-52.

<sup>518</sup> Roberts, *Friendship in Art*, 73.

<sup>519</sup> Chan, “Modern Art World,” 9 & 273.

<sup>520</sup> Roberts, *Friendship in Art*, 52-54.

<sup>521</sup> Hui, interview.

techniques, and Huang inspired him to begin his own collection.<sup>522</sup> He maintained a close relationship with Huang throughout his life, frequently exchanging letters with him while continuing to paint landscapes in the traditional style.<sup>523</sup> As an important mentor who shaped Low's perspectives on practicing and collecting art, Huang gave Low his other name Junliang 均量, which provides the homophone for 'a gentleman's character' 君量.<sup>524</sup>

In 1936 Low graduated from Jinan University and married Tay Choon Hua 鄭俊華 (?-1982) in Swatow.<sup>525</sup> Afterwards he moved back to Singapore to assist in his father's business, where he gradually built up a collection of painting and calligraphy. The following year, news of the Marco Polo Bridge Incident reached Singapore, where the Chinese community raised major funds to support the resistance against Japanese invasion in China. For example, in October 1938 the Nanyang Hua Chiau China Relief Fund Union was established by Chinese representatives from various Southeast Asian countries, with Ee Hoe Hean as the headquarters.<sup>526</sup> During this period, artistic exchanges between China and Singapore were led by national fervour, when many Chinese artists visited Singapore including He Xiangning 何香凝 (1878-1972) in 1929, Gao Jianfu in 1930, Xu Beihong 徐悲鴻 (1895-1953) in 1939, Liu Haisu 劉海粟 (1896-1994) in 1940 and Yang Shanshen 楊善深 in 1941 (1913-2004).<sup>527</sup> Xu Beihong sold his paintings in Singapore to raise money for China, while Liu Haisu sold not only his own paintings, but also some antique paintings in his collection; this included *Wutong* by Xu Wei 徐渭 (1521-1593), *Lush Elegance in the Streams and Mountains* by Wu Li 吳歷 (1632-1817), and *The Pagoda of Changgan Monastery* by Shitao 石濤 (1642-1707).<sup>528</sup>

After Japanese forces invaded Singapore in 1942, the Japanese military launched their campaign *dai kensho* (great inspection) to remove 'anti-Japanese elements' and secure their military administration of the island (this is known to Chinese as the Sook Ching Massacre). As part of this operation, Chinese men were rounded up for screening and those found guilty

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<sup>522</sup> Low, "Foreword," 13.

<sup>523</sup> Hui, interview; Christina Chu, "Huang Binhong & Low Chuck-Tiew," in *Homage to Tradition: Huang Binhong* (Hong Kong: Urban Council of Hong Kong, 1995), 22.

<sup>524</sup> Hui, "Xubaizhai Zhu Er San Shi," 163.

<sup>525</sup> *Ibid.*, 163.

<sup>526</sup> Au, "Chinese Social Clubs," 118.

<sup>527</sup> Du, "Zhong Guo Shu Hua," 72; Auyeung Hingyee 歐陽興義, *Beihong in Singapore* 悲鴻在星洲 (Singapore: Yishu Gongzuo shi, 1999); Auyeung Hingyee 歐陽興義, *Xu Beihong in Nanyang* 徐悲鴻在南洋 (Singapore: Singapore Art Museum, 2008).

<sup>528</sup> Chu, "A Gift of Heritage," 34.

of boycotting Japanese goods or supporting fundraising campaigns to aid China's war efforts were persecuted.<sup>529</sup> Disruption of transportation systems during the war led to shortages of daily necessities. Many Singaporeans struggled to survive and sold their assets to supplement their rations.<sup>530</sup> In order to raise funds, the trader Zhu Guoliang (n. d.) sold his collection of painting and calligraphy, which included *The Pagoda of Changgan Monastery* by Shitao previously owned by Liu Haisu.<sup>531</sup> Low was delighted to see this masterpiece and acquired it from Zhu.<sup>532</sup>

In 1945, Low took refuge in a small Indonesian island while the food supply in Singapore diminished, maintaining a living through fishing.<sup>533</sup> He suffered great hardships during this period as he was not accustomed to life at sea.<sup>534</sup> After moving back to Singapore, while WWII was drawing to an end, his family's residence and shops were all burned down after being hit by allied bombing, destroying almost all of Low's family collection. A famous story about this incident is often recounted to demonstrate Low's dedication to preserving artworks – as he escaped from the fire, he saved the painting *The Pagoda of Changgan Monastery* while other pieces perished.<sup>535</sup> This painting is one of the earlier paintings that he collected before moving to Hong Kong, and remains one of the most highly regarded items at the HKMoA today, often being featured as a highlight of the Xubaizhai collection. However, Hui gives a less heroic account of this escape story by indicating that Low simply saved the piece as it was conveniently located by the door as Low fled his residence, and there are also doubts over whether the painting is genuinely by the hand of Shitao.<sup>536</sup> Nevertheless, this sensational story is often cited as evidence of Low's commitment to preserving Chinese art which seems to perpetuate his image as a respectable collector.

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<sup>529</sup> Geok Boi Lee, "The Chinese Community in Singapore During the Japanese Occupation," in *A General History of the Chinese in Singapore*, eds. Kwa Chong Guan and Kua Bak Lim (Singapore: Singapore Federation of Chinese Clan Association, 2019), 675-676.

<sup>530</sup> Lee, "Chinese Community," 680-681.

<sup>531</sup> Chu, "A Gift of Heritage," 34.

<sup>532</sup> *Ibid.*, 34-35.

<sup>533</sup> Hui, "Xubaizhai Zhu Er San Shi," 163.

<sup>534</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>535</sup> Huihong Sun 孫暉紅, "Xin Jia Po Si Da Shu Hua Shou Cang Jia 新加坡四大書畫收藏家," in *Ming Jia Tan Shou Cang - Wen Hua Pian (Shang) 名家談收藏 – 文化篇(上)* (Shanghai: Dongfang Publishing, 2009), 176; Victoria Finlay, "Reflections of National Sentiment," *South China Morning Post*, 17 October 1995, 17, accessed 20 June 2020: <https://search.proquest.com/docview/1554537423?accountid=16710>.

<sup>536</sup> Hui, interview.

## From one British Colony to Another: Collecting Networks, Methods and Sources

After the end of the war, Low moved to Johor in Malaya to work on rubber plantations.<sup>537</sup> In 1946 he joined the Sze Hai Tong Bank 新加坡四海通銀行 (later renamed the Four Seas Communications Bank in 1964), and relocated to Hong Kong in 1949 to work as the branch manager, when many Chinese migrants like Shanghai collectors also settled in the city. Like Singapore, a sizeable portion of the population in Hong Kong originated from Chaozhou. The Hong Kong Four Seas Communications Bank was founded by Singapore's Chaozhou community in 1907, hence Low played an important role in managing business between Singapore, Hong Kong and the transnational Chaozhou community.<sup>538</sup> He worked on restarting business at the bank after the war and stayed in this position until his retirement in 1986 at the age of 75. Historians have often noted similarities between Singapore and Hong Kong as two migrant cities which had both been under British rule for significant periods of time, and were important breeding grounds for Sun Yat-sen and his revolutionary forces that overthrew the Qing empire. Many Chinese residents in both places shared a heightened sense of nationalism as they were caught between British colonisation, Japanese invasion and factionalised Chinese forces competing for the right to govern China throughout the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

In Hong Kong, Low witnessed the huge volume of Chinese art coming through the border from China and collected many of these dispersed pieces before they were purchased by European, American or Japanese collectors, just as Huang Binhong was motivated to collect artworks in Shanghai before they were sold to foreign buyers and shipped overseas.<sup>539</sup> To fulfil his quest of keeping 'national treasures' within the Chinese community, Low started to amass a collection of ceramics as well as painting and calligraphy, but later decided to abandon ceramics and focus on painting and calligraphy due to his limited financial resources.<sup>540</sup> Although those like mainland Chinese scholar Yang Renkai 楊仁愷 (1915-2008) considered

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<sup>537</sup> Hui, "Xubaizhai Zhu Er San Shi," 163.

<sup>538</sup> "Four Seas Communications Bank Ltd," advertisement in *South China Morning Post*, 7 March 1980, 44, accessed 20 June 2020: <https://search.proquest.com/docview/1533661800?accountid=16710>.

<sup>539</sup> Hui, "Xubaizhai Zhu Er San Shi," 163.

<sup>540</sup> *Ibid.*, 164.

Low to be a wealthy collector, whose status as a reliable professional in the banking sector boosted his reputation as a trustworthy connoisseur of Chinese art, others like Hui maintain that Low led a frugal life to reserve funds for collecting, so that he eventually acquired over one thousand works mostly by famous artists.<sup>541</sup> Compared to the luxurious lifestyles of Chow, Ip and Tsui (as will be explored in the following chapter), Low indeed seemed to lead a more modest and austere life.

Apart from the aforementioned story regarding the rescue of his Shitao painting, another dramatic episode has been recounted to demonstrate Low's 'selflessness' in protecting Chinese art – caught up in a car accident in the Hong Kong Cross-Harbour Tunnel, Low was thrown out of the vehicle due to the impact of the collision, causing a head injury; while sustaining heavy bleeding from his head, he still tightly held a landscape painting album 山水合璧冊 by Yun Shouping 惲壽平 (1633-1690) and Wang Hui 王翬 (1632-1717) to protect it from damage.<sup>542</sup> Among Hong Kong collecting circles, stories like these were often told to bolster one's reputation as a connoisseur, seemingly evidencing one's 'passion' and dedication to the preservation of Chinese art, neglecting other less admirable motivations such as pursuit of fame, status or financial gain.

While Low settled in Hong Kong, he remained close to his contacts in Singapore, which became an independent city-state on 9 August 1965. As an artist-collector who networked with other collectors, painters, calligraphers and poets, Low's social circles resembled that of traditional Chinese literati connoisseurs. For example, he was acquainted with Singaporean collector and calligrapher Tan Tzee Chor, who also originated from Chao'an in Chaozhou. Tan owned one of the most famous private Singaporean collections of Chinese art, Xiangxue Zhuang 香雪莊, and donated two of his calligraphic works to the Hong Kong Museum of Art in 1980.<sup>543</sup> Low was also close to Chen Wen Hsi 陳文希 (1906-1991), a Shanghai-trained artist who moved to Singapore where he pioneered a new modern 'Nanyang style' of painting, and

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<sup>541</sup> Ren Kai Yang 楊仁愷, "Xubaizhai Zhu Ren Liu Jun Liang Xian Sheng Zan 虛白齋主人劉均量先生贊," in *Ming Jia Han Mo 32: Xubaizhai Cang Hua Te Ji (Shang) 名家翰墨 32: 虛白齋藏畫特集(上)*, ed. Lai Ping Hui 許禮平 (Hong Kong: Han Mo Xuan Publishing Co. Ltd, 1992), 26; Hui, *Xubaizhai Cang Hua Te Ji*, 24; Hui, "Xubaizhai Zhu Er San Shi," 164.

<sup>542</sup> Sun, "Xin Jia Po," 176.

<sup>543</sup> Du, "Zhong Guo Shu Hua," 57; Memorandum for Members of the Cultural Services Select Committee, Hong Kong Museum of Art, Progress Report, Committee Paper CS/97/80, 4 September 1980, HKRS1104-1-18, 1980-1981, HKPRO.

Pan Shou 潘受 (1911-1999), a Chinese calligrapher who was an influential figure in the development of art and calligraphy in Singapore.<sup>544</sup> Towards the latter years of his life Low also enjoyed composing poetry as a pastime and frequently exchanged with poets in Singapore.<sup>545</sup>

Within Hong Kong connoisseurship circles, Low was known to museums at least since the 1970s as a 'noted collector and painter' who owned 'one of the finest collections of painting and calligraphy in Hong Kong'.<sup>546</sup> Low collected in a relatively independent manner and never joined collecting societies in contrast to Ip and Tsui; he was approached by the Min Chiu Society to join as a member during its founding, but had turned down the offer. Hui suggests that perhaps Low was wary of being attached to any association in fear of political implications.<sup>547</sup> Furthermore, when collecting societies mount exhibitions with items from different members' collections, the selection process inevitably becomes complicated due to differing opinions on the items.<sup>548</sup> Instead of participating in society activities in which collectors would regularly share their collections with fellow connoisseurs, Low's collection was nonetheless shown to his acquaintances and experts in the field through personal introductions and recommendations. James Cahill (1926-2014), who purchased paintings in Hong Kong from the late 1950s to 1980s for his own collection as well as for the Freer Gallery when he was its Chinese art curator from 1958 to 1965, recalled spending time with respected collectors in Hong Kong including Ho lu-kwong, Wang Nanping 王南屏 (1924-1985) and Low.<sup>549</sup> It was through the introduction of Wong Pao Hsie that Cahill met Low in the late 1960s; he visited Low to view his collection several times afterwards, sometimes in the company of James Watt, who arranged many of Cahill's visits to Hong Kong collectors.<sup>550</sup> As recalled by the painter, calligrapher and connoisseur Xie Zhiliu 謝稚柳 (1910-1997), who was a prominent figure of the Shanghai School of art, it was also through Watt's introduction that

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<sup>544</sup> Joon Tai Wong, "Chinese Calligraphy is Alive and Well in Singapore," in *50 Years of the Chinese Community in Singapore*, ed. Cheng Lian Pang, (Singapore: World Scientific Publishing Co. Pte. Ltd., 2016), 211-213.

<sup>545</sup> Hui, interview.

<sup>546</sup> Memorandum, Committee Paper MUS/20/79, HKRS1104-1-2 1979-1980, HKPRO; Memorandum, Committee Paper MUS/82/84, HKRS1104-1-15 1984-1985, HKPRO.

<sup>547</sup> Hui, interview.

<sup>548</sup> Ibid.

<sup>549</sup> James Cahill, "Seeing Paintings in Hong Kong", *Ching Yuan Chai so-shih III, Kaikodo Journal XVIII*, (November 2000): 20-25, accessed 12 November 2020, <http://jamescahill.info/the-writings-of-james-cahill/cahill-lectures-and-papers/92-clp-172-2000>.

<sup>550</sup> Cahill, "Seeing Paintings."

he was able to view the Xubaizhai collection in 1981, and he subsequently became friends with Low.<sup>551</sup>

Hui met Low around the late 1970s, and the two often met for meals and visited places such as the dealer's gallery Tsi Ku Chai 集古齋 in Central to view Chinese painting and calligraphy.<sup>552</sup> Low had two children, a son in New York and a daughter in Hong Kong who often travelled overseas, which may explain why Low often sought Hui's company.<sup>553</sup> Hui's family also originated from the Chaozhou region, hence they were able to communicate in the Chaozhou dialect. Low became a valued consultant for *Han Mo*, the scholarly magazine publication dedicated to traditional Chinese painting and calligraphy which is run and edited by Hui. In one special issue of *Han Mo*, Low was invited to give advice on how to authenticate and collect paintings, revealing how Low approached collecting in his own words. According to this issue, Low believed that one could obtain a good amount of connoisseurship skills to authenticate painting and calligraphy within two to three years, as long as one had a good sense of perception, observational skills, patience, perseverance and most importantly a good mentor.<sup>554</sup> He contended that judging a piece requires experience as well as knowledge about its historical background, literary references, use of brush and ink and calligraphic techniques; he also purported that the material of the paper, the colour of the ink, the control of the brush, and inscriptions, signatures and seals were all important in determining the age and authenticity of a piece.<sup>555</sup> He also paid close attention to the stylistic differences of painters, likening them to differences in each person's tone 語氣 and manner of speaking 語調.<sup>556</sup> His methods complied with the criteria of traditional Chinese connoisseurship, viewing paintings and calligraphy as the embodiment of artists' personalities. This aspect is one of the reasons why the category of painting and calligraphy was, and still is, often set apart from other categories of Chinese art such as ceramics, jade, bamboo, furniture or textiles – while many

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<sup>551</sup> Zhiliu Xie 謝稚柳, "Xubaizhai Zhu Ren Ji Qi Zhen Cang 虛白齋主人及其珍藏," in *Ming Jia Han Mo 33: Xubaizhai Cang Hua Te Ji (Xia) 名家翰墨 33: 虛白齋藏畫特集(下)*, ed. Lai Ping Hui 許禮平 (Hong Kong: Han Mo Xuan Publishing Co. Ltd, 1992), 82.

<sup>552</sup> Hui, interview.

<sup>553</sup> Ibid.

<sup>554</sup> Chuck Tiew Low 劉作籌 and Kim Man Chan 陳儉雯, "Liu Zuochou Tan Shu Hua Jian Ding Yu Shou Cang Ru Men 劉作籌談書畫鑒定與收藏入門," in *Ming Jia Han Mo 13: Shu Hua Jian Ding Te Ji 名家翰墨 13: 書畫鑒定特集*, ed. Lai Ping Hui 許禮平, (Hong Kong: Han Mo Xuan Publishing Co. Ltd, 1991), 80.

<sup>555</sup> Low and Chan, "Liu Zuochou," 80-81.

<sup>556</sup> Ibid., 81.

painting and calligraphy works (particularly the most sought after ones) are attributable to specific artists, often identifiable based on their signatures or seal marks, the other materials which were commonly collected by Hong Kong collectors were mostly produced by anonymous artists, craftsmen or workshops.

Although there was no set standard for art authentication and people held different subjective views and opinions, Low believed that those with similar levels of experience and knowledge of the subject based on existing research would make a similar judgement on the same work of art.<sup>557</sup> He stated that thanks to the wealth of publications, connoisseurs can easily look at good quality illustrations of published genuine works for comparison when authenticating an artwork.<sup>558</sup> This is particularly true in Hong Kong where many collections such as those owned by Chow and Ip were published. Like Chow, Low was meticulous about the conservation and storage of artworks, stating that collectors should be careful not to compromise the original beauty of the painting when adding one's collector's seal stamp on an artwork, and gave detailed tips on how to store paintings.<sup>559</sup>

In Hui's opinion, Low was very generous in sharing his knowledge, and did not lightly judge a piece without having spent sufficient time examining it in detail.<sup>560</sup> For example, a calligraphy couplet by Zhao Zhiqian 趙之謙 (1829-1884) was hung in Low's office for a long time while Low took time to consider the piece carefully, and it was only after much scrutiny that he decided it was authentic and informed Hui of his final decision.<sup>561</sup> The piece was later verified by other respected connoisseurs such as Qi Gong 啟功 (1912-2005) to be authentic.<sup>562</sup> Hui expressed admiration for Low's meticulous and diligent approach to appraising artworks, in contrast to other connoisseurs in the field who made judgements hastily; for example, a Japanese dealer had dismissed the same couplet by Zhao Zhiqian from photos Hui had showed him, but changed his mind later when it was too late for him to acquire it.<sup>563</sup> In describing the experience of buying from the dealer Chang Ting-chen (n. d.), who had reputedly worked in a painting and calligraphy store in Liulichang in pre-1949 Beijing before

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<sup>557</sup> Ibid.

<sup>558</sup> Ibid.

<sup>559</sup> Ibid., 81-82.

<sup>560</sup> Hui, interview.

<sup>561</sup> Ibid.

<sup>562</sup> Ibid.

<sup>563</sup> Ibid.

relocating to Hong Kong, Cahill similarly recounted that he could take paintings back to his hotel room for longer contemplation and pay for them at a later stage, hence it was a process heavily based on trust.<sup>564</sup> This lengthy way of purchasing paintings contrasted greatly with the fast-paced sales of Western auction rooms. Low sourced items through different dealers and agents, many of whom knew of Low's reputation and often approached him proactively when they sourced an item they believed he would be interested in. Low was said to have bought heavily from dealer Ho Kuan-wu (n. d.), who was noted by Cahill as 'an excellent source' of Ming-Qing paintings.<sup>565</sup> Sometimes items were exchanged between collectors at private gatherings, following traditional Chinese connoisseurship practices. It was through this system of internal recommendations that Low's collection expanded. Cahill noted that access to pieces was dependent upon one's relationships with dealers and collectors, and that there was notable competition between dealers who would speak ill of their competitors in their efforts to secure clients.<sup>566</sup>

The way in which Low acquired the name Xubaizhai for his collection provides a good example of how these private exchanges took place. The calligraphy of the two characters *xu bai* 虛白 in *lishu* script by the Qing calligrapher Yi Bingshou 伊秉綬 (1754-1815) was originally offered to another collector at the price of \$300 HKD.<sup>567</sup> The characters *xu bai* may be interpreted as 'a tranquil state of mind evoked by an empty chamber', originating from the phrase *xu shi sheng bai* 虛室生白, 'emptiness illuminates the chamber', which was recorded in *In the World of Men* 人間世 by Zhuangzi 莊子 (ca. 369 BC-286 BC).<sup>568</sup> The collector thought the calligraphy was too expensive, so the agent proceeded to show it to Low instead.<sup>569</sup> Low took a liking to it, especially since the meaning behind *xu bai* appealed to him, hence he bought the piece and paid the asking price without bargaining.<sup>570</sup> Subsequently the word *zhai*, which may be translated as 'studio', was added to *xu bai* to form Low's hall name Xubaizhai, meaning 'Studio of Xubai'. After the purchase had gone through, the collector who was first approached by

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<sup>564</sup> Cahill, "Paintings".

<sup>565</sup> Ibid.

<sup>566</sup> Ibid.

<sup>567</sup> Hui, interview.

<sup>568</sup> Sandra Yan-ling Hu, "Making the Xubaizhai Collection Travel in Time," *Arts of Asia* 49, no. 6 (November-December 2019), 58.

<sup>569</sup> Hui, interview.

<sup>570</sup> Ibid.

the agent changed his mind and enquired about the piece again, but it was too late as Low had already bought it.<sup>571</sup> Such was the system of private exchanges at the time; an agent would privately approach collectors he knew individually and allow time for each collector to make a decision before moving on to the next potential buyer. Hui remarked that since Low was willing to pay high prices for what he liked (just as Ip did, as mentioned in the previous chapter), many agents prioritised approaching him before reaching out to others, since Low was more honest and straightforward when it came to giving his opinion on an artwork compared to other collectors at the time.<sup>572</sup> He would not state that something was inauthentic just to argue for a lower price, a tactic used by many collectors when trying to secure a bargain. Low's good reputation and amicable relationship with agents were vital in ensuring he was approached early on when pieces that suited his taste became available. If he was at the bottom of this 'food chain', he would have only been shown pieces which were previously refused by others and would have missed opportunities to add pieces he liked to his collection.

According to Hui, for 'serious collectors' of painting and calligraphy like Low, they only bought items and rarely sold them; they were extremely selective, so they only acquired a piece if they felt absolutely sure about adding it to a collection, which explains why the buying process was often a long one.<sup>573</sup> Cahill similarly noted the presence of 'true collectors' like J. S. Lee and Wong Pao Hsie who showed no interest in selling, compared to other collectors like J. D. Chen 陳仁濤 (1906-1968) and Lee Kwok-wing who were very willing to part with items in their collections.<sup>574</sup> There were also 'dealers posing as collectors' like Ma Chi-tsu (n. d.), who disguised their commercial interests by presenting themselves as collectors, showing the fluid identities of many Hong Kong collectors and dealers as previously demonstrated in Chow's case.<sup>575</sup>

Most of the painting and calligraphy works collected by Low date to the Ming and Qing periods, although his pieces ranged from the Six Dynasties (220-589) to the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Ming and Qing pieces were relatively more affordable compared to earlier Song and Yuan paintings,

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<sup>571</sup> Ibid.

<sup>572</sup> Ibid.

<sup>573</sup> Ibid.

<sup>574</sup> Cahill, "Paintings".

<sup>575</sup> Ibid.

which were favoured by foreign buyers at the time. Although Low collected to ‘rescue’ items from falling into foreign hands, he was limited by his resources to focus on the later period of Chinese painting and calligraphy, claiming that it was also more difficult to appraise earlier works due to the abundance of forgeries in the market.<sup>576</sup> Indeed, doubts were raised over some of Low’s earlier pieces; for example, he owned a piece attributed to Zhao Mengfu 趙孟頫 (1254-1322), and professional photographs were taken of the piece in preparation for publication, but after its authenticity was questioned by other connoisseurs, Low humbly accepted this and was willing to leave it out of the publication.<sup>577</sup> Just as Ip started collecting bamboo carvings at a time when they were less sought after, hence more reasonably priced with a wider variety available on the market, Low began to collect painting and calligraphy of a later period as they were more affordable and more likely to be genuine. This reflects a recurring pattern in the Hong Kong market – when specific categories of Chinese art became popular among collectors, their market prices were driven up and forgeries often appeared so that sellers could take advantage of the appetite for these objects. Collectors thus avoided paying high prices or buying forgeries by seeking new areas to collect, which ultimately drove new collecting trends and opened up new areas for research as they developed connoisseurship in those areas.

Although Low’s collecting choices were subject to his financial limitations and market forces, he was highly selective of what was available to him, and developed a particular preference for works dating to the 17<sup>th</sup> century. He focused on important masters of Ming and Qing periods, such as the Four Great Masters of the Ming, including Shen Zhou 沈周 (1427-1509), Wen Zhengming 文徵明 (1470-1559), Tang Yin 唐寅 (1470 – 1524) and Qiu Ying; as mentioned above he also collected paintings from other masters such as Shitao and also the Eight Eccentrics of Yangzhou. Low is acknowledged for having the ‘clarity of vision and knowledge’ when selecting items for his collection, which emphasised the importance of artistic development during the transitional period of the Ming and Qing eras.<sup>578</sup>

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<sup>576</sup> Low and Chan, “Liu Zuochou,” 82.

<sup>577</sup> Hui, interview.

<sup>578</sup> Hu, “Xubaizhai,” 58.

## Advising the Hong Kong Museum of Art

Like Chow and Ip, Low was not only a respected collector, but also a trusted adviser to others in the field. Hui often consulted Low on items he considered acquiring, and Low also played a vital role in shaping the development of the HKMoA's collection by serving as an honorary adviser in the last decades of his life, just as Ip did. Tam noted that before Low's official appointment as an honorary adviser to the museum in 1974, he was already involved with the museum's activities in 1973 – for example, he lent items in his collection to the museum for an exhibition on Qi Baishi.<sup>579</sup> Low was also credited by Tam for supporting and lending items in his collection for other exhibitions, including an exhibition on Guangdong masters in 1974, an exhibition of calligraphy by Guangdong masters in 1981, and an exhibition on early Qing period paintings in 1984.<sup>580</sup> Apart from benefitting from his advice on Chinese painting and calligraphy, involving Low in museum activities through this advisory appointment might have been a strategic move by the museum to convince Low to gift his collection to the museum one day, in addition to securing his items for loan exhibitions.

From 1974 to 1993, Low worked alongside Pihan C. K. Chang (n.d.), Chuang Shen, Huo Pao-tsai 霍寶材 (also known as P. T. Huo or Huo Baocai) (1909-1987), Kuo Ven-chi 郭文基 (1944-), Fan Chai, Sheung Chung-ho 常宗豪 (1937-2010), Jao Tsung-I 饒宗頤 (1917-2018), Leo K. K. Wong, and T. C. Lai 賴恬昌 (1921-) to advise on the development of the 'Chinese Painting and Calligraphy' section of the museum collection, specifically regarding the acquisition of items and their documentation, and the preparation of exhibitions, as laid out in the 'terms of reference' for advisers (the same as those set out for the advisers of 'Chinese Antiquities' as mentioned in the previous chapter on Ip).<sup>581</sup> In addition to this, like the advisers for 'Chinese Antiquities', the advisers for 'Chinese Painting and Calligraphy' were also asked to declare

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<sup>579</sup> Laurence C. S. Tam, 譚志成, "Xubaizhai Cang Zhong Guo Shu Hua Guan 虛白齋藏中國書畫館," in *Ming Jia Han Mo 33: Xubaizhai Cang Hua Te Ji (Xia) 名家翰墨 33: 虛白齋藏畫特集(下)*, ed. Lai Ping Hui 許禮平, (Hong Kong: Han Mo Xuan Publishing Co. Ltd, 1992), 25; the 1973 exhibition was curated by Laurence Tam and held at the City Museum and Art Gallery between 14 September and 3 October 1973, entitled *Ch'i Pai Shih*.

<sup>580</sup> Tam, "Xubaizhai," 25.

<sup>581</sup> Memorandum for Members of the Museums Select Committee, Committee Paper MUS/87/77, 29 December 1977, HKRS1124-2-161 1977-1978, HKPRO; Memorandum, Committee Paper MUS/20/79, HKRS1104-1-2 1979-1980, HKPRO; Memorandum for Members of the Museums Select Committee, Committee Paper MUS/36/90, 21 June 1990, HKRS1594-1-4, HKPRO; Memorandum for Members of the Museums Select Committee, Committee Paper MUS/46/90, 6 July 1990, HKRS1594-1-4, HKPRO; Memorandum for Members of the Museums Select Committee, Committee Paper MUS/101/83, 5 September 1983, HKRS1104-1-9, HKPRO.

personal or commercial interests which may be in conflict with their duties as Museum Advisers.<sup>582</sup> As no mention of conflict of interest appears to have been recorded in museum documents, it may be assumed that since Low bought more items through private dealers rather than auction, competition with the museum did not arise as much or as directly as it did for Ip who purchased many items from auctions.

Many of the other advisers for 'Chinese Painting and Calligraphy' shared a similar profile or background with Low, indicating that Low was a typical type of adviser within the small circles of connoisseurship in Hong Kong. For instance, Huo Pao-tsai was also a banker and collector of Chinese painting and calligraphy.<sup>583</sup> While the museum considered Low to have 'one of the finest collections of painting and calligraphy in Hong Kong', Kuo Ven Chi, another painter-collector, was known for having 'one of the finest collections of modern Chinese paintings outside China'.<sup>584</sup> Fan Chai, also a painter-collector, was similarly trained in Chinese painting and calligraphy in Shanghai, and was also the student of a famous artist, the calligrapher and seal-carver Teng Sanmu 鄧散木 (1898-1963).<sup>585</sup> As for Jao Tsung-I, the distinguished scholar, painter and calligrapher, he was also born in Chao'an district of Chaozhou, and made a significant contribution to the Chaozhou community by compiling the *Chaozhou Zhi* 潮州志 (Chaozhou Gazette), which surpassed previous efforts by Qing officials to organise historical records in the region. Like Low, Jao was a consultant for *Han Mo* magazine, and the latter contributed to the documentation of the former's collection. Around the early 1980s, two Japanese connoisseurs San'u Aoyama 青山杉雨 (1912-1993) and Tanimura Kisai 谷村熹齋 (n. d.) viewed the Xubaizhai collection during their visit to Hong Kong. They were impressed with the collection and through their recommendation, 145 items of painting and calligraphy in the collection were published in *Kyohakusai-zō shogasen* 虛白齋藏書畫選 (Chinese Painting & Calligraphy in the Hsu-po Studio) through the Japanese publisher 二玄社 Nigensha, with text contributions by Jao Tsung-I.<sup>586</sup> Similar to Chow, Low's collection thus gained wider fame through collaboration with Japanese publishers that took an interest in Chinese art collections. This indicates another characteristic of Hong Kong collecting – although both Chow and Low

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<sup>582</sup> Memorandum, Committee Paper MUS/101/83, HKRS1104-1-9, HKPRO.

<sup>583</sup> Memorandum, Committee Paper CS/53/80, HKRS1104-1-18 1980-1981, HKPRO.

<sup>584</sup> Ibid.

<sup>585</sup> Memorandum, Committee Paper MUS/101/83, HKRS1104-1-9, HKPRO.

<sup>586</sup> Low Chuck-Tiew, "Preface," in *Chinese Painting & Calligraphy in the Hsu-po Studio* (Japan: Nigensha, 1982), 2-3.

had suffered under wartime Japanese aggression, they did not deny the opportunistic value of using Japanese agents and publications as a tool to promote their collections.

Throughout his appointment as adviser to the museum, Low completed the same rating sheets for acquisition recommendations that Ip did. Low, other advisers and the curator commented on items based on artistic merit ('high', 'fair', or 'average'), authenticity ('definitely genuine' or 'believably genuine'), price ('very reasonable', 'reasonable' or 'high'), physical condition ('acceptable', 'good' or 'excellent'), durability ('moderately durable', 'very durable', 'durable under controlled conditions'), availability ('rare', 'not too rare'), display value ('quite attractive', 'average attraction', 'very attractive') and reputation of artist ('average' or 'very well-known').<sup>587</sup> Low advised on a wide range of painting and calligraphy works by artists, including those by Chao Shao-an 趙少昂 (1905-1998),<sup>588</sup> Gao Jianfu,<sup>589</sup> Wu Li 吳歷 (1632-1718),<sup>590</sup> Ju Lian 居廉 (1828-1904),<sup>591</sup> Zhang Mu 張穆 (1607-1683)<sup>592</sup> and 沈仲強 (1893-1974).<sup>593</sup> The majority of these artists were from the Guangdong region, which reflects both the museum's dedication to developing its collection of Guangdong artists and the advantage of Hong Kong's location in gaining access to works in the Guangdong area.

Low's depth of knowledge on Chinese art is evident through the long commentaries he often provided when recommending items for acquisition, particularly during the 1980s. While the curator and other advisers tended to give brief comments, if any at all, in the rating sheets, Low often elaborated on the historical context, rarity, stylistic characteristics and condition of a piece, as well as biographical information on the artist or calligrapher. He also drew reference to pieces in the museum's collection to comment on whether or not the piece in question would fit with existing pieces, and made remarks on the suitability of displaying the piece in the galleries, showing that he had a comprehensive understanding of the museum

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<sup>587</sup> Memorandum, Committee Paper MUS/87/77, HKRS438-4-46 1977-1978, HKPRO.

<sup>588</sup> Memorandum, Committee Paper MUS/74/78, HKRS1104-1-1 1978-1979, HKPRO.

<sup>589</sup> Memorandum for Members of Museums Select Committee, Committee Paper MUS/75/78, 12 September 1978, HKRS1104-1-1 1978-1979, HKPRO.

<sup>590</sup> Memorandum for Members of the Cultural Services Select Committee, Committee Paper CS/106/80, 8 September 1980, HKRS1104-1-18 1980-1981, HKPRO.

<sup>591</sup> Memorandum for Members of the Museums Select Committee, Committee Paper MUS/124/83, 17 October 1983, HKRS1104-1-9, HKPRO.

<sup>592</sup> Memorandum for Members of the Cultural Services Select Committee, Committee Paper CS/160/80, 20 November 1980, HKRS 1104-1-19 1980-1981, HKPRO.

<sup>593</sup> Memorandum, Committee Paper CS/160/80, HKRS 1104-1-19 1980-1981, HKPRO.

collection and display methods. Like Ip, he also offered specific comments on market prices to influence the museum's financial decisions in acquisitions. For example, at a meeting in November 1984, lots from Ip's collection in the Sotheby's *Fine Chinese Painting* auction were discussed.<sup>594</sup> For lot 15, a Zhang Ruitu 張瑞圖 (1576-1641) calligraphy in cursive script (hanging scroll, ink on silk), Low pointed out that Zhang was 'one of the most famous late Ming Calligraphist and his works were rare; that the calligraphy was very good; that the only negative point of the scroll was that on the lower part, the condition was not so good, but this did not affect the overall appearance of the piece; that the price was acceptable; that the Museum of Art had in its existing collection very few works of the late Ming period and Zhang's piece should be acquired; that because the piece was so good, it would be a pity if the Museum failed to acquire it'.<sup>595</sup> For lot 37, a Wang Yuanqi 王原祁 (1641-1715) landscape painting (hanging scroll, ink and colour on paper) in the style of Huang Gongwang 黃公望 (1269-1354), Low pointed out that it was 'a very well-painted piece for museum display because of its impressive size; that Wang was one of the six masters of the early Qing period and this painting was one of his best paintings; his anticipation that the price of the painting would go up to as high as \$650,000 (HKD)'.<sup>596</sup>

Additionally, as Low's comments were often noted in Chinese then supplemented with English translation, it is evident that Low was more comfortable with giving commentaries in Chinese compared to other Western-educated advisers who gave their comments directly in English. His more traditional Chinese approach is also seen in his emphasis on the use of brush and ink as an appraisal method (as mentioned above, this was advocated by 'traditionalists' like Huang Binhong) when commenting on items for acquisition. For example, regarding an album of animals and flowers by Zhang Mu, Low commented: 'The brush and ink manner as revealed in this album by Zhang Mu is ingenious and excellent. It is quite different from the artist's usual style of painting in a vigorous manner. The whole atmosphere of the paintings is calm and placid, and each leaf serves an epitome of the nature'.<sup>597</sup>

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<sup>594</sup> Museums Select Committee Minutes MUS/11/84, HKRS1104-1-15 1984-1985, HKPRO; *Fine Chinese Paintings: Property of the Estate of Dr. Ip Yee, 21 November 1984, Sotheby's Hong Kong* (Hong Kong: Sotheby's, 1984).

<sup>595</sup> Museums Select Committee Minutes MUS/11/84, HKRS1104-1-15 1984-1985, HKPRO.

<sup>596</sup> Ibid.

<sup>597</sup> Memorandum, Committee Paper CS/160/80, HKRS 1104-1-19 1980-1981, HKPRO.

## Donating to the Hong Kong Museum of Art

In the early 1980s, Low began to plan the final home for his collection. He was deeply affected by the death of his wife in 1982, which may have prompted him to consider the legacy of his collection.<sup>598</sup> Low was worried about separating items in his collection, stating that he did not want his collection to disperse like ‘clouds and mist’ 雲煙, a phrase used in Chinese to describe something ephemeral.<sup>599</sup> Considering how much joy his collection had given him and his concern over keeping his collection together, he preferred to donate it to the wider community so as to propagate ‘the lineage of Chinese culture and art’, as well as to preserve the effort he had put into assembling his collection.<sup>600</sup> His motivation for donation can hence be interpreted not only as a ‘selfless’ act of sharing Chinese art to the wider public, but paradoxically also a form of self-preservation in which his collection and the ideas of Chinese art narrated through the collection may live on after his death. His donation thus exemplifies Duncan’s conception of the art museum as a ritual site, specifically a memorial for the donor, a monument which outlives the individual.<sup>601</sup>

When many collectors became worried about the imminent handover of Hong Kong to China in 1997, one collector persuaded Low to open a safe in London or New York and transfer his collection there.<sup>602</sup> Low mentioned this to Hui, saying that he found this suggestion to be absurd, as his initial motivation to collect was to preserve artworks within Chinese communities; he therefore had no intention to relocate the collection to the West.<sup>603</sup> Low was seemingly not worried about keeping his collection in Hong Kong or staying in Hong Kong himself, since he could always return to Singapore if anything happened to Hong Kong.<sup>604</sup>

If not the West, where did Low consider donating his collection to? Before we consider the reasons why the HKMoA was eventually chosen as the ultimate home of the Xubaizhai Collection, it is important to first examine why Low did *not* consider donating to other museums. As a Singaporean, Low apparently disliked his own government, and often

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<sup>598</sup> Hui, “Xubaizhai Zhu Er San Shi,” 164.

<sup>599</sup> Low, “Foreword,” 14.

<sup>600</sup> Ibid.

<sup>601</sup> Duncan, *Civilizing Rituals*, 72-100.

<sup>602</sup> Hui, “Xubaizhai Zhu Er San Shi,” 164.

<sup>603</sup> Ibid.

<sup>604</sup> Hui, interview.

criticised the country as a narrow-minded, arrogant and money-driven entity which resembled a commercial company rather than a country.<sup>605</sup> He had witnessed how fellow collectors had donated to the Singaporean government, only to find out afterwards that the pieces were not preserved well, with some of them even sold off for monetary gain.<sup>606</sup> Low's negative opinion of the Singaporean government's treatment of art and culture was shared by many at the time who considered Singapore a 'cultural desert'. Choo Thiam Siew, who held many important arts management posts, admitted that during the 1970s and 1980s, Singapore was so focused on nation-building and economic growth that development of art and culture was largely ignored.<sup>607</sup> One of the ministers in the first cabinet who became Deputy Prime Minister in the 1980s, S. Rajaratnam, once condemned Singaporeans for only knowing 'the price of everything and the value of nothing'.<sup>608</sup>

Although other collectors in Hong Kong like Ip donated to the Palace Museum in Beijing and the National Palace Museum in Taipei, Low had reservations about both museums. He did not have a good impression of Taiwan, where he had previously worked for business reasons and found local legal regulations to be confusing and contradicting.<sup>609</sup> He was apprehensive about the management of art collections in mainland China, as the Cultural Revolution had only just ended around a decade before.<sup>610</sup> Despite his concerns, he was still open to corresponding with the Beijing Palace Museum as well as the Shanghai Museum in the early 1980s. However, their exchanges failed to lead to a donation.

According to Hui, Liu Jiuan 劉九庵 (1915-1999), the painting and calligraphy expert at the Beijing Palace Museum, visited Hong Kong in 1982.<sup>611</sup> Hui introduced him to Low and they went to view the Xubaizhai Collection stored at the Four Seas Communications Bank.<sup>612</sup> Liu was impressed by Low's collection and suggested that he exhibit his collection at the Beijing Palace Museum.<sup>613</sup> Low agreed to this, but official correspondence with the museum failed

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<sup>605</sup> Ibid.

<sup>606</sup> Ibid.

<sup>607</sup> Thiam Siew Choo, "Towards a Nanyang Culture," in *50 Years of the Chinese Community in Singapore*, ed. Cheng Lian Pang (Singapore: World Scientific Publishing Co. Pte. Ltd., 2016), 193.

<sup>608</sup> Choo, "Nanyang Culture," 193.

<sup>609</sup> Hui, "Xubaizhai Zhu Er San Shi," 164.

<sup>610</sup> Ibid.

<sup>611</sup> Ibid., 164-165.

<sup>612</sup> Ibid., 165.

<sup>613</sup> Ibid.

to materialise despite Liu's enthusiasm, thus the exhibition never took place and Low did not consider donating to the museum.<sup>614</sup>

In 1983, Shen Zhiyu 沈之瑜 (1916-1990) from the Shanghai Museum visited Hong Kong, and again Hui brought him to view the Xubaizhai collection.<sup>615</sup> Like Liu, Shen was impressed by the quality and size of Low's collection, and began discussions on a loan exhibition of the collection in Shanghai.<sup>616</sup> After this visit, Huang Xuanpei 黃宣佩 (n. d.) and Zhong Yinlan 鍾銀蘭 (n. d.) from the Shanghai Museum also inspected the Xubaizhai Collection to select items for exhibition.<sup>617</sup> After two years, around 100 pieces were shipped to the Shanghai Museum for exhibition, spreading the fame of the collection in mainland China.<sup>618</sup> To coincide with the exhibition, the periodical *Yiyuan Duoying* 藝苑掇英, which was first published in 1978 to promote traditional Chinese art, dedicated two issues (nos 31 & 32) to the Xubaizhai Collection, signifying the first time ever that a private collection was the focus of one, let alone two consecutive issues.<sup>619</sup> Owing to the success of this exhibition, Low had a good impression of the museum staff and their procedures, but because the museum had not been renovated for years with outdated facilities, and the political climate in mainland China did not seem entirely stable to Low, he also abandoned the idea of donating his collection to the Shanghai Museum and the exhibits were returned to Hong Kong after the exhibition.<sup>620</sup> Zhong later expressed to Hui that the Xubaizhai collection was highly regarded by the Shanghai Museum, and she believed that if the exhibition was held at its new premises on Renmin Dadao today, perhaps the exhibits would have had a chance of remaining in Shanghai on a permanent basis.<sup>621</sup>

With Singapore, Taiwan, Beijing and Shanghai ruled out, Hong Kong seemed to be a natural and obvious choice as the final home for Low's collection. As a trusted adviser to the HKMoA

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<sup>614</sup> Ibid.

<sup>615</sup> Ibid.

<sup>616</sup> Hui, "Xubaizhai Zhu Er San Shi," 165.

<sup>617</sup> Ibid.

<sup>618</sup> Ibid.

<sup>619</sup> Hui Lai Ping 許禮平, "Xian Sheng Zhi Feng Shang Gao Shui Chang - Mian Huai Liu Zuochou Gu Wen 先生之風山高水長－緬懷劉作籌顧問," in *Liu Zuochou Shan Shui Ce* 劉作籌山水冊 (Hong Kong: Han Mo Xuan Publishing Co. Ltd, 1993), II; *Yi Yuan Duo Ying: Xubaizhai Zhen Cang Shu Hua Zhuan Ji* 藝苑掇英: 虛白齋珍藏書畫專輯, nos 31 & 32 (Shanghai: Shanghai Ren Min Mei Shu Chubanshe, 1986).

<sup>620</sup> Hui, "Xubaizhai Zhu Er San Shi," 165.

<sup>621</sup> Ibid.

for many years, Low was already familiar with museum staff and their operational procedures, especially after loaning items in his collection for exhibition there. During this period the museum was planning its new premises in Tsim Sha Tsui, boasting new visitor facilities and audio visual equipment for better displays. In 1989, Low officially donated works from his collection to the HKMoA, which had recently moved to Tsim Sha Tsui.<sup>622</sup> This donation was approved at a Museums Select Committee meeting on 8 December 1989 and heralded by the museum as ‘one of the most important private collections in the world’.<sup>623</sup> The HKMoA valued this donation highly – Laurence Tam’s successor Gerard C. C. Tsang 曾柱昭 (n. d.) noted that when the donation was confirmed, even though the new museum in Tsim Sha Tsui was already at an advanced stage of construction, plans were immediately modified to accommodate the creation of a dedicated gallery to display the Xubaizhai collection in rotation, showing how important the collection was to the museum.<sup>624</sup>

Before the donation was finalised, Low was characteristically extremely careful with checking the details of the donation and asked for Hui’s help in securing a reliable lawyer for consultation.<sup>625</sup> During this process, Hui noticed that Low split his collection into two parts and planned to donate them in two separate stages; Hui enquired why this was so, and learned that Low had heart problems and a limited retirement fund, so he kept behind the second group of his collection in case he needed to raise funds to cover costly medical treatments.<sup>626</sup> In September 1992 Low added 93 items to the original donation of 377 items made in 1989, further requesting that an additional clause be added to the Deed of Gift of the Xubaizhai Collection to the effect that ‘all items in his gift will not under any circumstances be deaccessioned or put up for sale or exchange’.<sup>627</sup> This clause further exemplifies Low’s wish

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<sup>622</sup> “Xubaizhai Collection of Chinese Painting and Calligraphy,” Hong Kong Museum of Art, accessed 12 May 2017, [http://hk.art.museum/en\\_US/web/ma/collection06.html](http://hk.art.museum/en_US/web/ma/collection06.html).

<sup>623</sup> Memorandum for Members of the Museums Select Committee, The Capital Works Select Committee, the Finance Select Committee and the Standing Committee of the Whole Council, Committee Paper MUS/34/90, CAP/32/90, FIN/62/990, CW/54/90, 4 June 1990, HKRS1594-1-4, HKPRO; Memorandum for Members of the Museums Select Committee, Committee Paper MUS/89/91 (13.9.91), 9 September 1991, HKRS1124-1-130, HKPRO.

<sup>624</sup> Gerard C. C. Tsang, “Preface”, in *Xubaizhai Collection of Chinese Painting and Calligraphy, Collection Catalogue, Painting, Vertical Scroll* 虛白齋藏中國書畫藏品目錄. 繪畫, 立軸 (Hong Kong Museum of Art, Hong Kong: Hong Kong Urban Council, 1997), 7.

<sup>625</sup> Hui, “Xubaizhai Zhu Er San Shi,” 166.

<sup>626</sup> *Ibid.*, 166.

<sup>627</sup> Memorandum for Members of the Museums Select Committee, Committee Paper MUS/90/92, 2 October 1992, HKRS1124-1-132, HKPRO.

to keep his collection together. It was also reported that when Low made the donation, he specified that the museum had to use it for educational purposes so that more people could appreciate Chinese art.<sup>628</sup>

## Opening the Xubaizhai Gallery of Chinese Painting and Calligraphy

Built at a cost of \$205 million HKD and occupying a total of 5800 square metres floor space, the new HKMoA opened on 15 November 1991; the building had five storeys and a basement, containing six galleries in total.<sup>629</sup> New innovative facilities enabled the installation of introductory video films, which illustrated the artistic value, historical and technical aspects of the works of art on display to enhance the educational value of the exhibitions.<sup>630</sup> Four of the galleries displayed the museum's collection of 'Chinese Antiquities', 'Chinese Fine Art' (equivalent to 'Chinese Painting and Calligraphy'), 'Historical Pictures' and 'Contemporary Modern Art', with the fifth gallery reserved for temporary exhibitions.<sup>631</sup> The sixth gallery was the only gallery dedicated to one specific named collection, the Xubaizhai Collection of Chinese Painting and Calligraphy, which opened one year after the museum's inauguration.<sup>632</sup>

The design plans for the Xubaizhai Gallery, Collection Room and Study Room were approved by Low on 15 May 1990.<sup>633</sup> The curator Tsang has been quoted for maintaining that the presentation of exhibits was heavily determined by Low, who wanted a 'memorial hall' with marble and a sculpture of himself.<sup>634</sup> Tsang seemed to have had reservations about this and tried to 'soften' the look of the gallery with wood, antique chairs and carpeting.<sup>635</sup> Low even made several visits to Guangzhou to meet the sculptor Tang Daxi (1326-) (also Director of the Guangzhou Sculpture Academy), who was commissioned to construct the bronze sculpture for display in the gallery.<sup>636</sup> Low's influence over museum decisions shows the powerful position that donors and museum advisers held, insisting on the fashioning of what Duncan

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<sup>628</sup> Finlay, "Reflections."

<sup>629</sup> Press Release issued by the Public Information Unit, Urban Council and Urban Services Department, no.: USD(CE)-0651/90 Thursday, October 25, 1990, HKRS70-10-153 1988-1990, HKPRO.

<sup>630</sup> Memorandum for Members of the Museums Select Committee and Finance Select Committee, Committee Paper MUS/85/90, FIN/185/90, 8 October 1990, HKRS1594-1-4, HKPRO.

<sup>631</sup> Press Release, no.: USD(CE)-0651/90, HKRS70-10-153 1988-1990, HKPRO.

<sup>632</sup> Ibid.

<sup>633</sup> Memorandum, Committee Paper MUS/34/90, CAP/32/90, FIN/62/990, CW/54/90, HKRS1594-1-4, HKPRO.

<sup>634</sup> Wear, "Patterns," 294.

<sup>635</sup> Ibid.

<sup>636</sup> Memorandum for Members of the Museums Select Committee, Committee Paper MUS/115/91 (8.11.91), 1 November 1991, HKRS1124-1-130 1991, HKPRO.

calls ‘ostentatious donor memorials’ which could threaten a museum’s credibility and integrity.<sup>637</sup>

Apart from Low, another Hong Kong collector and adviser to the museum played an important part in the construction of the new Xubaizhai gallery space. Simon Kwan, an architect by profession, who also practiced the art of painting like Low, was appointed as the Project Architect and Consultant Architect for the Xubaizhai gallery. Kwan worked closely with Low to plan the new gallery space; his knowledge of the display and conservation of Chinese art undoubtedly aided the design process.<sup>638</sup> The Urban Council approved the proposed plans for altering one gallery, building an additional storeroom and a study room to accommodate the architectural requirements of Low’s donation at an estimated cost of \$13,108,000 HKD.<sup>639</sup> This cost was later raised to \$19,024,000 HKD and approved by the council.<sup>640</sup> The use of public money in storing and displaying the Xubaizhai donation and supporting its educational aims to accommodate the wishes of the donor is thus notable.

On 26 September 1992, the Xubaizhai Gallery of Chinese Painting and Calligraphy 虛白齋藏中國書畫館 opened to public with a donation ceremony, during which Low made an opening speech. In this speech, Low stated that he decided to donate this collection to the HKMoA as he had collected these items from Hong Kong and should therefore return them to Hong Kong (although most of these were not created in Hong Kong); with the new facilities and professional management, he believed that the museum would make good use of this cultural heritage for the benefit of greater society.<sup>641</sup> The exhibition ‘A Gift of Heritage: Selection from the Xubaizhai Collection of Chinese Painting and Calligraphy’ was unveiled to showcase 60 paintings and 20 calligraphy works to the public. The museum considered the opening to be a success, attracting ‘favourable comments’ and approximately 300 guests.<sup>642</sup> Museum records also show that Low was pleased with the occasion.<sup>643</sup> Gallery talks were arranged to accompany the exhibition, including a talk by Low held the day after the opening.

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<sup>637</sup> Duncan, *Civilizing Rituals*, 61-62.

<sup>638</sup> Memorandum, Committee Paper MUS/34/90, CAP/32/90, FIN/62/990, CW/54/90, HKRS1594-1-4, HKPRO.

<sup>639</sup> Ibid.

<sup>640</sup> Memorandum for Members of the Museums Select Committee, Committee Paper MUS/104/90, 6 November 1990, HKRS1594-1-4, HKPRO.

<sup>641</sup> Hui, “Xubaizhai Zhu Er San Shi,” 165.

<sup>642</sup> Memorandum, Committee Paper MUS/90/92, HKRS1124-1-132, HKPRO.

<sup>643</sup> Ibid.

Furthermore, a three-day Xubaizhai International Symposium entitled *Perspectives of Twentieth Century Painting* with over 20 speakers from different international institutions was held from 27 to 29 October 1995 to generate discussion on early 20<sup>th</sup> century Chinese painting in the context of nationalism and internationalism.<sup>644</sup> The event proved to be so popular that the organisers had to change the venue from the museum to the City Hall theatre to cater for over 300 attendants.<sup>645</sup> Sponsors for the symposium included corporate companies and private individuals, including Tsui whose wider philanthropic efforts will be discussed in the next chapter.<sup>646</sup> Translation in Cantonese, English and Mandarin was offered to cater to the multilingual audience, and the symposium coincided with three exhibitions of 20<sup>th</sup> century paintings at the museum with items selected from different private and public collections.<sup>647</sup> Christina Chu 朱錦鸞 (n. d.), the dedicated curator for the Xubaizhai Collection at the museum during this time, was reported to have stated that the museum wanted the timing of the exhibitions to coincide with the Sotheby's and Christie's autumn auctions in Hong Kong and China, so as to attract more foreign visitors.<sup>648</sup> This is significant in showing that art market events influenced the planning of museums, demonstrating the closeness between the two entities with a similar target audience. A series of catalogues on the Xubaizhai collection were published in subsequent years, including *A Gift of Heritage* (1992), *Fan* (1994), *Album* (1995), *Vertical Scroll* (1997), *Handscroll* (1999) and *Calligraphy* (2003).<sup>649</sup>

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<sup>644</sup> Gerard C. C. Tsang, "Canvas Records Changes," *South China Morning Post*, 30, 27 October 1995, accessed 21 June 2020: <https://search.proquest.com/docview/1554575401?accountid=16710>.

<sup>645</sup> Finlay, "Reflections."

<sup>646</sup> "The Xubaizhai International Symposium", *South China Morning Post*, 31, 27 October 1995, accessed 21 June 2020: <https://search.proquest.com/docview/1554575857?accountid=16710>.

<sup>647</sup> The three exhibitions include the main exhibition *Twentieth Century Chinese Painting: Tradition and Innovation* 二十世紀中國繪畫 – 傳統與創新, and two feature exhibitions *Homage to Tradition: Huang Binhong* 澄懷古道 – 黃賓虹 and *Vision and Revision: Wu Guanzhong* 叛逆的師承 – 吳冠中 taking place between October 1995 and January 1996. The main exhibition also travelled to the Singapore Art Museum, the British Museum and the Museum fur Ostasiastische Kunst in Cologne.

<sup>648</sup> John Serjeant, "Novel show proves real work of art: Twentieth Century Chinese Painting," *South China Morning Post*, 30, 27 October 1995, accessed 21 June 2020: <https://search.proquest.com/docview/1554574908?accountid=16710>.

<sup>649</sup> Hong Kong Museum of Art, *Xubaizhai Collection of Chinese Painting and Calligraphy, Collection Catalogue: Chinese Calligraphy* 虛白齋藏中國書畫藏品目錄: 書法(Hong Kong: Hong Kong Leisure and Cultural Services Department, 2003); Hong Kong Museum of Art, *Xubaizhai Collection of Chinese Painting and Calligraphy, Collection Catalogue. Painting, Album* 虛白齋藏中國書畫藏品目錄. 繪畫, 冊頁(Hong Kong: Hong Kong Urban Council, 1995); Hong Kong Museum of Art, *Xubaizhai Collection of Chinese Painting and Calligraphy, Collection Catalogue. Fan* 虛白齋藏中國書畫藏品目錄. 扇面(Hong Kong: Hong Kong Urban Council, 1994); Hong Kong Museum of Art, *Xubaizhai Collection of Chinese Painting and Calligraphy, Collection Catalogue. Painting, Handscroll* 虛白齋藏中國書畫藏品目錄. 繪畫, 手卷(Hong Kong: Hong Kong Provisional Urban Council, 1999); Hong

It was also noted by the museum that the wife of the Hong Kong Governor at the time, Mrs Christopher Patten (1944-), accepted an invitation from the museum's Friends Society invitation to be its Honorary Patron.<sup>650</sup> In celebration of her new position, a guided tour of the Xubaizhai Gallery was organised for her and other patrons as part of a 'Welcome the Honorary Patron Evening'.<sup>651</sup> Patten's position as Honorary Patron mirrors the British tradition of using cultural institutions to legitimise political dominance through displaying appreciation for its art and culture, while cultural institutions used their political influence and social prestige to extend their reputation.

Low's donation significantly reshaped the public collection of Chinese painting and calligraphy in Hong Kong. Museum records state that Chinese painting and calligraphy by early masters from the Xubaizhai Collection filled 'one big gap in the Museum collection'.<sup>652</sup> Both Tam and Sandra Hu Yan-Ling, the current Assistant Curator of the Xubaizhai Collection at the HKMoA, acknowledged that the Xubaizhai collection elevated the status of the museum's collection from 'a provincial collection of Guangdong painting and calligraphy' to one of 'international distinction' which offers a more comprehensive illustration of the development of Chinese painting and calligraphy throughout Chinese history.<sup>653</sup>

Apart from expanding and substantiating the museum collection, this donation also opened up valuable research opportunities for scholars and still continues to provide impetus for exhibitions and publications today. As part of the reopening of the HKMoA in 2019 after a major renovation, an exhibition based on selected works from the Xubaizhai Collection was mounted (entitled 'The Wisdom of Emptiness: Selected Works from the Xubaizhai Collection'), proving that the masterpieces in this collection are still heralded as highly valued treasures of the museum 27 years after the first opening of the Xubaizhai Gallery in 1992.

Furthermore, scholarly publications produced to coincide with the new gallery opening also include two special issues of *Han Mo*, in which respected connoisseurs of painting and

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Kong Museum of Art, *Xubaizhai Collection of Chinese Painting and Calligraphy, Collection Catalogue. Painting, Vertical Scroll* 虛白齋藏中國書畫藏品目錄. 繪畫, 立軸 (Hong Kong: Hong Kong Urban Council, 1997).

<sup>650</sup> Memorandum, Committee Paper MUS/90/92, HKRS1124-1-132, HKPRO.

<sup>651</sup> Ibid.

<sup>652</sup> Memorandum, Committee Paper MUS/67/92, HKRS1124-1-132, HKPRO.

<sup>653</sup> Laurence C. S. Tam, "Preface," in *A Gift of Heritage: Selection from the Xubaizhai Collection of Chinese Painting and Calligraphy*, 古萃今承: 虛白齋藏中國書畫選 vol. 1, (Hong Kong: Urban Council, 1992), 10; Hu, "Xubaizhai," 58.

calligraphy acknowledged the importance and highly regarded status of the Xubaizhai Collection. They include painters, calligraphers, art historians, museum experts and collectors mostly based in Hong Kong or mainland China – Tam, Qi Gong, Xie Zhiliu, Yang Renkai 楊仁愷, Liu Jiuan, Shan Guolin 單國霖 (1942-), Wan Qingli 萬青力 (1945-2017), Xia Yuchen 夏玉琛 (n. d.) and Luo Fu 羅孚 (1921-2014).

### **Backlash from Singapore and the ‘Xubaizhai Effect’**

Apart from its contribution to the cultural scene in Hong Kong, Low’s donation indirectly stimulated the development of museums in Singapore. While Hong Kong celebrated Low’s donation, in Singapore it was considered a disgrace – journalists reported that Low’s donation ‘upset’ many Singaporeans as he chose to leave his collection to Hong Kong instead of his native Singapore, while connoisseurs heavily criticised their government for not investing in cultural development, thus its lack of resources and expertise led to losing collections like the Xubaizhai collection.<sup>654</sup>

Low informed Hui that after the news of his donation reached Singapore, the Prime Minister Gok Chok Tong 吳作棟 (1941-) had an audience with Low and mentioned his donation to Hong Kong.<sup>655</sup> Low politely informed Gok that he was not aware of the Singapore government’s interest in art collections, citing the donation of other collections to Singapore which were not handled professionally.<sup>656</sup> In Hui’s opinion, this heavy blow triggered the Singapore government to invest in developing its cultural facilities and set up five museums as a result, and he calls this the ‘Xubaizhai effect’ 虛白齋效應.<sup>657</sup> While this might be attributing too much agency to Low’s donation, conversations with Singaporeans in the Chinese art field show that many genuinely believed that the ‘Xubaizhai effect’ sparked off acceleration of the development of arts and culture in Singapore. Indeed, during this period the Singapore government actively encouraged donations through changing their tax policies in favour of art donors under the direction of government minister George Yeo 楊榮文 (1954-). Sharing a similar history of being under British colonial rule, Singaporeans had long

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<sup>654</sup> “The Art of Amassing a Fortune,” *AsiaOne Online*, 8 April 2013, accessed 20 June 2020: <https://www.asiaone.com/art-amassing-fortune>; Memorandum, Committee Paper MUS/67/92, HKRS1124-1-132, HKPRO.

<sup>655</sup> Hui, interview.

<sup>656</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>657</sup> Hui, “Xubaizhai Zhu Er San Shi,” 166; Hui, interview.

looked up to Hong Kong as a model for modernisation, including political authorities or general households who consumed Hong Kong pop culture.<sup>658</sup> Lee Kuan Yew once wrote:

*After independence in 1965, I made a point of visiting Hong Kong almost every year to see how they handled their difficulties, and whether there were any lessons I could learn from them. I saw Hong Kong as a source of inspiration, of ideas of what was possible given a hard-driving society.*<sup>659</sup>

In addition to Low's indirect influence on Singapore, the ways in which he inspired and motivated other collectors to share their collections with the public can also be seen as part of the 'Xubaizhai effect'.<sup>660</sup> During the museum guided tours led by Low the day after the opening of the Xubaizhai gallery, he recounted stories of his collecting journey and provided detailed analysis of the brush and ink styles executed in the works.<sup>661</sup> On one tour was the Taiwanese collector Lin Baili 林百里 (1949-), who later said to Hui that he was so moved by Low's generosity that in future he would also like to donate his collection and build a museum for the public to appreciate and study his pieces.<sup>662</sup> In recent years Lin gained the support of the Taipei government in building a museum to display his collection; this is currently managed independently, although he pledged to transfer this to the government later on.<sup>663</sup> Some of the collection is now on display in the museum in Taipei, under his hall name Guangya Xuan 廣雅軒.<sup>664</sup> In April 1993, Low died from his heart condition only seven months after the opening of the Xubaizhai gallery at the HKMoA.<sup>665</sup> Many of his friends, including notable collectors, attended the memorial service in Singapore held the following month in May.

## Conclusion

As a representation of the Cantonese diasporic community in Southeast Asia, examination of Low's networks in Chaozhou, Singapore, Shanghai and Hong Kong has offered a glimpse into

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<sup>658</sup> Shaw Brothers Studio was successful in building their entertainment empire in Singapore and Malaysia, circulating Hong Kong culture transnationally through Hong Kong cinema and television from the 1960s onwards.

<sup>659</sup> Lee, *Third World*, 544.

<sup>660</sup> Hui, "Xubaizhai Zhu Er San Shi," 166.

<sup>661</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>662</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>663</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>664</sup> *Ibid.*, 166-167.

<sup>665</sup> *Ibid.*, 166.

the significance of native place associations and transnational connections in shaping anti-imperialist, nationalistic approaches to collecting Chinese art in 20<sup>th</sup> century Hong Kong.<sup>666</sup> Low did not spend much time in the Western world (nor did he appear to care much about it or attempt to connect with it), and demonstrated a more conservative, traditional Chinese literati approach to collecting compared to the other collectors addressed in this thesis – this is evidenced by his status as an artist-collector who connected with painters, calligraphers and poets as well as scholars and collectors; his adoption of traditional connoisseurship standards in authenticating painting and calligraphy; his method of purchasing painting and calligraphy through private dealings; his use of hall names and his dedication to preserving Chinese art within the imagined borders of Chinese communities. However, it would be a mistake to view his collecting activities solely through the lens of colonial resistance, as he also utilised and benefitted from Hong Kong's colonial environment to adopt Western and Japanese practices in promoting his collection, exemplifying an innovative, cross-cultural approach to collecting which was typical in Hong Kong.

Although Chinese art collectors by and large worked together to support the development of public collections in Hong Kong, underpinned by a commitment to civic responsibility, this chapter has demonstrated that the field of Chinese painting and calligraphy was very often treated separately from other categories, as seen in the segregation of advisory panels in the HKMoA. While the previous chapter has demonstrated the fluid boundaries between collecting groups, museums and the art market in Hong Kong, this chapter has revealed that some strict divisions within collecting categories existed, indicating that Hong Kong collecting developed in fragmented and diverse ways.

Furthermore, the above investigation has examined why Low eliminated the options of other institutions in China, Taiwan and Singapore before deciding to donate his collection to the HKMoA where he realised his desire to build a 'memorial' hall dedicated to his collection. This is significant in showing how nationalistic fervour (a desire to keep collections within Chinese communities), political stability (Hong Kong was perceived to be more politically stable than mainland China), economic affluence, professionalism of museums, scholarly expertise and

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<sup>666</sup> Banker-collector Ma Kam Chan, who purchased one of Chow's 'chicken' cups at auction in 1980, also has family origins in Chaozhou. Similar to Low and Jao, he was very engaged with his Chaozhou networks, acting as President of the Hong Kong Chiu Chow Chamber of Commerce in 1950-1952 (Chiu Chow being the Cantonese transliteration of Chaozhou).

advanced cultural facilities were some of the main reasons why Hong Kong attracted so many Chinese art collections during the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

## Chapter Six: The Philanthropic Entrepreneur-Collector T. T. Tsui

The final case study of this thesis investigates Tsui's collecting as a representation of a group of newly wealthy, self-made entrepreneurs (others include Au Bak Ling and Ma Kam Chan) who used their financial prowess to dominate the Chinese art scene in Hong Kong. Collectors like Tsui and Joseph Hotung became engaged in global philanthropy through funding redisplay of Chinese art galleries worldwide, at a time when collectors became concerned about the implications of the imminent handover of Hong Kong from Britain to China. While conservative collectors like Low and Ip only donated Chinese art to institutions in Chinese communities, collectors like Tsui held a contrastingly open attitude towards sharing Chinese art with a global audience, and extended business and diplomatic networks through their collecting activities. Even though Tsui was a pioneer in building the first private museum in Hong Kong, he represented Hong Kong collectors who followed conventional standards of connoisseurship and did not shape or reinforce new categories of Chinese art like Chow and Ip did.

This chapter also follows a broadly chronological approach as adopted in the previous three case studies, and begins by outlining how resources, financial opportunities and networks in Hong Kong enabled Tsui to build his collection while taking on positions of influence in wider collecting circles. This is followed by an examination of his collecting methods and approach, which will be further analysed through investigating his donation to the Victoria and Albert Museum and the opening of the Tsui Museum of Art, in light of the complex and often contradictory ways in which Hong Kong collectors responded to political ambivalence of the 1980s and 1990s. Records in the archive of the Victoria and Albert Museum, old newspaper reports and museum catalogues related to Tsui's donations have provided valuable sources of information for this chapter. Interviews with dealers and curators who worked with Tsui have also been conducted to add new perspectives to his collecting biography.

## Building a Collection in Hong Kong: Resources, Networks and Methods

### Early Beginnings

Tsui fled communist China with his family and moved to Hong Kong from Yixing in Jiangsu Province at the age of nine in 1950. At the same time Chow left Shanghai to settle in Hong Kong, Ip returned home after studying in the United Kingdom and Low moved to Hong Kong from Singapore to undertake his manager position in a bank. Tsui's full name was Tsui Tsin Tong 徐展堂, and like Chow, he abbreviated his name to enable easier pronunciation in English. Tsui once recalled that his father was a student of Hu Hanmin 胡漢民 (1879-1936), a prominent leader of the Chinese Nationalist Party, whose other name was Tsin Tong.<sup>667</sup> In honour of Hu, Tsui's father named his son after him.<sup>668</sup> Tsui's father worked in textiles and chemicals, and passed away when Tsui was only thirteen. Tsui stated in an interview that he preferred a traditional Chinese lifestyle due to his father's influence, and remembered how his father had taught him to continue the good name of the family as he followed a lineage of learned gentlemen through generations.<sup>669</sup> Perhaps it can be suggested that the death of his father caused Tsui to hold close to his father's teachings as a way of coping with loss, leading him to cultivate his passion for collecting Chinese art in keeping with his ancestry of learned gentlemen. As not much appears to be recorded about the history of Tsui's family, it is difficult to verify such claims concerning his family background, just as it seems impossible to confirm if Chow was a descendant of Qiu Ying or not. However, it is worthy of note that neither Tsui nor Chow pursued higher education like Ip and Low did; linking themselves to respectable family histories undoubtedly improved Tsui and Chow's reputations in collecting circles where many well-educated scholarly collectors inherited collections from distinguished families.

As the eldest child of the family with a younger brother and younger sister to support, Tsui was obliged to take on odd jobs to help his family make ends meet. He worked in a wide range of businesses including paint, property, hotels, jewellery and buses. He boldly invested in the

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<sup>667</sup> Zheng, *Hai Shang*, 504.

<sup>668</sup> Ibid.

<sup>669</sup> Ibid.

Hong Kong property and stock markets when they were relatively weak in the early 1970s, earning himself great sums of money when the Hong Kong financial situation improved. As a result he was able to take ownership of many local businesses, eventually chairing corporations including CNT Group, Citybus and China Paint Company.

Tsui began collecting Chinese art in 1970 and acquired a wide variety of objects including ceramics, bronzes, jades, wood and ivory carvings, glass, furniture and Buddhist sculpture. According to Xu Huping 徐湖平 (1945-) who worked at the Nanjing Museum, Tsui once stated that he first became interested in collecting Chinese art when he bought some small porcelain pieces from Guangzhou during a business trip.<sup>670</sup> He gifted these to his overseas business partners, who were delighted with them.<sup>671</sup> Perhaps this positive experience instilled in Tsui a belief that Chinese art can be a great tool for furthering relationships, as will be explored further in this chapter. It has also been recalled that Tsui collected watches before he collected Chinese art, like his close friend and fellow collector Walter Kwok 郭炳湘 (1950-2018), a real estate developer who was known to be an avid collector of watches as well as Chinese art.<sup>672</sup> Just as earlier Hong Kong collectors gained greater access to Chinese art due to political instability in China, Tsui once mentioned that thanks to uneasiness over Hong Kong's future after its handover to China in 1997, many collectors of the previous generation were willing to let go of items in their collections.<sup>673</sup> By the 1990s Tsui had assembled more than 4,000 items, the majority of which were Chinese ceramics, representing what was described as 'a comprehensive collection' ranging from Neolithic pottery to Qing imperial porcelain, spanning a period of 5,000 years.<sup>674</sup>

## Purchasing Through Dealers and Auctions

Like Chow and Ip, Tsui roamed the market place for Chinese art in Hong Kong, including Cat Street and Hollywood Road. But unlike Chow and Ip, Tsui often consulted dealers and heavily relied on their assistance and advice when making acquisitions. One of the earliest dealers he

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<sup>670</sup> Hu Ping Xu 徐湖平, "Hui Yan Hui Xin Hui Gen -- Ji Xiang Gang Shou Cang Jia Xu Zhan Tang 慧眼 慧心 慧根——記香港收藏家徐展堂," *Southeast Culture* 東南文化, issue 2 (2000): 65.

<sup>671</sup> Xu, "Hui Yan," 65.

<sup>672</sup> Rose Kerr, interview by author, 6 June 2018.

<sup>673</sup> Zheng, *Hai Shang*, 503.

<sup>674</sup> Hsiao-yi Chin, "Preface," in *Splendour of Ancient Chinese Art: Selections from the Collections of T. T. Tsui Galleries of Chinese Art Worldwide* (Hong Kong: The Tsui Museum of Art, 1996), 10.

sought advice from were the brothers Lai Loy and Lai Tak of Tai Sing Antiques. Tai Sing once bought on behalf of Tsui a Chenghua mark and period blue and white ‘palace’ bowl decorated with daylilies from the Christie’s Hong Kong auction of the R. H. R. Palmer collection on 17 January 1989 for \$2.2 million HKD.<sup>675</sup> This was a large sum for the market at the time and drew a lot of attention within Chinese art circles. Furniture dealer Curtis Evarts (n. d.) also noted that Tsui’s furniture collection was formed in the late 1980s and early 1990s under the guidance of Lai Loy’s son Peter Lai 黎志江 (n. d.) and daughter-in-law Sandee Lai 黎仙蒂 (n. d.), who set up Peter Lai Antiques Ltd. 黎氏古玩有限公司 in 1988 in Princes Building in Central.<sup>676</sup> By 1990, Tsui had created a network constituting ‘a rollcall of the great dealers and merchants of Chinese art on every continent’, including Eskenazi, Tatsuo Hirano (n. d.) of Hirano Kotoken 平野古陶軒, Lally (who left Sotheby’s to set up his own business), Mayuyama, Kochukyo, Joseph Chan (n. d.), Richard Marchant and Michel Duchange (n. d.).<sup>677</sup> As a multinational businessman, Tsui travelled extensively and sourced items from dealers and auctions worldwide, including England, America and Japan. He became known in the field as a generous collector who was willing to pay high sums for what he liked, similar to Ip and Low. Kerr recalled in an interview that she attended auctions in Hong Kong with Tsui and witnessed how he ‘absolutely commanded the saleroom’ with his aggressive bidding.<sup>678</sup> Tsui noted himself that he can be ‘overcome with madness’ when purchasing Chinese art and never bargained with dealers.<sup>679</sup> Unlike Chow who made a living through dealing in Chinese art and professionals like Ip and Low, Tsui probably had much greater wealth to spend on collecting, and at certain points in his life he seemingly had limitless funds, resembling other affluent businessmen-collectors like Kwok who was ranked as some of the wealthiest individuals in the world.<sup>680</sup>

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<sup>675</sup> Rosemary Scott, *Christie’s Asia 30 Anniversary 佳士得亞洲三十週年* (Hong Kong: Christie’s, 2016), 68.

<sup>676</sup> Curtis Evarts, “Peter and Sandee Lai: Early Friends of Classical Chinese Furniture,” in *The Lai Family Collection of Fine Chinese Furniture and Works of Art, Christie’s New York, 17 September 2015* (New York: Christie’s, 2015), 10.

<sup>677</sup> Anthony Lin, “T. T. Tsui (1941-2010),” *Orientalism* 41, no. 5 (June 2010): 66.

<sup>678</sup> Kerr, interview.

<sup>679</sup> Zheng, *Hai Shang*, 503.

<sup>680</sup> “Gu Dong Jie Zou Le Yi Wei Shou Cang Da Jia - Kan Po Jia Qian De Guo Bing Xiang 古董界走了一位收藏大家 - 看破價錢的郭炳湘”, *The Value*, 21 October 2018, accessed 24 June 2020: <https://hk.thevalue.com/articles/walter-pingsheung-kwok-dies-collector?fbclid=IwAR0SMVECA9rwbF9IOP5GPc0-li0ZLufEwea8l4u8TUHakUaQ0hYKpDiH0fE>.

Elegant Wong, who was one of the dealers who advised Tsui, said in a recent interview that Tsui was the most generous, forthright and straightforward client he had ever worked with.<sup>681</sup> According to Wong, Tsui not only rarely bargained on price; on numerous occasions he would even buy a piece without inspecting or researching it carefully as long as the piece appealed to him. The first time Wong witnessed one such occasion was when Tsui invited him and some other collectors to stay at his residence in Taipei.<sup>682</sup> During that trip Wong accompanied Tsui on a visit to a Taiwanese dealer's shop, where Tsui saw a cloisonné enamel vessel from a far distance.<sup>683</sup> Without looking at the piece closely, Tsui casually enquired about the price and asked whether it was made in the Qianlong period.<sup>684</sup> The shopkeeper quoted a six-figure price and answered that it was indeed dated to the Qianlong reign. Tsui then immediately responded that he would like to purchase the piece, saying he would write a cheque for it.<sup>685</sup> Wong was shocked by how quickly Tsui bought the piece without even inspecting it properly to judge its condition or dating.<sup>686</sup>

Although Tsui's bold way of collecting and spending money earned him respect from dealers like Wong, other dealers may have tried to take advantage of his wealth and trusting character by selling convincing copies to him, or quoting prices that were much higher than the market price (just as dealers hiked up prices when Ip bought bamboo carvings). Wong once overheard Tsui scolding another dealer for selling him a fake piece, but after some time Wong saw that dealer attended one of the meal gatherings initiated by Tsui, indicating that the two had reconciled within a short period of time.<sup>687</sup> In Wong's opinion, Tsui was a forgiving, sociable man who liked a good crowd and didn't hold grudges against people.<sup>688</sup>

On the other hand, sometimes Tsui confessed that he knew a piece was fake or the price was unreasonably high, but he completed the purchase anyway to support the business of the trade. Wong recalled that one evening in Beijing, when he visited Tsui's historic *siheyuan* 四合院 residence, Tsui showed him his recent purchases and Wong thought that some of them

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<sup>681</sup> Wong, interview.

<sup>682</sup> Ibid.

<sup>683</sup> Ibid.

<sup>684</sup> Ibid.

<sup>685</sup> Ibid.

<sup>686</sup> Ibid.

<sup>687</sup> Ibid.

<sup>688</sup> Ibid.

were not genuine.<sup>689</sup> He asked Tsui how much he had paid, and questioned why a genuine piece would be so cheap, to which Tsui replied, ‘of course it can’t be genuine at this cheap price, I just want to support that dealer’s business’ (translated from Cantonese ‘咁平梗係唔係真嘍啦, 幫襯吓人地啦’).<sup>690</sup> Although it is difficult to verify whether or not Tsui said this just to avoid the embarrassment of admitting to buying a fake piece, it is clear that Tsui remained undeterred in his determination to collect despite encountering forgeries. Perhaps after many experiences of purchasing fakes or overpaying for items, he had convinced himself not to dwell on his mistakes and continued to hold a positive attitude to collecting by seeing every purchase as an act of support to the antiques industry.

Apart from Wong, Andrew Lai (n. d.), son of Lai Tak, also recalled in an interview that Tsui’s generosity set him apart from other collectors. Every year before Chinese New Year, Tsui would go around Hollywood Road to purchase new acquisitions for his collection, with Lai’s shop in Central as his last stop.<sup>691</sup> Tsui would show Lai the items he had just bought, and on one occasion when Lai commented that some of his newly acquired Jun ware weren’t that special, Tsui responded with the same phrase that Wong had cited: ‘I just want to support the dealer’s business’ (‘幫襯吓人地啦’).<sup>692</sup> Lai was deeply impressed by Tsui’s dedication to supporting the antiques trade, and stated that Tsui’s contribution in boosting the business of Hollywood Road was so significant that if a statue were to be erected there, it should be one of Tsui.<sup>693</sup>

## Befriending Scholars and Collectors

Apart from dealers and agents, Tsui also befriended a lot of scholars and fellow collectors who shared his interests in Chinese art. Kerr remembered that Tsui would occasionally ask for her opinion on things.<sup>694</sup> She visited his luxurious house on the Peak in Hong Kong, a prestigious location where many of the most affluent Hong Kong residents lived; here he kept his collection in a room behind a secret door and enjoyed taking pieces out to show his guests.<sup>695</sup>

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<sup>689</sup> Ibid.

<sup>690</sup> Ibid.

<sup>691</sup> Lai, interview, 14 September 2020.

<sup>692</sup> Ibid.

<sup>693</sup> Ibid.

<sup>694</sup> Kerr, interview.

<sup>695</sup> Ibid.

The generosity Tsui showed to dealers was also extended to his collector friends. Wong, who had introduced Tsui to Kwok, remembered one occasion when the two collectors visited a London dealer's shop, and after Kwok failed to reach an agreement on the price of a piece with the dealer, Tsui offered to pay the difference so that Kwok could complete the purchase successfully.<sup>696</sup> Kwok was overwhelmed by this kind act and the two collectors grew closer over the years.<sup>697</sup>

Tsui followed in Ip's footsteps by taking on positions of responsibility in the Min Chiu Society, acting as Vice-Chairman of the society in 1990 during its 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary, when the exhibition *Selected Treasures of Chinese Art: Min Chiu Society Thirtieth Anniversary Exhibition* was jointly organised by the society and the HKMoA, with an accompanying catalogue produced.<sup>698</sup> Tsui and other collectors were on the Exhibition and Editorial Committee for this exhibition, with Laurence Tam and Peter Lam as the Selection Advisers.<sup>699</sup> Under the list of lenders to the exhibition, the Tsui Museum of Art which housed Tsui's collection was acknowledged to have lent the largest number of almost 40 exhibits.<sup>700</sup> From 1995 to 1997, Tsui was Chairman of the Min Chiu Society. Under his leadership, the society's club house was re-opened after major renovation work was completed in October 1995. The exhibition *In Pursuit of Antiquities: 35<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Exhibition of the Min Chiu Society* was held at the HKMoA during that year. *Collected Papers from the 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Min Chiu Society* was published in 1996, and several trips were arranged to visit museums in China and Taiwan between 1996 and 1997, including one to attend the opening of the Shanghai Museum in 1996.<sup>701</sup>

It is clear that Tsui was heavily involved in supporting these exhibitions, yet he was not as engaged in conducting academic research or authoring scholarly works on Chinese art compared to Ip. Ip was perceived as a sophisticated intellectual and Low received classical Chinese training from famous artists and connoisseurs from a young age, while Tsui had humble beginnings and spoke limited English and Mandarin. This may explain why he had relatively little involvement with the OCSHK, essentially an English-speaking society which

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<sup>696</sup> Wong, interview.

<sup>697</sup> Ibid.

<sup>698</sup> Hong Kong Urban Council, *Collecting Is Fun: Selected Treasures of Chinese Art: Min Chiu Society 30th Anniversary Exhibition* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong Museum of Art, 1990).

<sup>699</sup> Ibid., iii.

<sup>700</sup> Ibid., 35.

<sup>701</sup> *Grandeur of Chinese Art Treasures*, 82.

accommodated more westernised collectors like Ip.<sup>702</sup> Even though Chow also received limited education, his early entry into the Shanghai art trade, his claims to a 'traditional Chinese' approach to collecting, his association with widely-respected collectors like David and scholars like Drake, and his efforts in promoting new perspectives on Ming porcelain enabled him to distinguish himself as an 'expert' in the field which commanded respect from his contemporaries. On the other hand, Tsui's conventional taste in collecting was judged by many as a demonstration of 'trophy-hunting', typical among new Hong Kong collectors who used financial resources to gain recognition in society.<sup>703</sup> As Chinese art became increasingly commercialised in Hong Kong in the 1970s, aided by the presence of Sotheby's which made investing in Chinese art much easier for those without the family background, networks or connoisseurship expertise, the rise of newly wealthy collectors like Tsui caused anxiety among more traditional, scholarly collectors who had valued Chinese art collecting as a respectable activity that demonstrated knowledge and 'good taste'. His rapid rise to success as a businessman and a collector who built up a large collection quickly was often viewed upon with disdain in the elitist, often 'snobbish' circle of Chinese art connoisseurship.<sup>704</sup> Kerr remembered being with Tsui when she saw people laughing behind his back, seeing him as 'a big jovial poor boy who became rich', an enthusiastic but not sophisticated collector.<sup>705</sup> Their perceptions mirror that of serious art collectors of the Ming Dynasty who felt threatened by a new breed of wealthy uneducated merchants and ridiculed them for their 'crude dispositions, vulgar taste, and lack of specialist knowledge'.<sup>706</sup> Wear has cited how Harold Wong lamented that collecting in Hong Kong towards the last decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century increasingly became 'a middle class activity and often part of an investment portfolio', while C. C. Wang believed that collectors of Chinese antiquities were 'principally concerned with status and investment' in contrast to treating collecting as a 'serious practice' passed on within families.<sup>707</sup> In 20<sup>th</sup> century Hong Kong, suspicion towards Tsui was compounded by a prejudice against ceramics collectors held by collectors of painting and calligraphy, who viewed connoisseurship of paintings to be superior to that of ceramics (as mentioned in the

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<sup>702</sup> Clunas, interview; Kerr, interview.

<sup>703</sup> Lally, interview, "CCAHK" Project Archive.

<sup>704</sup> Kerr, interview.

<sup>705</sup> Ibid.

<sup>706</sup> Jang, "Culture," 53.

<sup>707</sup> Wear, "Patterns," 273-4.

previous chapter). Wear has recounted the opinion of Hugh Moss who claimed that it was easier to master established notions for authenticity and value in ceramics compared to paintings, hence it was possible for 'new, uncultivated' businessman-collectors like Tsui and T. Y. Chao to partake in collecting the category.<sup>708</sup> Arnold Chang, former Head of Chinese Paintings at Sotheby's, further suggests that Tsui was an example of wealthy collectors with 'big money' and 'little real interest in the works', treating collecting as investment which boosted their ego and pride when the values of their items increase.<sup>709</sup> Tsui's bold and swift manner of purchasing Chinese art was evidently appreciated by dealers who profited from his buying sprees, but criticised by others who saw him as a stereotype of reckless ego-chasing, money-driven new ceramic collector-investor in direct contrast to collectors like Low who would spend a long time considering a piece before deciding to acquire it.

Despite these negative opinions, Tsui was, at least on a superficial level, accepted by collecting circles who benefitted from his financial strength and political influence. Reported to be one of the 'top 25 wealthiest men in Hong Kong', Tsui treated collectors, dealers, scholars and curators with generosity and hospitality, in the same way that Ming merchant collectors befriended the literati class in their quest to elevate their social status.<sup>710</sup> Beyond collecting circles, Tsui had significant political influence and played a key role in shaping the development of Hong Kong through forging political and international business alliances. He not only rubbed shoulders with key leaders of the British colonial government in Hong Kong, the British royal family and the British political elite; he was also closely linked with the Chinese government in Beijing, and was directly involved with plans for Hong Kong's transition back to China, acting as one of the First Group of Advisers in Hong Kong Affairs and later becoming a Hong Kong member of the Standing Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference. It was even rumoured that he would run for the post of Chief Executive after the 1997 handover of Hong Kong to China, although he dismissed such allegations as false.<sup>711</sup>

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<sup>708</sup> Ibid., 287-8.

<sup>709</sup> Wear, "Patterns," 321.

<sup>710</sup> Mick Brown, 'A £1 Million Thank You', *Telegraph*, 12 June 1991, RP/1988/1160 Box 200, Chinese Gallery Tsui Gallery, Press & Public Relations, V&A Archive, London; Jang, "Culture," 56-57.

<sup>711</sup> Mick Brown, 'A £1 Million Thank You', *Telegraph*, 12 June 1991, RP/1988/1160 Box 200, Chinese Gallery Tsui Gallery, Press & Public Relations, V&A Archive.

## Collecting Criteria and Approach

Tsui stated that he followed three criteria when deciding on acquiring a piece: authenticity 真, top quality 精 and beauty 美.<sup>712</sup> This is similar to the three criteria advocated by Shanghai connoisseurs like J. M. Hu and Chow which was followed by many other Hong Kong collectors, albeit with slightly different variations. This criteria actually has little meaning in judging how selective a collector is, as the three conditions are all subjective. By claiming to follow a set of purportedly objective rules, the collector merely attempts to demonstrate his/her seriousness in the selection process. Tsui certainly attempted to demonstrate this, once revealing that he personally purchased every item in his collection and thoroughly researched each one of them to fully understand their historical background and design characteristics.<sup>713</sup> His diligence in studying the subject might be a slight exaggeration, especially considering how Tsui would quickly decide to purchase items without even inspecting them properly; but perhaps he did study them carefully after each purchase, and Kerr also claimed that Tsui seemed to make his own decisions on pieces and would often stay up at night looking through Chinese art reference books.<sup>714</sup>

According to Regina Krahl, Tsui collected with the ambitious aim of covering the entire history of Chinese ceramics from the Neolithic times to the Qing dynasty.<sup>715</sup> In her discussion of select pieces in Tsui's collection, Krahl purports that the collection was 'classical' and 'in no way adventurous', suggesting that Tsui was collecting what was conventionally accepted, at least by his circles, as good examples which were representative of the broad spectrum of Chinese art, so that the collection was 'not defined by peculiarities of personal taste', in other words, without a distinctive taste.<sup>716</sup> In his collecting of Jingdezhen porcelain from the Yuan to Qing periods, Tsui was considered to have tended towards the 'imperial taste', a common celebratory attribution for collectors of Chinese ceramics like Chow and David.<sup>717</sup> As mentioned in Chow's case study in Chapter Three, many other Hong Kong collectors

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<sup>712</sup> Zheng, *Hai Shang*, 503.

<sup>713</sup> Zheng, *Hai Shang*, 503.

<sup>714</sup> Kerr, interview.

<sup>715</sup> Regina Krahl, "The T.T. Tsui Collection of Chinese Ceramics," *Oriental Art* 40, no. 12 (December 1989):32.

<sup>716</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.

<sup>717</sup> *Ibid.*, 38.

associated their collections with the perceived ‘imperial’ standards of collecting in the Qing court.

In fulfilling his desire to amass a ‘comprehensive’ collection, Tsui was concerned with completing sets of items. His eagerness in acquiring full sets of twelve Kangxi ‘month cups’, each of which represents one month of the calendar year, seemingly demonstrated how serious he was as a collector, marked by ‘obsession’ and ‘perseverance’ as evidence of a genuine interest in what he collected.<sup>718</sup> Wong remembers visiting Tsui’s secret room in his house on the Peak, where Tsui showed him his sets of these cups, including some decorated in blue and white and some decorated in *wucai* 五彩 colours.<sup>719</sup> Tsui also collected sets of Kangxi period peachbloom-glazed porcelain vessels, and he would point out which pieces he was missing, in the hopes that Wong would inform him if he ever came across them, so that he may purchase them and fill the gaps in his collection.<sup>720</sup> Such behaviour is not uncommon among collectors – in Pearce’s analysis of common modes of collecting, she points out how ‘systematic collecting’ involves ‘completing a set’ to fill a gap in a collection.<sup>721</sup>

Apart from his self-proclaimed ‘madness’ when purchasing items, Krahl observes that Tsui’s ‘personal interest seems to overrule pure investment considerations’, suggesting that he did not think twice about paying more than the market price for items he had set his eyes on.<sup>722</sup> Andrew Lai recalled that Tsui set himself a budget for collecting, but often went over it very quickly and continued purchasing pieces anyway.<sup>723</sup> Apart from the Chenghua mark and period blue and white ‘palace’ bowl that Tsui purchased from the Palmer auction in 1989, Tsui also drew a lot of attention when he acquired other lots from auction at record-breaking prices.<sup>724</sup> As Akin argues, collectors often collect in spite of market fluctuations, and in doing so violate common investment strategies.<sup>725</sup> Tsui certainly demonstrated this, once paying three times the expected price for a Yongzheng period tea cup, only because he wanted to

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<sup>718</sup> "149th Congregation (1995) Tsui Tsin Tong," University of Hong Kong, accessed 28 June 2020, <https://www4.hku.hk/hongrads/citations/j-p-tsin-tong-tsui-tsui-ysin-tong>.

<sup>719</sup> Wong, interview.

<sup>720</sup> Ibid.

<sup>721</sup> Pearce, “Collecting: Shaping the World,” 87.

<sup>722</sup> Krahl, “Tsui Collection,” 32.

<sup>723</sup> Lai, interview, 14 September, 2020.

<sup>724</sup> Ibid.

<sup>725</sup> Akin, “Passionate Possession,” 112.

drink from the vessel on his 50th birthday.<sup>726</sup> Such ‘commercially foolish decisions’ have also been cited by other Hong Kong collectors and dealers as proof of their ‘passion’ for Chinese art, as Wear has observed in his study on Hong Kong collecting in the 1990s.<sup>727</sup> For Tsui, creating an image of himself as a ‘passionate’ collector seemed to counter criticisms of him as an investor rather than a ‘true collector’.

Tsui once stipulated that a Chinese art collector has two responsibilities: first, ‘utmost care and protection of precious cultural relics’; second, ‘promote and support exhibitions and activities of cultural exchange so that the general public can have a chance to view and appreciate those cultural objects’.<sup>728</sup> In the 1980s to 1990s, while many ageing Hong Kong collectors sought new homes for their items, local museums needed more objects to substantiate or expand their collections. As Tsui’s businesses took off, he also had the means to start donating funds and objects to museums. From interviews, speeches at gallery openings and forewords in exhibition catalogues authored by Tsui, it is possible to make sense of Tsui’s self-proclaimed motivations for his philanthropic acts. He asserted the idealistic view that the appreciation and study of art helps to ‘catalyse peace and harmony among people of different cultures’.<sup>729</sup> He maintained that this was the reasoning behind his commitment to setting up his own museum as well as assisting other museums to have Chinese galleries, so that Chinese communities as well as people of other cultural traditions can ‘better understand the magnificent heritage of China’.<sup>730</sup>

However, while collectors such as Ip and Low were concerned with protecting Chinese heritage within Chinese communities, Tsui brought Chinese art to different countries around the world. As a result of his sponsorship and donations, museum galleries which benefitted from his generosity and are named after him can be found in Shanghai, London, Chicago, Toronto, and Canberra. A closer examination of two events – his sponsorship of the Victoria and Albert Museum and the building of the Tsui Museum of Art – reveals his underlying

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<sup>726</sup> University of Hong Kong, “Tsui Tsin Tong.”

<sup>727</sup> Wear, “Sense,” 183.

<sup>728</sup> T. T. Tsui, “Message from Dr T. T. Tsui,” in *Art Treasures from Shanghai and Hong Kong: 9 November 1996 to 25 January 1997* (Hong Kong: University Museum and Art Gallery, The University of Hong Kong, 1996), 12.

<sup>729</sup> T. T. Tsui, “Foreword,” in *Splendour of Ancient Chinese Art: Selections from the Collections of T.T. Tsui Galleries of Chinese Art Worldwide* (Hong Kong: The Tsui Museum of Art, 1996), 7.

<sup>730</sup> Ibid.

concerns for expanding business opportunities and diplomatic networks through Chinese art, in light of the historical specificity of Hong Kong pre-1997.

## The T. T. Tsui Gallery at the Victoria and Albert Museum

The Victoria and Albert Museum in London has its origins in the 1851 Great Exhibition which celebrated the British Empire's achievements in industrial technology and design.<sup>731</sup> The museum's collection grew exponentially throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, undergoing dramatic changes during a period of self-critique in the 1970s and 1980s. In the late 1980s, the museum was looking for funds to refurbish their Far Eastern Gallery which needed better lighting and humidity controls to display fragile items such as lacquer and textiles.<sup>732</sup> Kerr, who worked at the V&A at the time, recalled in an interview that it was probably through the introduction of Grace Wu Bruce that the museum got in touch with Tsui, who was 'immediately sympathetic' with the museum's need for funding.<sup>733</sup> Kerr recalled that after the museum made a proposal to Tsui, listing details of the renovation costs, Tsui swiftly agreed to gift £1.25 million GBP to the museum in 1988 for the creation of a new gallery of Chinese art.<sup>734</sup> In the late 1980s, £1.25 million GBP was the largest sum ever received by the museum from a private donor, and the gallery became one of the first galleries outside China to provide labelling for exhibits in bilingual form, featuring both English and Chinese at Tsui's request.<sup>735</sup> An illustrated book *Chinese Art and Design* edited by Kerr was also published to accompany the new display.<sup>736</sup>

Tsui's decision to fund the new gallery was influenced by a positive experience he had when he first visited the museum in 1978; during this visit Tsui wanted to view the museum's collection of Chinese ceramics, but upon discovering the gallery was closed, he made enquiries to the Far Eastern Collection team and a member of staff showed him the items

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<sup>731</sup> Malcolm Baker, "Museums, Collections, and Their Histories," in *A Grand Design: The Art of the Victoria and Albert Museum*, eds. Malcolm Baker and Brenda Richardson (London: V&A, 1999), 17.

<sup>732</sup> Rose Kerr, "Victoria and Albert Museum: The T. T. Tsui Gallery of Chinese Art," in *Splendour of Ancient Chinese Art: Selections from the Collections of T.T. Tsui Galleries of Chinese Art Worldwide* (Hong Kong: The Tsui Museum of Art, 1996).

<sup>733</sup> Kerr, interview.

<sup>734</sup> Ibid.

<sup>735</sup> Rose Kerr, ed., *Chinese Art and Design: The T. T. Tsui Gallery of Chinese Art* (London: Victoria and Albert Museum, 1991), 12.

<sup>736</sup> Kerr, *Chinese Art*.

which were not on display.<sup>737</sup> More importantly, Tsui saw this donation as an opportunity to build connections between China and Britain. In a V&A Press Release, Tsui is quoted for stating:

*As a Chinese businessman working in Hong Kong I am very much aware of the contribution which Britain has made to my country. Britain has long stood as a bridge between East and West and it gives me great pleasure to support this project which I believe will bring our two countries even closer together. I am also aware of the very large and long established Chinese community living in Britain. I would like the Chinese people both in this country and the Far East to look upon this gallery as their own and to be excited and stimulated by the collections as I have been. For this reason I have asked the Museum to label all the objects in the new Gallery both in English and in Chinese.*<sup>738</sup>

The museum's development strategies mirrored Tsui's beliefs, as records in the V&A archive show that the objectives of the museum's Marketing and Public Relations plan included establishing the gallery as 'a major centre in Britain for the study and understanding of Chinese culture' and using it to 'establish links with the Chinese community in Britain'.<sup>739</sup> In March 1991, three months prior to the gallery opening, a Chinese Community Liaison, Amy Lai, was appointed to contribute to the museum's Education programme as one of the 'spokespeople' for the new Tsui gallery.<sup>740</sup> The funding Tsui offered to the museum covered Amy Lai's post and the first three years of the museum's education outreach programme.<sup>741</sup>

The new name of the gallery, the T. T. Tsui Gallery of Chinese Art 徐展堂中國藝術館, was executed in neat Chinese calligraphy by Tsui's wife, Amy Tsui 徐王詠梅, and raised above the

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<sup>737</sup> 'June Opening for V&A's new Tsui Gallery', 15 February 1991, RP/1988/1160 Box 200, Chinese Gallery Tsui Gallery, Press & Public Relations, V&A Archive.

<sup>738</sup> V&A Press Release: 'V&A to Create New Chinese Gallery – Major Sponsorship Agreement Signed', 20 June 1988, RP/1988/1160 Box 200, Chinese Gallery Tsui Gallery, Press & Public Relations, V&A Archive.

<sup>739</sup> The T. T. Tsui Gallery of Chinese Art draft marketing and PR plan by Charles Mills and Tracy Williamson, 7 February 1991 & Memorandum from Rose Kerr to Charles Mills and Tracy Williamson, 12 February 1991, RP/1988/1160 Box 200, Chinese Gallery Tsui Gallery, Press & Public Relations, V&A Archive.

<sup>740</sup> T. T. Tsui Gallery of Chinese Art Minutes of Progress Meeting 3: Publicity and Marketing (8.2.91); T. T. Tsui Gallery of Chinese Art Progress Meeting 5: Publicity and Marketing Agenda, 8 March 1991; T. T. Tsui Gallery of Chinese Art Minutes of Progress Meeting 4: Publicity and Marketing (22.2.91), 13 March 1991 & Tsui Gallery Spokespeople, 22 February 1991, RP/1988/1160 Box 200, Chinese Gallery Tsui Gallery, Press & Public Relations, V&A Archive.

<sup>741</sup> T. T. Tsui Gallery of Chinese Art Q&A for internal use, RP/1988/1160 Box 202, Chinese Gallery Tsui Gallery, Press & Public Relations, V&A Archive; Kerr, interview.

exhibition space (fig. 6). Prince Charles officiated the ribbon-cutting ceremony for the opening of the gallery on 12 June 1991. Tsui was thrilled with the royal attendance, as it showed ‘just how seriously the British are taking it’, revealing that he had invited the prince himself (the V&A had also officially invited the prince).<sup>742</sup> He had met the prince on several occasions prior to the gallery opening, and also had dinner with then British Prime Minister John Major who expressed interest in attending the opening too.<sup>743</sup> The businessman and socialite Sir David Tang 鄧永鏘 (1954-2017) was noted in correspondence between Tsui and the V&A as the interpreter for Tsui on the day of the opening, although Kerr believes he most definitely played a much bigger role than that.<sup>744</sup> Tang and Tsui were good friends and business partners; they later set up the exclusive China Club in Hong Kong which opened in 1991.<sup>745</sup> The two also ventured into Chinese language satellite television, targeting business-oriented Europeans interested in news on China and Hong Kong as well as Chinese communities overseas.<sup>746</sup> As Tang had a very close relationship with the British royal family and was active in London elitist social circles, it may be speculated that his involvement with the opening extended beyond interpreting responsibilities and he perhaps helped Tsui to extend his network in the UK.

Thanks to the efforts of the museum and Tsui’s vast connections, the opening was a star-studded event. The Min Chiu Society organised a trip to attend the opening ceremony, when the group also visited other major museums in London and Paris.<sup>747</sup> Tsui covered the travel expenses for all society members, flying in VIPs from Hong Kong including politician and

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<sup>742</sup> “Prince to Honour Tsui’s Generosity”, *South China Morning Post*, 29 April 1991, 4, accessed 27 June 2020: <https://search.proquest.com/docview/1540884016?accountid=16710>.

<sup>743</sup> “Prince to Honour Tsui’s Generosity”.

<sup>744</sup> Letter from Tracy Williamson (V&A Press Office) to T. T. Tsui, 20 May 1991 & Facsimile transmission from Chung Tak Ming at Rediffusion (Hong Kong) Ltd. to V&A Press Office, 21 May 1991, RP/1988/1160 Box 201, Chinese Gallery Tsui Gallery, Press & Public Relations, V&A Archive; Kerr, interview.

<sup>745</sup> The China Club was opened as an exclusive club celebrating the opulent style of Shanghai in the 1930s. Wear examines how Tang’s curation of Chinese art displayed at the club reflects his self-proclaimed ‘Westernisation’ which is ‘of a particular variety of modern cosmopolitan Chineseness emphasising a bit of English public school and Romantic literature’; see Wear, “Patterns,” 79. Wear also points out that Tang utilised art to promote ‘lifestyle’ products and services through organisations like the China Club; see Wear, “Patterns,” 252.

<sup>746</sup> “Satellite Feedback Right on Button,” *South China Sunday Morning Post*, 6 September 1992, 36, accessed 27 June 2020, <https://search.proquest.com/docview/1753774853?accountid=16710>; Fionnuala Halligan, “T. T. makes news with European pay-TV deal: KEEPING POSTED,” *South China Morning Post*, 6 October 1992, 4, accessed 27 June 2020, <https://search.proquest.com/docview/1542097201?accountid=16710>; Simon Twiston Davies, “Chinese News Service Expands,” *South China Sunday Morning Post*, 22 August 1993, 18, accessed 27 June 2020, <https://search.proquest.com/docview/1543301998?accountid=16710>.

<sup>747</sup> *Grandeur of Chinese Art Treasures*, 82.

businessman Sir Kenneth Fung 馮秉芬 (1911-2002), businessman Sir Quo-wei Lee 利國偉 (1918-2013) and politician Lady Dunn 鄧蓮如 (1940-).<sup>748</sup> The attendance of famous figures of society no doubt helped to draw attention to the event and boost Tsui's reputation as a generous donor.

## New Gallery Display, Reception and Decolonisation

The redisplay of the gallery has been viewed as a major curatorial initiative which 'reformulated one of the great "imperial archives" of non-Western art for the 1990s'.<sup>749</sup> Tsui's donation enabled the museum to carry out three years of visitor research which facilitated the V&A curators in designing the new exhibition in the T.T. Tsui Gallery.<sup>750</sup> Research questionnaires showed that visitors were most interested in knowing how the objects were used, what they were made of, how they came to the museum and what their designs mean.<sup>751</sup> The curatorial team, which included Kerr, Clunas and Verity Wilson, set out to answer these questions with the new curation, with the ultimate goal of promoting public understanding of Chinese culture.<sup>752</sup> Both Kerr and Clunas recalled that Tsui was a generous patron in the sense that he gave the team complete freedom to conduct their curatorial work, which is markedly different from Low's tight control over the construction of the Xubaizhai Gallery at the HKMoA.<sup>753</sup> Apart from the donation of funds for the renovation of the gallery, Tsui also gifted a 16<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> century Chinese *huanghuali* washstand to the V&A in 1989 in his wife's name after Clunas had seen it in Hong Kong in January that year.<sup>754</sup> Clunas recalled that he always wanted to source a washstand for the V&A collection as they didn't have one; Tsui's donation filled the gap and the piece went on display as soon as it was donated.<sup>755</sup>

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<sup>748</sup> Lai, interview, 14 September, 2020; "Tsui Flies in 80 VIPs for Opening", *South China Morning Post*, 13 June 1991, 4, accessed 27 June 2020, <https://search.proquest.com/docview/1540956731?accountid=16710>; "Prince to Honour Tsui's Generosity".

<sup>749</sup> Barringer and Flynn, "Introduction," 4-5.

<sup>750</sup> 'June Opening for V&A's new Tsui Gallery', 15 February 1991, RP/1988/1160 Box 200, Chinese Gallery Tsui Gallery, Press & Public Relations, V&A Archive.

<sup>751</sup> Kerr, *Chinese Art*, 21-26.

<sup>752</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>753</sup> Kerr, interview; Clunas, interview.

<sup>754</sup> Acquisition form by Craig Clunas, 89/682, 45/56/423, 15 May 1989 & letter from Rose Kerr to T. T. Tsui, 26 April 1989, RP/1989/682 Box 324, Mr T. T. Tsui, One Chinese Wooden Washstand, Gifts, Acquisitions, V&A Archive.

<sup>755</sup> Clunas, interview.

Instead of the more conventional curatorial practice of arranging objects by material or chronology, the V&A curators chose to place objects in their social and practical context, presenting the museum's collection of Chinese art via six themes – Burial, Temple and Worship, Living, Eating and Drinking, Ruling and Collecting. The new layout of Chinese art objects was considered innovative and unprecedented on many levels. Rosemary Scott, who was the curator of the Percival David Foundation at the time, stated in a recent interview that the new Chinese art gallery at the V&A was 'ground-breaking', as it represented Britain's new acceptance of China, presenting its culture in an inventive way and being one of the first galleries outside Greater China to provide labelling for exhibits in Chinese to accommodate a Chinese-speaking audience.<sup>756</sup>

Another new feature of the exhibition offered visitors the opportunity to touch a double-gourd blue and white vase and a carved serpentine head, both dating to the Ming Dynasty, providing a unique hands-on experience for the visitor. Kerr remembers that Tsui was initially 'taken aback' by the idea but eventually grew to like it.<sup>757</sup> Members of the press were not so sympathetic – the *Telegraph* criticised the museum's decision to let the audience handle its objects:

*It would be easy to decide that the chief purpose of a museum is to stop people touching its exhibits. This helps to preserve them and also to remind us of the great difference between owning something and being invited to inspect it. The Victoria and Albert Museum, by urging visitors to touch two of its more precious exhibits in the new Chinese gallery, seems to be standing conventional wisdom on its head. Perhaps it is engaged in a subtle plot to destroy the fierce and particular joy of ownership, thereby easing the way for the communist millennium... There are good reasons why people would not be encouraged to touch animals in the zoo.<sup>758</sup>*

This notion of 'owner versus visitor' mirrors the comparison between enjoying a piece through private collecting and viewing a piece in a museum, as mentioned previously in Chapter Three – according to Thompson, Chow thought that a piece of porcelain could not be

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<sup>756</sup> Scott, interview, 24 June 2019.

<sup>757</sup> Kerr, interview.

<sup>758</sup> 'Eat Them', *Telegraph*, 15 June 1991, RP/1988/1160 Box 200, Chinese Gallery Tsui Gallery, Press & Public Relations, V&A Archive.

appreciated in the same way if it was placed behind a glass case in a museum, thus removing the tactile element of appreciating it. The V&A's innovative decision to invite visitors to touch its Ming vase may have seemed transgressive to some, but it certainly bridged the gap between the 'owner versus visitor' debate, allowing members of the public to appreciate the 'tactile attraction' of porcelain.<sup>759</sup> If one were to adopt the *Telegraph's* analogy of comparing object-handling to touching animals in a zoo, then allowing visitors to feel a Ming vase could perhaps be likened to having a petting area in a zoo where visitors could enjoy a more intimate connection with the animal and foster a better understanding of the subject under controlled and secure circumstances.

Overall, the controversial design received mixed reviews from scholars. Roderick Whitfield, who was Professor of Chinese Art and Archaeology and Head of the Percival David Foundation of Chinese Art, pointed out the confusing labelling and 'misleading elements' of the display – for example, 'the serious student will have to hunt back and forth as pieces of real worth, such as Ru ware, are hidden among the rest'.<sup>760</sup> Apart from this typical complaint about thematic displays, he also stated that the Ming vase offered for touching should be displayed lying sideways to show its whole shape and base which would enable appreciation of the texture of the vase's body and glaze; furthermore, he noted how the Chinese used in the labels lacked 'fluency and elegance' which are 'essential to easy reading and understanding'.<sup>761</sup> By contrast, Nick Pearce, a former staff member of the V&A, offered a positive review of the new gallery (he was working as Assistant Keeper at the Burrell Collection at the time of the review), stating that each section of the display 'leads naturally into the next' and that the impressive design and display would have a 'far-reaching and lasting effect' while the accompanying book publication would quickly become 'a standard work' on the subject.<sup>762</sup>

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<sup>759</sup> "Museum Bids to Fill Gaps," 16.

<sup>760</sup> Roderick Whitfield, "The T. T. Tsui Gallery of Chinese Art. London, Victoria and Albert Museum," *The Burlington Magazine* 133, no. 1064 (November 1991): 788-789.

<sup>761</sup> Whitfield, "Tsui Gallery," 788-790.

<sup>762</sup> T. T. Tsui Gallery of Chinese Art Minutes of Progress Meeting 4: Publicity and Marketing (22.2.91), 13 March 1991, RP/1988/1160 Box 200, Chinese Gallery Tsui Gallery, Press & Public Relations, V&A Archive; Nick Pearce, "The T. T. Tsui Gallery of Chinese Art," *Arts of Asia* 21, no. 4, (July-August 1991): 85-89.

Apart from questions about curatorial decisions, comments were also made on the irony of a Hong Kong donor's patronage of its colonial patron. The *Telegraph* suggested that:

*Such sponsorship tends to stir paradoxical feelings in the British. Gratitude for largesse, tempered by an embarrassment and resentment that we are unable to do it ourselves. We are more accustomed to being cultural patrons than being patronised.*<sup>763</sup>

Evidently, Tsui's high-profile donation seemed to challenge pre-existing colonial power relations, although this might not have been the original intention of the curators. Clunas stated that although the curators themselves were keen to have bilingual signage, the fact that the donor himself requested this made it easier for them to receive approval and support from upper management for what was a 'technical nightmare' considering the difficulties in producing Chinese captions with British software systems in the 1980s.<sup>764</sup> Clunas also commented that they wanted Amy Tsui's calligraphy to emphasise the 'Chineseness' of the gallery for visitors who were mostly non-Chinese; the museum was not so conscious about Chinese visitors at the time when there were not as many Chinese tourists as there are today.<sup>765</sup> In Whitfield's criticism of the new display, he similarly noted the lack of consideration given to Chinese visitors, stating that the museum should have consulted more scholars, particularly Chinese scholars, in the preparation process so as to use better terminology and include more current research in the new gallery; he thinks that the curators could have learned more from 'those who are specialists within their own culture and in their own country, who can act as Bodhisattvas to enlighten and save us from our own mistakes'.<sup>766</sup> Whitfield's criticism seems to affirm the aforementioned statement in the *Telegraph* that the British are 'more accustomed to being cultural patrons than being patronised', thus failing to involve Chinese expertise in the curating process.<sup>767</sup>

Although the new display may have continued to feed the longstanding British taste for Chinese art objects and the museum could have included more Chinese perspectives in the gallery design (as noted by Clunas and Whitfield), the presence of Chinese captions and a

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<sup>763</sup> Mick Brown, 'A £1 Million Thank You', *Telegraph*, 12 June 1991, RP/1988/1160 Box 200, Chinese Gallery Tsui Gallery, Press & Public Relations, V&A Archive.

<sup>764</sup> Clunas, interview.

<sup>765</sup> Ibid.

<sup>766</sup> Whitfield, "Tsui Gallery," 791.

<sup>767</sup> Mick Brown, 'A £1 Million Thank You', *Telegraph*, 12 June 1991, RP/1988/1160 Box 200, Chinese Gallery Tsui Gallery, Press & Public Relations, V&A Archive.

prominently hung piece of Chinese calligraphy from a practised Chinese hand made this new display more welcoming to a Chinese audience. Referring to this redisplay as well as the new Joseph Hotung Gallery of Oriental Antiquities at the British Museum which opened in 1992, Clunas commented that ‘the continued presence of major displays of Chinese art in the national museums, paid for with money from Hong Kong, come to seem in their entirety like souvenirs of that empire which is fast vanishing’.<sup>768</sup> This comment, perhaps coming from a place of self-critique considering Clunas’ direct involvement in the V&A redisplay, actually fails to recognise that financial sponsorship offered by wealthy Hong Kong collectors symbolised a rebalance of power, as these patrons were not blindly pandering to the British Empire, but were seeking ways to protect their collections and financial assets through forging international ties during a period of political uncertainty in Hong Kong.<sup>769</sup> Perhaps it is possible to understand the adoption of Chinese text and the promotion of Chinese art in a British museum as a form of decolonisation – that is, rather than aiding the colonial powers’ efforts in patronising the ‘colonised’ subject, Tsui’s philanthropic act can be interpreted as an appropriation of British museological methods to reclaim ownership of his own cultural heritage. Tsui has been described in one report published by the *South China Morning Post* as a ‘crusader of Chinese culture’.<sup>770</sup> Tsui has even been compared to the past emperors of China as a patron of the arts:

*Art was part policy, part the project of a reign, and part the affirmation of a dynasty’s identity, the expression of its culture. The emperor, the highest and the best amongst the rich and the mighty, gave directions, provided opportunities, threw fashions, and collected curios and masterpieces. Beautiful buildings harboured beautiful objects... The*

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<sup>768</sup> Clunas, “China in Britain,” 50.

<sup>769</sup> Clunas has acknowledged elsewhere that the presence of Chinese items in the museum ‘rightly demands constant and self-critical examination’, and recognised ‘the power of East Asian companies and individuals to assert presence of their culture in British national museums’, with reference to the creation of the Toshiba Gallery of Japanese Art in 1986, the T. T. Tsui Gallery of Chinese Art in 1991 and the Samsung Gallery of Korean Art in 1992 at the V&A, yet overlooked the nuanced political circumstances and implications of Hong Kong sponsorship. See Partha Mitter and Craig Clunas, “The Empire of Things: Engagement with the Orient,” in *A Grand Design: The Art of the Victoria and Albert Museum*, eds. Malcolm Baker and Brenda Richardson (London: V&A, 1999), 236.

<sup>770</sup> Brendan Delfino, “Magical Rise to Riches of ‘Crusader,’” *South China Morning Post*, 19 January 1999, 3, accessed 27 June 2020, <https://search.proquest.com/docview/2026022490?accountid=16710>.

*emperor's collection was personal and affected by the tastes and the knowledge of the collector which, at the same time, affected the state's and the nation's collections.*<sup>771</sup>

This comparison may not be too far-fetched, considering how Tsui was perceived (albeit falsely) to be a candidate for the highest position of power of Hong Kong – the first Chief Executive after the handover to China. The construction of the Tsui Museum of Art, the first private museum in Hong Kong, which shall be discussed later, further illustrates how Tsui's wealth, political influence and personal collecting affected public collections and international diplomacy.

### **Collecting as Business and Diplomacy**

*The song says money may not be able to buy love. But if it buys stronger cultural links between Hongkong and Britain then it's fine by a couple of Hongkong tycoons.*<sup>772</sup>

Apart from interest in the new gallery design, the press was curious to find out more about this generous donor, and quickly picked up on the fact that Tsui was also pursuing big business in Britain when he sponsored the V&A's renovation project. On 14 May 1991, the *Standard* reported that the flotation of shares in Hong Kong's leading paint manufacturer, China Paint Holdings, owned by Tsui, was 153 times oversubscribed, attracting almost £1 billion GBP for the £7.38 million GBP issue.<sup>773</sup> Up until that point, Tsui's other businesses in transport, telecommunications and property were always privately controlled.<sup>774</sup> The 'extraordinary interest' in the paint company's shares meant that Tsui's company would make over £1 million GBP in interest payments from holding the cash on short term deposits.<sup>775</sup> Compared to this large sum of profit, the £1.25 million GBP that Tsui donated to the V&A may have seemed like a relatively small number to the business tycoon.

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<sup>771</sup> Maud Girard-Geslan, *Of Earth and Fire: The T. T. Tsui Collection of Chinese Art in the National Gallery of Australia* (Canberra: National Gallery of Australia, 1999), 5.

<sup>772</sup> In reference to Tsui, Lai Sun and Peter Lam Kin-ngok's donation of \$5.08 million to the London South Bank Arts Centre; "Tycoons Put up Millions to Boost Arts in Britain", *South China Morning Post*, 29 March 1990, 4, accessed 27 June 2020, <https://search.proquest.com/docview/1540552645?accountid=16710>.

<sup>773</sup> Michael Shanahan, 'Big Stir over China Paint Float', the *Standard*, London, 14 May 1991, RP/1988/1160 Box 200, Chinese Gallery Tsui Gallery, Press & Public Relations, V&A Archive.

<sup>774</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>775</sup> *Ibid.*

On 12 June 1991, the *Telegraph* journalist Mick Brown reported on his visit to Tsui's London flat in Mayfair, where a photograph of Tsui with Princess Michael of Kent (1945-), a trustee of the V&A, and another photograph of a yellow double-decker bus – belonging to Tsui's UK company Ensign Bus Company of Essex – were on display.<sup>776</sup> Tsui had bought this fleet of 87 double-deckers the previous year, representing his 'first foray into British business'.<sup>777</sup> According to an issue of *Bus Business* of Peterborough on 29 June 1991, while Tsui was in London for the opening of the V&A gallery, he also placed a bid to London Transport, proposing that his company's three axle air-conditioned double-decker buses go into service in London with a new route 29 running from Wood Green to Trafalgar Square.<sup>778</sup> This seemingly coincidental timing of developing businesses in London while donating to the V&A did not go entirely unnoticed: on 2 May 1991, *Coachmart* in Hull suggested that 'No doubt just about every Ensign bus will carry V and A advertising down the side simultaneously'.<sup>779</sup>

Although records in the V&A archive suggest that Tsui did not impose upon the museum to have the gallery named after him, his donation nonetheless raised his international profile significantly, as evident from the huge number of press reports on his donation, and helped him bridge contacts with the upper echelons of British society. According to the *Telegraph*, it was only after Princess Michael's persuasion that Tsui agreed to having the new V&A gallery named after him, as she pointed out that 'it would bring a sense of pride to the Chinese people as a whole'.<sup>780</sup> Kerr and Clunas both maintain that Tsui did not ask for the gallery to be named after him, although this was done for many if not most of his other donations to other galleries.<sup>781</sup> Tsui's patronship of museums certainly enabled his name to be attached to many galleries in top institutions around the world; previously an unknown individual from Hong Kong, his global philanthropy and resulting reputation as an ambassador of Chinese art aided

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<sup>776</sup> Mick Brown, 'A £1 Million Thank You', *Telegraph*, 12 June 1991, RP/1988/1160 Box 200, Chinese Gallery Tsui Gallery, Press & Public Relations, V&A Archive.

<sup>777</sup> Ibid.

<sup>778</sup> 'Capital May Get Tri-axle Deckers', *Bus Business*, Peterborough, 29 June 1991, RP/1988/1160 Box 200, Chinese Gallery Tsui Gallery, Press & Public Relations, V&A Archive.

<sup>779</sup> 'Tsui Helps Museum', *Coachmart*, Hull, 2 May 1991, RP/1988/1160 Box 200, Chinese Gallery Tsui Gallery, Press & Public Relations, V&A Archive.

<sup>780</sup> Mick Brown, 'A £1 Million Thank You', *Telegraph*, 12 June 1991, RP/1988/1160 Box 200, Chinese Gallery Tsui Gallery, Press & Public Relations, V&A Archive.

<sup>781</sup> Kerr, interview; Clunas, interview.

his efforts in gaining the trust of new business partners, ultimately assisting him in forging business relationships and securing international investments.

With reference to American institutions, Duncan's analysis of private interests in public spaces are useful here in further understanding how Tsui's collecting was related to the fostering of business opportunities and diplomatic ties. Duncan notes the complex and contradictory ways in which American bankers and business tycoons founded public art museums, defined by 'a mix of personal and public ambitions, elitist and democratic sentiments'.<sup>782</sup> Controlling vast shares of American capital, these art patrons attempted to secure their political base and social prestige through supporting the arts – 'The power of high culture to identify them as members of an elite social network with international connections was not simply a luxury; it was necessary to their political and economic objectives'.<sup>783</sup> Duncan examines how visitors are prompted to pay homage to the idealised donor in museums, where 'donor memorials' commemorate not the capitalist lives of the donors that are 'almost always philanthropically expunged', but rather their lives of art collecting.<sup>784</sup> By focusing on their art collecting instead of their capitalist gathering of wealth, donors gain a form of 'social-moral credit', which is particularly useful to those in need of repairing their public image or 'salve a bad social conscience'.<sup>785</sup>

Indeed, rumours that Tsui's wealth originated from dubious sources linked with the smuggling of firearms further tainted his image as a *nouveau riche*.<sup>786</sup> Wear quotes Russell Belk's discussion of the traditional desire to separate art from money in 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century collecting in Europe and America when considering how 'dirty' money was 'sacralised' through the purchase of art, and contends that Tsui was perceived by many as a collector who did this through making donations to museums around the world and opening his private

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<sup>782</sup> Duncan, *Civilizing Rituals*, 54.

<sup>783</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>784</sup> Duncan, *Civilizing Rituals*, 82.

<sup>785</sup> *Ibid.*, 82-83.

<sup>786</sup> According to documents in the V&A archive, an article appeared in the *Sunday Morning Post* in Hong Kong in October 1990 stating that a company that Tsui has shares in had been involved in illegal arm trading; the article was later retracted as the editor had apparently fabricated the story. The V&A Press Office was 'satisfied that there is no truth in the story'; see letter from Tracy Williamson (V&A Press Office) to Kiloran McGriggor (Buckingham Palace Press Office), 6 June 1991 & T. T. Tsui Gallery of Chinese Art Q&A for internal use, RP/1988/1160 Box 202, Chinese Gallery Tsui Gallery, Press & Public Relations, V&A Archive. Also see "Juan Ru Zhong Yi Jun Huo Jiao Yi 捲入中伊軍火交易," *Apple Daily*, 3 April 2010, accessed 24 June 2020, <https://hk.news.appledaily.com/local/daily/article/20100403/13891369>.

museum.<sup>787</sup> Although it is difficult to verify such claims regarding Tsui's sources of wealth, he certainly tapped into the 'ideological power and prestige of art museums' to further his business ambitions by raising his international profile and building a reputation as a generous philanthropist.<sup>788</sup> Beyond the realms of art, Tsui engaged in a wide range of philanthropic work, acting as Chairman of the Tung Wah Group (Ma Kam Chan also held this position twice) as well as Chairman of the Marrow Donation Fund and the Smile Operation in China, and a Director of the Community Chest.<sup>789</sup> He was appointed Justice of the Peace in 1992, a title of honour given by the government to recognise the achievements of community leaders in the colony.<sup>790</sup>

In addition to understanding how Hong Kong collectors extended their business relations and diplomatic ties as exemplified by Tsui's donation to the V&A, the below discussion of his construction of the Tsui Museum of Art further exemplifies how Hong Kong collectors managed their collections as a reaction to political uncertainty in Hong Kong specific to the 1980s and 1990s.

## The Tsui Art Foundation and the Tsui Museum of Art

After he made his donation to the V&A and before the new gallery opened in London, Tsui set up his art foundation in the spring of 1990, and shortly after founded his private museum in Hong Kong in 1991. The Tsui Museum of Art opened on 20 January 1991 in Tsui's business headquarters at Rediffusion House in Lai Chi Kok, Kowloon, enshrining over 2,000 pieces of art from his collection. This was the first Chinese-owned private museum outside China and Taiwan, and the choice of location positioned Tsui as a pioneer in the now widespread practice of housing private museums in office buildings. Many powerful and influential figures of society attended the museum opening, and a party was thrown in Tsui's home on the Peak. The museum later relocated to the Old Bank of China Building in Central for better public

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<sup>787</sup> Wear, "Sense," 203; Russell W. Belk, *Collecting in a Consumer Society* (London: Routledge, 1995), 41, 50-52.

<sup>788</sup> Duncan, *Civilizing Rituals*, 131.

<sup>789</sup> "149th Congregation (1995) Tsui Tsin Tong," University of Hong Kong, accessed 28 June 2020, <https://www4.hku.hk/honggrads/citations/j-p-ysin-tong-tsui-tsui-ysin-tong>. Since the establishment of the Tung Wah Hospital in 1870, followed by the founding of Tung Wah schools and community centres, the Tung Wah Group has consistently been a crucial provider of welfare services in Hong Kong, offering free medication, education and burial services.

<sup>790</sup> University of Hong Kong, "Tsui Tsin Tong."

access, reopening on 11 September 1992.<sup>791</sup> The significance of the occasion was marked by the presence of then Hong Kong Governor Christopher Patten, who officiated the opening ceremony.<sup>792</sup> Patten's show of support was in keeping with the tradition of using cultural institutions to legitimise political dominance, as mentioned above. Located on the fourth floor of Henley Building, 5 Queen's Road Central, the new museum measured about 8,000 square feet big and had the capacity to house 4,000 objects, with five galleries, two period rooms and a special room for showing miscellaneous works of art.<sup>793</sup> Arranged in a traditional chronological system, the curator of the museum Philip Mak 麥耀翔 (n. d.) stated that the exhibition displays were changed on a rotation basis, with nearly 600 pieces on show at one point.<sup>794</sup> The period rooms simulated the interior setting of a scholar's studio in the Ming and Qing periods, showcasing *huanghuali* furniture and *zitan* furniture respectively. In many ways the Tsui museum reflected and helped to reinforce Tsui's reputation as an 'encyclopaedic' collector with diverse interests unlimited to one period, medium or theme.

Five Chinese art catalogues were published by the museum within six years of the museum's opening, effectively acting as tools to promote Chinese art as well as the name of Tsui and his collection. Tsui's connections with the international community of Chinese art scholars is reflected in the museum advisers listed in those catalogues, which included museum directors and curators such as Wang Shixiang, John Ayers, Ma Chengyuan 馬承源 (1927-2004), Wang Qingzheng 汪慶正 (1931-2005), Peter Y. K. Lam, Rose Kerr (1953-), Clarence F. Shangraw (1936-2004), Yang Boda 楊伯達 (1927-), Yutaka Mino (1941-), Liu Xinyuan 劉新園 (1937-2013) and Jessica Rawson (1943-), representing museums such as the Shanghai Museum, the Palace Museum Beijing, the Chinese University of Hong Kong, the Asian Art Museum in San Francisco and the Art Institute of Chicago.<sup>795</sup> These authoritative names boosted the prestige of the museum while aiding Tsui's efforts in building a respectable collection with their advice. In return, the advisers gained access to his collection and received more research and publishing opportunities.

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<sup>791</sup> Kerr, "Victoria and Albert Museum".

<sup>792</sup> Ibid.

<sup>793</sup> Ibid.

<sup>794</sup> Ibid.

<sup>795</sup> *Splendour of Ancient Chinese Art: Selections from the Collections of T.T. Tsui Galleries of Chinese Art Worldwide* (Hong Kong: The Tsui Museum of Art, 1996), 4.

According to Zhang Deqin 張德勤 (1933-2015), who led the Chinese National Bureau of Cultural Relics 中國國家文物局 at the time, Tsui had expressed to Zhang in 1990 that he decided to open his own museum to display his collection in order to prove to Hong Kong collectors that he was not afraid of keeping his large collection in Hong Kong.<sup>796</sup> He hoped that others would follow his example and have confidence in the future of Hong Kong.<sup>797</sup> Indeed, at a time when Hong Kong collectors were so worried about the safety of their collections that many of them relocated their collections overseas, the opening of the Tsui museum was a strong statement to show that Tsui was optimistic about the continued preservation of Chinese art in Hong Kong after the handover in 1997. In Zhang's recollections, it is possible to see that Tsui was committed to ensuring the safety of Hong Kong collections and the survival of the antiques trade.

Zhang first met Tsui when he visited Hong Kong in 1988 and was invited to dine with members of the Min Chiu Society.<sup>798</sup> During this meeting Tsui asked Zhang frankly about the future of Hong Kong's antiques trade after the handover to China, questioning whether Chinese laws would be extended to Hong Kong, thereby limiting existing freedoms of the trade.<sup>799</sup> Zhang reassured Tsui and others in attendance that Hong Kong would follow the Basic Law and have its own separate trade system, to which Tsui replied: 'You're not worried, I'm not worried, but many people are worried. Do you know that many collectors are already packing up their collections, preparing to ship them overseas? In order to reassure Hong Kong collectors, as the Director of the National Cultural Heritage Administration you should request that an official statement be made on behalf of China to announce that the Cultural Relics Protection Law 文物保護法 will not apply to Hong Kong after the handover!'<sup>800</sup> Given his strong insistence on this matter and the fact that he had considered relocating to Canada pre-1997 (but he never managed to stay away from Hong Kong for a significant amount of time as business opportunities in the city always lured him back home), it is hard to believe that Tsui was not personally worried about this question.<sup>801</sup> Tsui did not like to admit that he had

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<sup>796</sup> Deqin Zhang 張德勤. "Gao Feng Liang Jie Chui Qian Gu - Shen Qie Dao Nian Xu Zhan Tang Xian Sheng 高風亮節垂千古—深切悼念徐展堂先生," *Collections*, issue 6 (2010): 162.

<sup>797</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>798</sup> Zhang, "Gao Feng Liang Jie," 162.

<sup>799</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>800</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>801</sup> Zheng, *Hai Shang*, 501.

reservations about Chinese sovereignty – speaking about his confidence in Hong Kong’s future, Tsui was reported to have said ‘I have some property and trading interests in London and Canada but I have no intention of going anywhere’.<sup>802</sup> When asked by *Telegraph* journalist Brown about the future of Hong Kong, he said ‘I think all the bad things in China will change, step by step’, and if they didn’t, then he would leave for Singapore or Britain.<sup>803</sup> *South China Morning Post* also reported that Tsui had said: ‘I’ve made my money in Hongkong and would like to continue doing business here... I really don’t wish to go anywhere else... But, if I don’t find it possible to stay, I will take my ceramics with me’.<sup>804</sup> It is likely that he raised his question to Zhang for ‘other collectors’ as an excuse when he himself was probably more interested in this than anyone else. Tsui’s comment was taken seriously by Zhang, who within half a year made a public announcement to the press that the Cultural Relics Protection Law in China will not be enforced in Hong Kong after 1997.<sup>805</sup> In 1991, Zhang submitted a government report to stress that the promotion of Chinese antique objects could increase Hong Kong people’s sense of unity through generating better understanding of Chinese culture, and proposed to work with Hong Kong collectors and publishers to promote the subject while organising field trips for connoisseurs in Hong Kong and Taiwan to visit important heritage sites in mainland China to cultivate further interest and encourage scholarly study.<sup>806</sup> This report was acknowledged and approved by then Chinese Premier Li Peng 李鵬 (1928-2019).<sup>807</sup> As a result, the Hong Kong China Cultural Heritage Information and Consulting Center 香港中國文物諮詢中心 was set up in 1992 to facilitate the activities of the National Cultural Heritage Administration in Hong Kong, Macau, Taiwan and other overseas locations, organising events for study trips and exchange activities, effectively using Chinese art for propagandistic purposes.<sup>808</sup> At the inauguration ceremony Tsui signed a cheque of \$1 million HKD to donate

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<sup>802</sup> Kavita Daswani, “Modest Entrepreneur with Confidence in Territory's Future,” *South China Sunday Morning Post*, 7 January 1990, 49, accessed 27 June 2020, <https://search.proquest.com/docview/1554192794?accountid=16710>.

<sup>803</sup> Mick Brown, ‘A £1 Million Thank You’, *Telegraph*, 12 June 1991, RP/1988/1160 Box 200, Chinese Gallery Tsui Gallery, Press & Public Relations, V&A Archive.

<sup>804</sup> Saw Puay Lim, ‘The Compleat Collector’, *South China Morning Post*, 26 May 1991, RP/1988/1160 Box 202, Chinese Gallery Tsui Gallery, Press & Public Relations, V&A Archive.

<sup>805</sup> Zhang, “Gao Feng Liang Jie,” 163.

<sup>806</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>807</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>808</sup> *Ibid.*

to the China Foundation for Cultural Heritage Conservation 中國文物保護基金會, pledging his support to the organisation.<sup>809</sup>

Tsui's efforts in securing Hong Kong's status as a safe place for preserving Chinese art may have helped to dispel fears about a Chinese crackdown on collectors and dealers, which had been experienced by many who had escaped from Shanghai in 1949/the early 1950s or the Cultural Revolution in the 1960s and 1970s. The Tsui Museum of Art could thus be perceived as a political act on Tsui's behalf to promote not only his collection and his reputation, but also the new image of Hong Kong as a city unified with mainland China through mutual efforts to preserve a shared culture and heritage.

## Engaging with the World: International Museums

In the early 1990s, Tsui mostly supported museums worldwide through the donation of funds rather than Chinese art objects from his private collection, which were reserved for his own museum. An exception to this was his donation of seven items to the National Palace Museum Taipei between 1991 and 1995, including a black pottery cup of the Longshan culture (ca. 3000-1900 BC), pottery horses of the Tang and Western Han dynasties, and a painted pottery figurine from the Tang Dynasty.<sup>810</sup> As a keen supporter of the museum, Tsui's residence in Taipei was intentionally chosen to be located right opposite the museum to enable more convenient access to the museum collection whenever he visited Taipei.<sup>811</sup> In 1992, Tsui loaned, rather than donated, a selection of his collection under the auspices of the Tsui Art Foundation to the Empress Place Museum in Singapore, exhibiting 150 pieces of ceramics and archaic bronzes.<sup>812</sup>

Other than the aforementioned V&A donation, Tsui also funded the renovation of the Chinese galleries in the Art Institute of Chicago which were reopened in 1992.<sup>813</sup> In the same year he also donated \$2.86 million HKD to the HKMoA to fund the purchase of a large sculpture of

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<sup>809</sup> Ibid.

<sup>810</sup> Kerr, "Victoria and Albert Museum"; List of Donations, National Palace Museum, accessed 10 June 2020 <https://www.npm.gov.tw/exh99/sharing/ch5.html>; Chin, "Preface," 10.

<sup>811</sup> Wong, interview.

<sup>812</sup> Tsui Art Foundation, *Gems of Chinese Art: Selections of Ceramics and Bronzes from the Tsui Art Foundation* (Hong Kong, the Tsui Art Foundation, 1992).

<sup>813</sup> Stephen Little, "The Art Institute of Chicago", in *Splendour of Ancient Chinese Art: Selections from the Collections of T. T. Tsui Galleries of Chinese Art Worldwide* (Hong Kong: The Tsui Museum of Art, 1996).

Guanyin from a Christie's auction.<sup>814</sup> In 1993, he donated \$1 million USD to the Shanghai Museum for a new ceramics gallery. He also became involved with fundraising for the museum, acting as Chairman of its Overseas Fundraising Committee.<sup>815</sup> The new gallery opening was attended by many prominent figures of Hong Kong society, including collectors Joseph Hotung and Quincy Chuang 莊貴倫 (n. d.). Tsui's support of mainland Chinese institutions is also seen through his donation of \$800,000 USD to the Nanjing Museum to help fund their new gallery; Tsui was made an Honorary Director of the museum in recognition of his contribution.<sup>816</sup>

In 1993 Tsui also donated 1 million Canadian dollars to the Royal Ontario Museum to build a new Chinese art gallery which officially opened on 15 February 1996, and he funded the publication of the book *Royal Ontario Museum: The T. T. Tsui Galleries of Chinese Art* to coincide with the gallery opening.<sup>817</sup> The new Early China Gallery was completed to accompany the Chinese Tomb Gallery and the Later Imperial China, combining to be named as the T. T. Tsui Galleries of Chinese Art, displaying Chinese art dating from Neolithic times to the 20<sup>th</sup> century in chronological sequence.<sup>818</sup> Tsui led fundraising efforts by introducing other donors to the museum, which was claimed to be a success.<sup>819</sup> Statements made by Tsui and the museum convey the same ideas of using art to foster relationships between different cultures which were expressed at the V&A gallery opening: the director of the Royal Ontario Museum noted that Tsui's 'love of Chinese culture' and 'strong desire to have others learn of this culture through access to collections of Chinese art' parallel the museum's ambition 'to make its collections most accessible and relevant to its visitors'.<sup>820</sup>

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<sup>814</sup> Press Release issued by the Public Information Unit, Urban Council and Urban Services Department, no.: USD(CE)-0659/90, 24 October 1990, HKRS 70-10-153 1988-1990, HKPRO; Press Release issued by the Public Information Unit, Urban Council and Urban Services Department, 25 October 1990, HKRS70-10-153, HKPRO.

<sup>815</sup> For discussion on how the Shanghai Museum survived, and even benefitted from, the Cultural Revolution, see Lu, "Seizing Civilization," 168-283; Denise Y. Ho, "Antiquity in Revolution: The Shanghai Museum," in *Curating Revolution: Politics on Display in Mao's China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 211-247.

<sup>816</sup> Xu, "Hui Yan," 67.

<sup>817</sup> John McNeill, "A Note from the Director of the Royal Ontario Museum," in *Royal Ontario Museum: The T. T. Tsui Galleries of Chinese Art* (Toronto: Royal Ontario Museum, 1996), 8.

<sup>818</sup> McNeill, "Note," 8.

<sup>819</sup> Ibid.

<sup>820</sup> Ibid.

In addition to the major donations outlined above, Tsui also made smaller donations to museums which are not as well recorded. For example, Scott recalls that sometime between the 1980s and early 1990s, Hong Kong collectors including Tsui and Robert Chang donated funds to the Percival David Foundation so that they could renew the display cases in the galleries.<sup>821</sup> Apart from museum funding, in 1993 Tsui donated £50,000 GBP to create a permanent position for a lecturer in Chinese studies at the University of Newcastle, to promote understanding of Chinese culture abroad.<sup>822</sup> Although he rarely donated objects to museums during this period, it was reported in 1990 that he donated two Ming ceramics and two paintings in his collection valued around \$1 million HKD to raise funds for the Community Chest fund through sale at Sotheby's on 13-15 November, setting an example for other collectors and dealers to follow.<sup>823</sup>

While Tsui conducted these global philanthropic acts, which could be interpreted as a strategic move to secure his international network with 1997 on the horizon, he also shaped the development of museums in advisory roles. In 1994, the Fung Ping Shan Museum at the University of Hong Kong became an independent unit of the university, and was renamed the University Museum and Art Gallery with its own Committee of Management under the chairmanship of Tsui. After Tsui made a donation to erect the T. T. Tsui Building, a new wing in the building was opened to public in 1996 and the museum combined the old Fung Ping Shan Museum with this new gallery.<sup>824</sup> This time Tsui also gifted ceramics and *zitan* furniture from his collection to accompany his donation of funds. In one of the rooms of the museum, traditional Chinese *zitan* furniture selected and donated by Tsui were displayed, with the room bearing his hall name One Step Studio 一步齋.<sup>825</sup> Tsui was awarded an honorary degree of Doctor of Laws by the university in 1995 in recognition of his 'unique contribution on a global scale to the propagation of Chinese art', which undoubtedly polished his public reputation further.<sup>826</sup> His simultaneous engagement with multiple museums in Hong Kong

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<sup>821</sup> Scott, interview, 24 June 2019.

<sup>822</sup> "Donation to UK University," *South China Morning Post*, 3 April 1993, 2, accessed 27 June 2020, <https://search.proquest.com/docview/1542213168?accountid=16710>.

<sup>823</sup> "Drive for Charity by Bus Firm Chairman," *South China Morning Post*, 3 October 1990, 4, accessed 27 June 2020, <https://search.proquest.com/docview/1540785099?accountid=16710>.

<sup>824</sup> Lau, "The University Museum and Art Gallery," 17.

<sup>825</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

<sup>826</sup> University of Hong Kong, "Tsui Tsin Tong."

further demonstrates the porous nature of museum culture in Hong Kong, as mentioned in previous chapters.

A close look at the first exhibition mounted at the new T. T. Tsui building in 1996 reveals Tsui's eagerness to foster better connections between Hong Kong and mainland China at the time. *Art Treasures from Shanghai and Hong Kong* 滬港藏珍展 was jointly organised by the Shanghai museum, the Tsui Museum of Art and the University Museum and Art Gallery of the University of Hong Kong, with approximately 110 pieces of bronzes, ceramics and paintings on show. These included some items from the Shanghai Museum which had never been exhibited outside China prior to this exhibition. As Chairman of the organising committee of the exhibition, Tsui wrote in the exhibition catalogue that: 'I am fond of collecting Chinese antiquities owing to my passion for the Chinese culture expressed in the art forms; whereas my keen promotion of exhibitions on Chinese antiquities is based on my belief of their function in unifying the Chinese people and promoting cultural interchange between China and the West. In the past, the cultural interchange between different countries and races is realized through the exchange of vessels. The practical objects in the past ages have now become art relics and served as the best media in promoting cultural exchange between nations through the organization of exhibitions and activities'.<sup>827</sup> This statement is important in showing how Tsui believed Chinese art could not only act as a catalyst to bring people of different cultures together, it could also 'unify' different Chinese people themselves. Furthermore, it reveals that his idea of art in relation to diplomacy and international business opportunities stems from his observations on how objects were historically used for cultural exchange, hence he was appropriating this practice and positioning himself within this tradition. Tsui also stressed the unique position of Hong Kong as an intersecting point between China and the West: 'Hong Kong has taken up the responsibility of cultural exchange between the East and the West on the basis of the Chinese cultural tradition... The display of these precious objects not only provide a good opportunity for Hong Kong and overseas guests to view the gem of Chinese civilization, but also states clearly the importance of strengthening Hong Kong's cultural linkage with Mainland China in order to give full play to its role in cultural exchange between China and the West'.<sup>828</sup> While those like Ip and Low

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<sup>827</sup> Tsui, "Message," 11.

<sup>828</sup> Ibid., 12.

recognised Hong Kong's unique position in preserving Chinese art and promoting the study of the subject, Tsui's repeated adoption of grand narratives and idealistic notions of sharing art with the world reflects the highly politicised environment in Hong Kong at the time when citizens, especially the wealthy and high-profile group of capitalist elites who were wary of the implications of Communist rule, were extremely self-conscious about the uncertainty of Hong Kong's future. Perhaps the propagation of one cohesive world achieved through mutual appreciation of different cultures, in spite of separate nation borders and political ideals, may have been Tsui's way of coping with an uncertain future. While Tsui was known for his political efforts in working towards a peaceful transition of Hong Kong from British to Chinese rule, and was perceived as a 'sympathiser' of Beijing, Tsui's attempts to promote Chinese culture through the power and prestige of museums go hand in hand with his efforts to generate more sympathy towards China politically.

## The Heritage Museum and the Jingquantang Sales

Despite his flamboyant collecting methods and grand gestures of philanthropy, Tsui's financial largess eventually reached its limits. *South China Morning Post* reported in November 1995 that CNT Group, which owned Citybus, China Paints and various properties, shed a third of its market value over the past year.<sup>829</sup> Tsui began to dismantle his private collection, donating parts of it to museums and selling some at auction to raise funds as the Tsui Museum closed its doors. After a period of primarily offering financial support to museums in the early 1990s, Tsui began gifting objects instead of writing cheques to museums in the mid-1990s, as noted above when he donated ceramics and *zitan* furniture to the University Museum and Art Gallery. In 1995, Tsui gifted part of his collection to the Hong Kong Heritage Museum for permanent display, forming the core collection for the new T. T. Tsui Gallery of Chinese Art, with a Memorandum of Understanding signed between the Tsui Art Foundation and the Hong Kong Regional Council in November that year.<sup>830</sup> Before the opening of the new gallery, the Provisional Regional Council displayed Han to Tang ceramics from the donation at the Sha Tin

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<sup>829</sup> Gren Manuel, "T. T. Tsui's \$300m Gift to Museum," *South China Morning Post*, 17 November 1995, 3, accessed 27 June 2020, <https://search.proquest.com/docview/1554585586?accountid=16710>.

<sup>830</sup> T. T. Tsui, "Foreword," in *The Art of Chinese Ceramics from Han to Tang: Selected Treasures from the Dr. T.T. Tsui Donation* 漢唐陶瓷藝術：徐展堂博士捐贈中國文物粹選 (Hong Kong: Provisional Regional Council, 1998), 7; Suk-yea Chan Lee, Woon-tong Cheng and Yan-yan Lo, eds. *Song to Qing Ceramics: From the Donation of the Tsui Art Foundation* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong Leisure and Cultural Services Department, 2003).

Town Hall, accompanied by a published catalogue.<sup>831</sup> Just as the opening of the Tsui Museum of Art was attended by Christopher Patten, the opening of the T. T. Tsui Gallery of Chinese Art at the Hong Kong Heritage Museum was similarly attended by the highest political authority in Hong Kong at the time, the Chief Executive Tung Chee-hwa 董建華 (1937- ).<sup>832</sup>

Tsui was able to donate parts of his collection to museums, probably because he was able to solve his financial problems by selling some, not all, of his pieces at auction. Evidence of Tsui selling his collection can be found as early as 1994, when he sold the aforementioned blue and white Chenghua mark and period 'palace' bowl (which he had acquired from the Palmer auction in 1989) through Christie's Hong Kong to Japanese dealer Mayuyama for \$3.1 million HKD, earning a profit of \$900,000 HKD within the short span of five years.<sup>833</sup> But it was not until 1996 that Tsui started auctioning off large portions of his collection in four separate sales, held between 1996 and 1997 at Christie's Hong Kong and New York, consigning in total over 300 lots including jades, bronzes, furniture and ceramics, with ceramics forming the largest number of lots. As with the Chow and Ip sales mentioned above, provenance information from the Tsui auction catalogues further reveal the sources of Tsui's collection. The four Tsui auction catalogues show that he purchased pieces from auctions in Hong Kong in 1974-1994, London in 1976-89 and New York in 1990. Items also originated from Japanese and London dealers – Yamanaka, Sparks, Boode, and Bluetts – and named collections including:

Palmer

Clark

Captain C. Oswald Liddell (b. 1851)

Herbert Hoover (1874-1964) (US President in 1929-1933)

Major L. F. Hay (1891-1946)

H. M. Knight (d. 1971)

British Rail Pension Fund (invested in art in the 1970s and sold its Chinese art in 1989)

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<sup>831</sup> *The Art of Chinese Ceramics from Han to Tang: Selected Treasures from the Dr. T. T. Tsui Donation* 漢唐陶瓷藝術:徐展堂博士捐贈中國文物粹選 (Hong Kong: Provisional Regional Council, 1998).

<sup>832</sup> Lam, "Best," 70.

<sup>833</sup> Scott, *Christie's Asia*, 68; "A Very Rare Ming Blue and White 'Palace' Bowl", The Jingguantang Collection, 3 November 1996, Christie's Hong Kong, accessed 24 September 2020, <https://www.christies.com/lotfinder/lot/a-very-rare-ming-blue-and-white-1135456-details.aspx?from=searchresults&intObjectID=1135456>.

Paul (d. 1987) and Helen (n. d.) Bernat

Professor E. T. Hall (1924-2001)

Barbara Hutton

J. M. Hu

T. Y. Chao

The provenance listed in the Chow, Ip and Tsui catalogues all demonstrate that 20<sup>th</sup> century Hong Kong collectors benefitted from the dispersal of older Western, mostly British collections. Tsui started collecting slightly later than Chow and Ip, hence he also benefitted from the sale of Hong Kong collections like those owned by Hu and Chao. In addition to these reputable names which boosted the prestige and value of Tsui's collection, lots previously featured in exhibitions and publications of the Tsui Museum of Art and the Min Chiu Society furthered the appeal of the items, as was the case for Ip's lots which had illustrious exhibition and publication history. Tsui's active engagement with exhibitions and publications thus boosted his financial assets in addition to bridging business opportunities and diplomatic networks.

Scholars Geng Baochang 耿寶昌(1922-), Yang Boda and Rosemary Scott wrote introductions for these auction catalogues, identifying the Jingguantang collection as one of the most famous collections in Hong Kong without revealing the identity of the owner.<sup>834</sup> It seemed rather out of character for Tsui to anonymise himself in these sales, while his name was proudly hung over Chinese art galleries in museums worldwide. Instead of using his personal name, the hall name Jingguantang 靜觀堂 was used in the Christie's auction catalogues, a hall name which he did not appear to have used previously. Tsui used several hall names throughout his lifetime – his residence on the Peak was named the Villa of Zaiwang 在望山莊, while his donation to the University Museum and Art Gallery at the University of Hong Kong was made under the auspices of One Step Studio 一步齋. As Tsui had explained the reasoning behind these names to Wong before, a recent interview with Wong allows us to understand their underlying meanings. Wong recalls how Tsui decided on those hall names

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<sup>834</sup> *The Jingguantang Collection: Magnificent Chinese Works of Art, 3 November 1996, Christie's Hong Kong* (Hong Kong: Christie's, 1996); *The Jingguantang Collection Part II: Fine and Important Chinese Ceramics and Works of Art, 20 March 1997, Christie's New York* (New York: Christie's, 1997); *The Jingguantang Collection Part III, 18 September 1997, Christie's New York* (New York: Christie's, 1997); *Important Chinese Ceramics and Jades from the Jingguantang Collection, 5 November 1997, Christie's Hong Kong* (Hong Kong: Christie's, 1997).

very casually and quickly; if he liked the sound of a hall name in a moment of inspiration, he would adopt it without giving it much thought, just as he would make quick decisions when making acquisitions for his collection.<sup>835</sup> According to Tsui, the Villa of Zaiwang represents the phrase *cheng gong zai wang* 成功在望, which may be translated as ‘success lies ahead’; this name was particularly fitting for a most prestigious address overlooking panoramic views of Hong Kong, conveying a sense of hope and optimism at a time when Tsui was making bold business ventures worldwide. As for the naming of One Step Studio, Tsui chose it based on a related piece of calligraphy that he liked and bought, resembling how Low picked the hall name Xubaizhai after purchasing the calligraphy of the characters *xu bai* by Yi Bingshou (see Chapter Five).<sup>836</sup> The name Jingguantang represents the phrase *jing guan qi bian* 靜觀其變, which may be literally translated as ‘quietly observe the changes’.<sup>837</sup> This phrase essentially conveys a strategy for coping with life’s changes, and is commonly used when comforting someone at times of adversity. The hall name Jingguantang thus seems particularly appropriate for the Christie’s auctions which sold off items from Tsui’s collection so he could better cope with changes at a time of financial difficulty.

Judging from the fact that Tsui used the hall name Jingguantang rather than his personal name for the Christie’s sales, it may be assumed that Tsui did not wish to publicise the fact that he needed to raise funds and liquidate his assets. Despite these efforts, it was not difficult for Chinese art connoisseurs to guess that the Jingguantang Collection was owned by Tsui, as some of the pieces, such as a rare set of eight Kangxi mark and period peachbloom-glazed vessels (featured in the November 1996 Hong Kong Christie’s sale) was widely known to have been in his collection.<sup>838</sup> But for those who were not experts in Chinese art, the pseudonym Jingguantang perhaps protected the anonymity of Tsui so as not to raise any alarm bells with his business partners and investors. Some members of the press did pick up on this though: ‘Although the ownership of the collection was supposed to be a secret, it did not take many long to recognise most of the pieces as possessions of T. T. Tsui’.<sup>839</sup>

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<sup>835</sup> Wong, interview.

<sup>836</sup> Ibid.

<sup>837</sup> Ibid.

<sup>838</sup> Scott, interview, 24 June 2019.

<sup>839</sup> Cairns, “Bullish.”

Wang notes that apart from the Christie's sales, sections of the Tsui collection were also sold through private deals with art dealers and collectors, suggesting that there was an urgent need to sell items quickly to raise cash.<sup>840</sup> Indeed, the sale of Tsui's collection came as a surprise to the Chinese art community, as Tsui was still producing catalogues for his collection and had not finished completing a planned set of publications when the collection went under the hammer at auction.<sup>841</sup> Scott remembers being invited to contribute to a new catalogue on Ming ceramics, but that never came to fruition.<sup>842</sup>

Pola Antebi (n. d.), one of the specialists who worked on the sales at Christie's Hong Kong, revealed in an interview that the items in the Jingguantang sales were so sought after by buyers that they helped to broaden the Christie's reach in the Hong Kong market which was previously dominated by Sotheby's.<sup>843</sup> The high prices achieved in the Jingguantang sales, like the Chow and Ip auctions mentioned in previous chapters, demonstrate the strength of the Hong Kong art market in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The Jingguantang sale results are used as benchmarks for art market analyses – Wang reports that market prices for Ming ceramics rose steadily throughout the 1970s and 1980s, and cites the sale result of a mid-Ming period piece from the Tsui collection as an indication of the rising popularity of mid-Ming porcelain:

*Jiajing-period wares have attained high prices at auction. Its growing popularity is acknowledgment of mid-Ming ceramics as a category of note. For example, a blue and white 'boys' jar from the Jiajing period was sold at Sotheby's New York, as part of the J.M. Hu Family Collection, 30 November 1993, lot 238; then as part of the Jingguantang Collection, at Christie's Hong Kong on 5 November 1997, lot 888, for HK\$4,200,000; and most recently at Christie's again, on 27 November 2007, lot 1738, for HK\$30,567,500.<sup>844</sup>*

In the lead-up to the 1997 handover, the media speculated that the Jingguantang sales were part of a wider trend of liquidating Hong Kong art collections before Beijing took over sovereignty of the city.<sup>845</sup> A documented interview with Tsui, conducted before he dismantled

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<sup>840</sup> Wang, *Chinese Antiquities*, 128.

<sup>841</sup> Scott, interview, 24 June 2019.

<sup>842</sup> Ibid.

<sup>843</sup> Pola Antebi, interview by Jenny So and Ling-Yun Tang, 28 March 2011, "CAHK" Project Archive.

<sup>844</sup> Wang, *Chinese Antiquities*, 80-81.

<sup>845</sup> Cairns, "Bullish."

his collection when the Tsui Museum of Art still existed, gives us clues as to why he later decided to auction off his collection and donate items to Hong Kong museums. When asked about the future of his collection, he said that he did not intend to move his museum outside Hong Kong in fear of the handover, and that he had come up with three options after much consideration:

Firstly, if his family would support him and financial funds were available, he would continue to run his museum privately. Secondly, if his children did not like his collection, he would donate it in its entirety to the Hong Kong government; since he made his wealth in Hong Kong, the collection should 'return' to Hong Kong (this resembles how Low said that because his collection was built up in Hong Kong, he wished to 'return' it to Hong Kong by donating it to the HKMoA, reflecting a sense of Hong Kong identity and commitment to civic responsibility). Thirdly, if he encounters financial difficulty, then there would be no option but to sell the collection at auction.<sup>846</sup> Furthermore, Tsui said it would be a shame if the collection had to be dispersed, but he would not feel extremely sad about it as Chinese art belongs to the Chinese and should not be restricted by country borders or political parties.<sup>847</sup>

From this, it can be assumed that Tsui sold his collection at auction due to financial difficulties, and donated other items to the Heritage Museum owing to the fact that his children did not wish to keep the collection. Although Tsui was passionate about Chinese art and attached meaning to his collection as a vehicle for cultural exchange, by placing them on the auction platform the items were inevitably reduced back to their original form as a commodity which could be exchanged for financial security, echoing how Low held back a portion of his collection at his initial donation to the HKMoA in case he needed to raise funds to pay medical bills. Tsui's financial troubles were probably linked to or worsened by the 1997 Asian financial crisis which swept over the city while the Jingtang auctions took place; CNT group 'slipped into the red' in 1998, reporting a net loss of \$568.35 million against a net profit of \$145 million in 1997, as a result of a slump in stock and property prices.<sup>848</sup>

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<sup>846</sup> Zheng, *Hai Shang*, 503.

<sup>847</sup> Ibid.

<sup>848</sup> Denise Tsang, "Transport Slump Takes Toll on Cement Maker," *South China Morning Post*, 19 May 1999, 27, accessed 27 June 2020, <https://search.proquest.com/docview/2026089845?accountid=16710>.

In spring 2010 Tsui suffered from a stroke and passed away in Beijing on 2 April at the age of 69. Tsui's Beijing residence was quickly filled with bereavement flowers when the news of his death became known.<sup>849</sup> A huge memorial service was held for Tsui at the Wanchai Convention & Exhibition Centre (one of the largest event spaces in Hong Kong), attended by then Hong Kong Chief Executive Donald Tsang 曾蔭權 (1944-) and his predecessor Tung Chee-Hwa.<sup>850</sup> At the service Tsui was publicly heralded as 'an industrialist, social activist, philanthropist, and close friend of the Chinese Communist Party'.<sup>851</sup>

In the last decades of his life, Tsui had occasionally been the subject of news reports and tabloid entertainment. Apart from controversies surrounding his investments and political affiliations, his high-profile extramarital affair with Beijing-born socialite Helen Qiu 邱海寧 (1978-) during the 1990s was also widely reported. His sudden death was no exception as the media took the opportunity to review his lifetime achievements. Many obituaries and eulogies were published by museum professionals, scholars, fellow collectors and others in the art field who remembered him fondly, one of which described him as 'one of the ten greatest Chinese art collectors in the world', and 'the only Chinese collector in the top 50 collectors of the world'.<sup>852</sup> Many of these writings were authored by individuals in mainland China, and from these it is possible to understand more about Tsui's close relationship with them which was not so publicly known before. For example, the editors of the Chinese magazine *Collections* credited Tsui for tirelessly advising and promoting the magazine during its infancy, and published a photograph taken in January 1999 showing Tsui hosting notable Chinese scholars and museum professionals in his Beijing home which was decorated with Chinese art.<sup>853</sup> His guests included Zhang Deqin, Geng Baochang, Wang Shixiang and his wife Yuan Quanxian 袁荃猷, Yang Boda and Li Xuemei 李雪梅 (n.d.).<sup>854</sup> After his death, Tsui's family sold some of his pieces through dealers in Hong Kong and auctions in mainland China,

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<sup>849</sup> Zhang, "Gao Feng Liang Jie," 162; "Chen Tong Dao Nian Xu Zhan Tang Xian Sheng 沉痛悼念徐展堂先生," *Collections*, Issue 5, (2010): 154.

<sup>850</sup> Jin Liang 梁今, "Ta Huo Chu Le Yi Ge Can Lan Ren Sheng - Xiang Gang Ge Jie Zhui Dao Xu Zhan Tang 他活出了一个灿烂人生—香港各界追悼徐展堂," *Collections* (6): 160.

<sup>851</sup> Liang, "Can Lan Ren Sheng," 160-161.

<sup>852</sup> "Chen Tong Dao Nian," 154.

<sup>853</sup> *Ibid.*, 154-155.

<sup>854</sup> *Ibid.*, 155.

including items still labelled with the name of Tsui's old residence in Hong Kong, the Villa of Zaiwang.

## Conclusion

Tsui's case study has exemplified the rise of newly wealthy Hong Kong businessmen who made their fortune thanks to economic growth in Hong Kong, and built their collections within a short span of time, sourcing items from a buoyant art market in which dealers and auction houses provided a ready supply of Chinese art. Tsui's quick rise to success as a businessman and collector demonstrates the opportunities that Hong Kong offered to Chinese migrants who did not inherit immense wealth or collections from their earlier lives in China (as exemplified by Chow and Hu). It has been noted that Tsui 'typified the success stories of many who left China for Hong Kong after the Communist victory', an 'inspirational rags-to-riches epic'.<sup>855</sup> He supported collector groups, museums and scholars with his financial resources, and enlisted the help of Chinese, Japanese, European and American dealers, scholars and curators in developing, managing and promoting his collection. His entry into connoisseurship circles, epitomised by his position as Chairman of the Min Chiu Society, threatened established collectors who viewed his approach to collecting as rash and flamboyant, seemingly determined by investment concerns rather than an appreciation of the art form. His conventional choices in collecting perpetuated his image as a profit-driven investor, as his approach contrasted with more specialised ways of collecting determined by distinctive personal tastes (as exemplified by Chow, Ip and Low who focused on Ming porcelain, bamboo carving and Ming and Qing painting and calligraphy respectively). While Tsui's dubious sources of wealth were viewed upon with suspicion, prejudice against *nouveau riche* collectors of ceramics was augmented by the longstanding view held by many painting and calligraphy collectors that ceramic collecting commanded a lesser degree of connoisseurship. This further demonstrates existing rifts within Hong Kong collecting circles as outlined in the previous chapter. Despite these controversies, Tsui's construction of his private museum paved the way for the founding of later private museums and venues for the display of Chinese art, such as the Liangyi Museum and the Sun Museum which were set up in 2014 and 2015 respectively.

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<sup>855</sup> Lin, "Tsui," 66; Delfino, "Magical Rise."

Tsui's case study has also exemplified how Hong Kong collectors became patrons of Chinese art worldwide in the years leading up to the handover in 1997. By having his name hung over museum galleries worldwide, Tsui raised his profile internationally which aided his efforts in cementing business opportunities and diplomatic ties. While Hong Kong collectors were certainly not the first collectors to adopt art collecting as part of a strategy to expand international networks, the unique political situation of Hong Kong in the 1980s-1990s prompted an unprecedented number of Hong Kong collectors to place their financial assets and collections overseas as protection against possible changes to cultural policies in post-colonial Hong Kong.<sup>856</sup> Their support of institutions in the West enabled them to forge links with countries that they considered emigrating to, in case it was necessary to leave Hong Kong. Tsui in particular used Chinese art to 'unify' people with different political persuasions and promote international relations between China and the West, in his attempts to pave the way for a more stable future of Hong Kong.

In Britain, the dominance of Hong Kong collectors and philanthropists in supporting art and educational institutions in which Chinese art and culture were preserved and promoted can be interpreted as a form of decolonisation, as they reclaimed ownership of their cultural heritage albeit within colonial constructs. For example, Sir Joseph Hotung and Selwyn and Ellie Lynn Alleyne funded the refurbishment of Chinese art galleries at the British Museum; businessman Sir Gordon Wu and his wife Lady Ivy Wu funded the establishment of the Ivy Wu Gallery of East Asian Art in the Royal Edinburgh Museum in 1996 with the Duke of Edinburgh officiating at its opening; and more recently in September 2014, T. L. Yang lent porcelains in his collection to the University of Oxford during the opening of the Dickson Poon University of Oxford China Centre Building (funded by Hong Kong businessman Sir Dickson Poon (1956-)), which was officiated by the Duke of Cambridge to support research in Chinese Studies and house the Bodleian Libraries' Chinese book collection.<sup>857</sup> Like Tsui, Yang had considerable

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<sup>856</sup> An example of non-Hong Kong collectors using Chinese art to further international negotiations is offered by Alexander Shaw's study on British diplomat-collector Malcolm MacDonald (1901-1981) who collected a large number of imperial Chinese ceramics; it is argued that MacDonald was a 'public collector' whose identity as a collector made him more 'effective' as an international negotiator, as he bonded with people of different cultures through a shared interest in collectible objects. See Alexander Nicholas Shaw, "A Diplomat and Collector: Malcolm MacDonald's Pursuit of Beauty During the Cold War and End of Empire", *Journal of the History of Collections* 30, no. 3, (November 2018): 511–527, <https://doi.org/10.1093/jhc/fhx045>.

<sup>857</sup> A review of the refurbished Hotung Gallery which opened in 1992 is provided by J. C. Y. Watt, "The Hotung Gallery at the British Museum," *The Burlington Magazine* 135, no. 1079 (February 1993): 158-159. A summary of Hotung's wider contributions to the field of Chinese art is offered by Davids and Jellinek, *Provenance*, 242-

political influence; as the only ethnically Chinese person to hold the role of Chief Justice of Hong Kong from 1988-1996, he was one of the candidates who ran in the first election for Hong Kong Chief Executive.

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243. Regarding Yang's support of the Dickson Poon University of Oxford China Centre Building, see Shelagh Vainker, "Introduction," in *Chinese Art: Displayed for the Opening of the Dickson Poon University of Oxford China Centre Building, 8-9 September 2014*. (Oxford: St Hugh's College, 2014), 10-11

## Chapter Seven: Conclusion

This thesis has offered a multi-disciplinary approach to understanding Chinese art collecting in Hong Kong from 1949 to 1997. Four specific case studies were chosen to each represent one of four main types of Chinese art collectors in Hong Kong – the cosmopolitan dealer-collector Chow represents a group of Shanghai collectors and dealers who sought refuge in Hong Kong and advocated their collecting tastes and standards of Chinese art connoisseurship in the colony; the scholarly adviser-collector Ip represents Hong Kong-born Cantonese collectors and a wider group of multilingual, Western-educated middle-class professionals who utilised their knowledge, networks and financial wealth to establish Hong Kong's status as a centre for research on Chinese art as a reflection of civic consciousness and Hong Kong identity; the nationalistic 'literati' collector Low represents Chinese diasporic communities in Southeast Asia who followed traditional Chinese methods of connoisseurship and were motivated by nationalistic fervour to preserve and promote Chinese art; and the philanthropic entrepreneur-collector Tsui represents Chinese migrants who made their wealth after arriving in Hong Kong and used Chinese art collecting and sponsorship of global Chinese art galleries to further business opportunities and international networks during a politically sensitive time in the 1980s and 1990s. The different cultural backgrounds, social groups, collecting approaches and Chinese art categories exemplified in these case studies together form a biography of Hong Kong as a unique site for Chinese art collecting with a distinctive pluralistic and cross-cultural character during an eventful time period in 20<sup>th</sup> century Hong Kong.

In addressing the first aim of this thesis, namely to show how the political, economic and socio-cultural environment of Hong Kong created favourable conditions for collectors to develop their collections of Chinese art, this study has outlined how the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century saw the founding of collector groups and museums and the expansion of the art market as a result of political stability, economic affluence and cultural diversity. Hong Kong offered a place of refuge and business opportunities to Chinese migrants, such as the Greater Shanghai and Cantonese communities represented by the four case studies, during a politically turbulent time in China. Low's case study has specifically shown how transnational networks spread anti-imperialist, nationalistic thought in wider diasporic Chinese

communities in light of foreign aggression in China during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, which motivated the formation and expansion of collections in Hong Kong as an attempt to retain Chinese art within Chinese communities. Geographically, Hong Kong collectors and museums benefitted from the colony's close proximity to China as many Chinese art objects came over the border and became available on the market. Freedom to travel and the local presence of international auction houses opened up further opportunities for them to acquire Chinese art from old Western collections, as evident in the provenance of Chow, Ip and Tsui's collections. While collecting societies like the Min Chiu Society and the OCSHK provided a platform for collectors to develop Chinese art connoisseurship through private exchanges, early Hong Kong museums, created as part of the British colonial government's attempts to consolidate and legitimise political authority in the city, also unlocked new ways for them to display and promote their collections. Conflict of interest was often overlooked when private collections, collecting societies, museums and the art trade expanded at a rapid rate and required the expertise of the same pool of dealers and collectors; this has been particularly obvious in the findings from Ip's case study.

Chapter Five's examination of Low's considerations when donating his collection to the HKMoA has specifically epitomised how scholarly expertise and advanced cultural facilities in Hong Kong museums and their increased professionalism set them apart from other museums in Asia and attracted donations from collectors. Furthermore, the active publishing industry in Hong Kong enabled the production of a wealth of bilingual Chinese art-related books, catalogues and magazines which stimulated the development of Chinese art connoisseurship in Hong Kong at a time when art publishing was restricted in China; Hong Kong thus played a central role in bridging Chinese and Western research on Chinese art during this period, exemplified by Chow and Ling's catalogues of Shanghai private collections, Ip and Tam's books on bamboo carving, catalogues of Low's Xubaizhai collection at the HKMoA and exhibition catalogues resulting from Tsui's sponsorship of Chinese art galleries around the world.<sup>858</sup> The mounting of public exhibitions, availability of Chinese art

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<sup>858</sup> Another good example other than the publications cited in these four case studies is Wang Shixiang's *Classic Chinese Furniture: Ming and Early Qing Dynasties* 明式家具珍賞, published by Joint Publishing in Hong Kong in 1985. It is often cited by furniture connoisseurs as an important reference book on Chinese furniture, representing the first comprehensive book on the subject authored by a Chinese scholar. As Wang was based in Beijing, publication of the book was only made possible through collaboration with Hong Kong agents. This was later translated into English, French and German.

publications, and increased commercialisation of Chinese art resulting from the expansion of the Hong Kong art market throughout the 1970s and 1980s meant that Chinese art collecting became more accessible to middle-class professionals like Ip and Low and newly wealthy entrepreneurs like Tsui. This thesis has also noted how traditional Chinese dealers' shops offered discreet ways of purchasing Chinese art which allowed negotiations to take place over lengthy periods (as Low did when considering acquisitions of painting and calligraphy), while the arrival of British auction houses Sotheby's and Christie's gave collectors a more open and direct way of buying and selling their collections (as demonstrated by Chow, Ip and Tsui's participation in auctions). Hong Kong's wide acceptance of these two contrasting ways of conducting business was unparalleled elsewhere in East Asia during this time, reflecting the colony's unique multicultural environment which embraced different trading methods.

The second aim of this study is to examine how collectors in turn contributed to this distinctively multicultural collecting environment by shaping private and museum collections, Chinese art scholarship and art market trends. In terms of private collecting, all four case studies have shown how collectors took advantage of resources in Hong Kong to expand their collections and exchange knowledge on Chinese art with other connoisseurs locally and overseas, adopting cross-cultural collecting practices in innovative and opportunistic ways. While Chow, Ip, Low and Tsui all used hall names or pseudonyms in keeping with the Chinese tradition of referring to one's collection in a modest and poetic manner, some collectors like Low demonstrated a stronger commitment to traditional 'literati' practices as he used his hall name more consistently, followed age-old connoisseurship methods such as judging a painting based on brush and ink techniques, and practiced Chinese painting like traditional Chinese artist-collectors. On the other hand, those like Tsui were accustomed to attaching their personal names to their collections and only used hall names infrequently and opportunistically, as seen in the adoption of the hall name Jingguantang when discretion was required during the Christie's sales of his collection. Regarding collecting tastes and methods, Chow's case study has exemplified how a group of collectors and dealers gained expertise in appraising, sourcing and selling Chinese art in the cosmopolitan treaty port of Shanghai pre-1949 and brought this to Hong Kong. For example, while Chow shared his connoisseurship methods with scholars like Drake, J. M. Hu transferred his taste in displays to curators like Watt. Shanghai connoisseurship was characterised by a deep concern for the display and

storage of objects with fitted stands and boxes in keeping with Qing court practices, and promotion of three criteria for collecting – *zhen*, *jing* and *xin* – which became widely adopted by later Hong Kong collectors like Tsui. Evidently, the importance of the Shanghai group in inspiring the development of art connoisseurship in Hong Kong cannot be overstated. This study has also noted how a select number of these Shanghai connoisseurs gathered forces with other collectors to form collecting societies which held both traditional Chinese literati-style gatherings and Western-style lectures and public exhibitions. Even though those like Chow and Low did not participate in these societies in the same way that those like Ip and Tsui did, they still actively shared and studied their collections with others privately, contributing to a vibrant collecting scene in Hong Kong where many collections could be viewed and studied through a network of recommendations.

Outside of private collecting circles, all four collectors discussed in this thesis showed support to museums through the donation of items which expanded Hong Kong's collections for public education and enjoyment. Examinations of Ip and Low's roles and responsibilities as museum advisers to the HKMoA have shed light on the importance of collectors in shaping Hong Kong museums' acquisition processes and financial decisions. Furthermore, Tsui's case study has demonstrated how Hong Kong collectors took on influential positions as patrons of Chinese art galleries worldwide, using their financial prowess and philanthropic gestures to expand their business opportunities and diplomatic networks through the medium of Chinese art at a time of political ambivalence leading up to the 1997 handover. Tsui was also a pioneer in being the first Hong Kong collector to manage and publicise one's collection through establishing a private museum, a practice which was followed by later Hong Kong collectors like Peter Fung Yiu-fai 馮耀輝 (1947-), who founded the Liangyi Museum to house and make publicly accessible his collection of mostly Chinese hardwood furniture.

Collectors used opportunities offered by museums and the buoyant publishing industry to disseminate their knowledge of Chinese art, fashioning themselves as Chinese art 'experts'; this was demonstrated most clearly in Ip's case as he took on a leading role in organising museum exhibitions, authoring scholarly books and giving lectures on Chinese art. It is also significant to note that despite having different education backgrounds and language skills, all four collectors discussed in this study were able to promote their collections and knowledge in the field, making good use of Hong Kong's uniquely multicultural and open

character – Chow did not stay in school for long and made up for his lack of linguistic finesse through collaborating with those like Ling and Drake to produce English catalogues and articles; as a well-educated intellectual who received British education in Hong Kong and Edinburgh, Ip had a good mastery of academic English, hence he gave lectures and wrote scholarly essays in English; Low, who had received Chinese education in Singapore and Shanghai, published his thoughts on connoisseurship in Chinese via *Han Mo* and provided his comments on potential museum acquisitions in Chinese which were translated by museum staff; and Tsui hired Chinese, British and American scholars and curators to write and conduct research for his bilingual museum publications when he lacked the expertise to do so himself. It was also through these platforms that collectors shaped new categories of Chinese art and consolidated their status as ‘experts’ in those areas, as demonstrated by Chow’s promotion of early Ming blue and white and Chenghua *doucai* porcelains and Ip’s promotion of bamboo carvings.

In the art market, apart from making use of both traditional Chinese dealers’ shops and Western auction houses to source items for their collections, Hong Kong collectors were acutely aware of the commercial value of Chinese art and considered their collections as a form of financial security, insurance and investment. This has been demonstrated in Low’s case when he kept behind parts of his collection in case he needed to sell them to pay medical bills, and also in Chow and Tsui’s cases when they sold their collections to raise cash in times of need. This was popular practice for other Hong Kong collectors, such as T. Y. Chao who sold his Chinese art collection through Sotheby’s to save his shipping business in 1986. In addition to this, it can be observed that when the availability of popular categories decreased and their prices increased due to market competition, collectors saw market opportunities in seeking new areas and inventing new categories to collect, as Chow, Ip and Low did in regards to Ming porcelain, bamboo carving and Ming and Qing painting and calligraphy respectively; when new trends were formed, often as a result of collectors’ efforts in promoting the categories, they were able to further their reputation as ‘tastemakers’ and ‘experts’ of the subject.

This study has identified some underlying animosities among subgroups within Hong Kong’s Chinese art circles – Chapter Two has noted the sense of ‘contempt’ and ‘resentment’ between wider Shanghai and Cantonese communities, and the presence of collectors who felt excluded from either Chinese or Western circles of collecting; in Chow’s case study,

Thompson and Tam's comments on the Chow sales capture contrasting attitudes towards preserving Chinese art within private collections versus displaying them in public museums; Low and Tsui's case studies have both noted how the category of painting and calligraphy was often treated as separate from other forms of Chinese art, with some collectors arguing that it was the more 'superior' category to collect; and Chapter Six has shown how traditional collectors who inherited collections and connoisseurship methods from their families were suspicious and dismissive of newly wealthy collectors like Tsui who bought a large number of items for their collections in a short period of time.<sup>859</sup> However, despite all these subtle anxieties and hostilities, Hong Kong collectors nonetheless collaborated with each other and embraced different socio-cultural groups as they built their private and museum collections simultaneously, navigating the characteristically porous boundaries between private collecting circles, academia, museums and the art trade in Hong Kong. In doing so, collectors took on multiple identities when serving slightly different roles in these different entities simultaneously – Chow manipulated his dual identities as a dealer-collector while Ip oscillated between his many positions as collector, museum adviser, antiques fair adviser, collecting society leader, exhibition lender and museum donor. The interconnectedness of Chinese art collectors in Hong Kong is also demonstrated by the many links between the four collectors of this study; although it is unclear whether they were acquainted with each other personally, they certainly moved in the same circles of connoisseurship and had many mutual contacts. For example, both Ip and Tsui sourced their items from Lai Tak and were close to Grace Wu Bruce, Adrian Joseph was acquainted with both Chow and Ip, and Laurence Tam worked alongside both Ip and Low on matters related to the HKMoA.

The findings of this thesis have thus revealed not only the distinctively pluralistic and cross-cultural character of Chinese art collecting in Hong Kong from 1949 to 1997; they have also demonstrated the mutually beneficial and often convoluted relationships between collectors, museums and the art market which were specific to this location and time period. While the collections, financial wealth, connoisseurship expertise, market insight of collectors and social connections were key to the development of Hong Kong as a centre of Chinese art, it was through Chinese art collecting that collectors consolidated their social status and financial

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<sup>859</sup> Wear has similarly observed the complex relationships between Hong Kong dealers, auctioneers, collectors, academics and curators, sometimes marked by suspicion and at other times close friendship. See Wear, "Patterns," 296-308.

security and realised their desire to preserve Chinese antiquity. This desire was often underlined by nationalistic sentiment, civic consciousness or political ambivalence under the unique historical situation of Hong Kong during the last decades of colonial rule.

## Hong Kong History

By shedding light on the underexplored subject of Chinese art collecting in Hong Kong during the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, this thesis contributes to the writing of a broader, more diversified history of Hong Kong based on local accounts. As such, this study follows revisionist historians in providing more multidimensional views that address the complexities of Hong Kong society, and in doing so breaks apart orthodox narratives confined to a binary framework focused on Britain and China. Apart from clarifying some misrepresented facts about the four collectors, this reconstruction of four collecting biographies have more importantly outlined the progression of Hong Kong from a convenient place of refuge which embraced people of different cultures, backgrounds and political affiliations in 1949 to an international metropolis in 1997 with a cultural identity defined by adaptability, flexibility and openness as seen through the innovative and cross-cultural ways in which Chinese art was collected, studied and promoted. This study has also shown how Hong Kong provided a unique environment that nurtured and embraced different, often contradicting ideas of Chinese nationalism, with collectors like Low concerned with keeping Chinese heritage within Chinese communities while those like Tsui developed international business and diplomatic networks through the promotion of Chinese art in the West. This eclecticism and fluidity is a key characteristic of Hong Kong identity, shaped by a dialogic community which has been exemplified by our four case studies. Despite their different backgrounds and approaches to collecting, they greatly contributed to the development of the Chinese art field in Hong Kong, and the Hong Kong collecting scene became a model of modernisation to places like Singapore (as mentioned in Low's case regarding the 'Xubaizhai Effect'), mainland China and Taiwan. In terms of mainland China for example, it has been widely acknowledged that the growth of auction houses and private museums there was inspired by Hong Kong.<sup>860</sup> The

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<sup>860</sup> Clarke, *Art and Place*, 250-258; Daniel S. Kiowski, "A Museum a Day: New Private Art Museums in Shanghai," in *Journal of Contemporary Chinese Art* 4, issue 1, (2017): 45-60; Giulia Zennaro, "Between Global Models and Local Resources: Building Private Art Museums in Shanghai's West Bund", in *Journal of Contemporary Chinese Art* 4, issue 1, (2017): 61-80.

1990s saw the expansion of a concentration of dealers' shops in Beijing's Curio City 北京古玩城 and the first Chinese art auctions held by Duo Yun Xuan 朵雲軒, China Guardian 中國嘉德 and Beijing Hanhai 北京翰海, mirroring earlier expansion of the Hong Kong art market in the 1970s and 1980s. Furthermore, Hong Kong collecting societies' use of both traditional Chinese and Western methods in promoting Chinese art was imitated by later collecting societies such as the Ch'ing Wan Society 清翫雅集, established in Taipei in 1992 after a group of Taiwanese collectors who frequented Hong Kong auctions from the 1970s onwards was impressed by the activities of Min Chiu members in developing Chinese art connoisseurship and organising public exhibitions.<sup>861</sup> Just as the Min Chiu Society was named after a Confucius saying, the Ch'ing Wan Society similarly took their name from traditional Chinese text, derived from the title of the Ming Jiajing period publication *Qing Wan* 清翫 which also refers to the appreciation and study of Chinese antiquity.

## Collecting Studies

By repositioning Hong Kong within global histories of Chinese art collecting, this study plays a part in redressing the imbalance between research on Chinese art collecting in the West and Chinese art collecting in China (particularly collecting that took place outside the imperial court), bridging an inherent gap between research on Republican collecting in China and Hong Kong collecting in the 1990s, and drawing further attention to the importance of dealers in the shaping of private and public collections. This study also decolonises perspectives on Chinese art collecting through showing how this activity served the interests of the colonised peoples as well as those of the colonial powers, as epitomised by Chow and Tsui's methods of promoting Chinese art in the West to raise their social status and expand international business opportunities. Even Low, the most overtly nationalistic collector examined in this thesis, reacted against colonial and imperialist aggression not only through 'rescuing' artworks from falling into foreign hands, but also by collaborating with British colonial organisations like the HKMoA and Japanese connoisseurs like San'u Aoyama and Tanimura Kisai to promote Chinese art, benefitting from their agency in raising the prestige of the Xubaizhai collection. While Wear's study emphasises how Hong Kong collectors of the 1990s were concerned with a 'Chinese approach to collecting' and dismissed Western approaches

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<sup>861</sup> Lam, "Min Chiu," 56.

in their imagined meanings of ‘Chineseness’ in collecting, the case studies of this thesis have demonstrated that, although such concerns did exist, generally speaking Hong Kong collectors of the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century were not too preoccupied with defining what were ‘Chinese’ or ‘non-Chinese’ approaches and embraced cross-cultural methods in collecting and promoting Chinese art.<sup>862</sup>

Furthermore, the findings from our case studies have substantiated and expanded upon previous studies which reveal the ‘mutually entangled’, ‘complex and shifting relationships between private collecting and public institutions’.<sup>863</sup> Through shedding light on the ways in which Chow and Ip respectively shaped the categories of Ming porcelain and bamboo carving, this thesis mirrors Green’s efforts in placing more emphasis on the importance of private collections in the formation of collecting categories, and reveals ‘the operation of collections within the museum to be far less controlled by the museum institution, and much more dependent upon contingent histories of private collection than much of the literature on museums suggests’.<sup>864</sup> By showing how Low’s wish to preserve his collection and Tsui’s desire to expand business opportunities were achieved through museum donations and sponsorship, resulting in gallery spaces dedicated to their collections or named after them in acknowledgement of their financial gifts, these case studies exemplify Duncan’s conception of gallery spaces as ‘donor memorials’ where the personal interests of collectors were realised.<sup>865</sup>

What sets 20<sup>th</sup> century Hong Kong collecting apart from other studies on collecting in other locations or timeframes is the distinctive way in which a large number of Hong Kong collectors shaped both private and museum collections simultaneously, even before their private collections entered museums; this is particularly evident in Ip and Low’s roles as museum advisers and Tsui’s position as a museum patron. While Hong Kong museums developed in their infancy, they did not appear to go through a critical period of self-assessment in the same way that British institutions did in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when the mark of the private collector was often erased in an attempt to ‘professionalise’ museums, shifting from ‘curiosity’

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<sup>862</sup> Wear, “Sense,” 173-204.

<sup>863</sup> Macdonald, “Collecting,” 95; Green, “Britain’s Chinese Collections,” 212.

<sup>864</sup> Green, “Britain’s Chinese Collections,” 26.

<sup>865</sup> Duncan, *Civilizing Rituals*, 61-62 & 82.

to 'scientific criteria'.<sup>866</sup> As noted by Shelton, associations between museums and private collecting became saturated with 'ethical ambiguity, distrust over intentions, and ambivalence about the psychological motivations attributed to collectors'.<sup>867</sup> However, in contrast to the situation in Britain, the case studies provided in this research have demonstrated that Hong Kong museums were consistently keen to draw upon the expertise of private collectors, and largely overlooked instances of conflict of interest. Suspicion towards Chow's vested interests as a dealer was limited when the University of Hong Kong cooperated with him on the publishing of scholarly articles which promoted items in his collection. Ip's bamboo collection, the Xubaizhai Collection and Tsui's collection at the Heritage Museum have largely been kept together to retain their characteristics as the result of a private collector's system of classification. After the HKMoA recently underwent a major renovation and reopened to public, at least five exhibitions were dedicated to or heavily acknowledge the original circumstances under which the artworks were collected and/or curated.<sup>868</sup>

The importance of collectors as figures of authority in museums appeared to decrease over time, as the role of museum curators became increasingly professionalised with a stronger emphasis on art historical expertise as prerequisite to their appointment. In reference to Bourdieu's conception of a 'field' that operates through the strategies of various 'habitus', Wear notes how in the 1990s Hong Kong dealers, historians and auction houses defined objects of interest, categorised them and established standards and hierarchies, with only 'some contribution' from collectors in terms of 'additions of knowledge' and 'validating purchases'.<sup>869</sup> His statement contrasts greatly with the findings of this thesis which indicate the powerful position that collectors held in earlier decades, particularly the 1970s and 1980s, which suggests that their authority and influence were much greater during the early stages of museum development in Hong Kong.

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<sup>866</sup> Shelton, *Collectors: Individuals and Institutions*, 15.

<sup>867</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>868</sup> These exhibitions include 'Ordinary to Extraordinary: Stories of the Museum', 'A Pleasure Shared: Selected Works from the Chih Lo Lou Collection', 'The Wisdom of Emptiness: Selected Works from the Xubaizhai Collection', 'The Best of Both Worlds: Acquisitions and Donations of Chinese Antiquities', and 'Lost and Found: Guardians of the Chater Collection'. See "Exhibition and Events," Hong Kong Museum of Art, accessed 15 June 2020: [https://hk.art.museum/en\\_US/web/ma/exhibitions-and-events.html](https://hk.art.museum/en_US/web/ma/exhibitions-and-events.html).

<sup>869</sup> Wear, "Sense," 186.

The biographies of our four collectors reveal a wide range of reasons that motivated them to collect – collecting could be conceived as a reflection of nostalgic longing for the past (Chow), a means of exerting control and discipline (Chow), a hobby which could foster friendships (Ip and Tsui), an exercise which could elevate one’s social status (all four collectors) and shape one’s reputation as a scholar or ‘expert’ in specific categories (Chow, Ip and Low), a diplomatic tool that could secure business opportunities and international relationships (Chow and Tsui), a form of financial security (Chow, Low and Tsui), a way of preserving cultural heritage within certain communities in association with nationalistic sentiment (Low), and a method of ‘immortalising’ oneself when the collection is preserved and dedicated to one’s memory (Low and Tsui). These collecting motivations are by no means specific to Hong Kong in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century; indeed, many of these have already been mentioned by scholars of collecting in their examination of other forms of collecting that took place in other locations and time periods. The case studies provided in this research have simply provided further examples for these observations and extended the application of their analyses to an area that has previously not been considered. However, there were some particularly contradictory collecting motivations which were unique to the historical specificity of Hong Kong. Wear states that:

*Art collecting in Hong Kong is a complex and inextricable mix of a universal desire to possess what is beautiful and display one's pride of possession to others, a national desire to proclaim the glories of traditional 'Chineseness' as against a relentlessly modernizing world, and a local desire to belong to a China to which only very recently has Hong Kong returned.<sup>870</sup>*

In addition to this, the current thesis has also demonstrated that while there was a desire to ‘rescue’ Chinese art from foreign buyers (as exemplified by Low), there was also a parallel desire to protect Chinese art from China when the 1997 handover was imminent (as mentioned in Chapters Two, Three and Six). Many items in Hong Kong collections had been ‘rescued’ from China during the tumultuous early decades of Communist rule, hence Hong Kong collectors were very conscious of their unique position as custodians of traditional Chinese culture and heritage. While those like Chow chose to flee to a different

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<sup>870</sup> Wear, “Sense,” 202.

country with his collection out of self-protection, others like Tsui sought to cement ties with Beijing through exchanges over Chinese art.

In terms of psychoanalytical approaches to studying collecting, the findings of this thesis have offered limited references for such theories. Baudrillard's notion of collecting as a response to 'loss' may explain some of the reasons why Chow, Ip and Tsui collected most prolifically after experiencing the death of their fathers (and in Ip's case the death of his wife as well), but this observation remains a largely speculative one. Instead of individual psychological factors, wider political, economic and socio-cultural factors appear to be more useful in explaining how Chinese art collecting unfolded in Hong Kong as represented by our four case studies. This thesis has exemplified how Chinese art was perceived as a kind of cultural capital which was used to boost social status, and how tastes for categories of Chinese art were developed by elitist groups who exerted their influence through private collecting circles, scholarly research, museums and the art market. In doing so, collecting activities in Hong Kong during the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century may be understood through Bourdieu's conception of taste as an indicator of social distinction.<sup>871</sup> Although some circumstances of Hong Kong collecting were particularly complex and require a more nuanced analysis that does not reduce individuals to types, considering constant changes of social positions and differences between individuals of the same class and social strata, Bourdieu's analytical framework remains useful in understanding the broader links between social position and collecting preferences.<sup>872</sup>

## Areas for Further Research

As the last major British colony that was decolonised and granted the status of 'Special Administrative Region', the observations made in this thesis may benefit other studies that examine the complex and often contradictory responses to colonial rule and decolonisation as seen through the activity of art collecting and the development of related groups and organisations. Moreover, future research could expand upon the four representative case studies offered by this study in the following ways:

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<sup>871</sup> Bourdieu, *Distinction*, 56-57.

<sup>872</sup> Wear views Bourdieu's reduction of individuals to types as insufficient in understanding more complex circumstances of the Hong Kong collectors he studied, stressing that some fields are 'in a constant state of transformation as new individuals join them or conditions change'; Wear, "Patterns," 436.

Firstly, more in-depth investigation of the development of art scholarship in relation to the agency of Hong Kong collectors may provide a more comprehensive picture of Hong Kong collecting and its global impact in shaping tastes and trends. For example, a closer examination of Chow and his contribution in raising the status of the Chenghua ‘chicken cup’ in light of broader developments in international Chinese art circles could achieve this, in a similar way that Chapter Four has analysed Ip’s involvement in developing research and drawing global attention to Chinese bamboo carving.

Secondly, further research on the underexplored biographies of other representative collectors and dealers in Hong Kong, such as J. M. Hu, T. Y. Chao, Philip Wen Chee Mao and K. S. Lo, could broaden the scope of the current investigation, as this study is a first attempt to characterise Hong Kong collecting from 1949 to 1997 and more examples are necessary in further verifying the observations presented here. In doing so, the perspectives of female collectors must also be uncovered to portray a more balanced view on the subject. Although collecting theorists such as Baudrillard and Muensterberger have come under criticism for being phallogocentric in excluding women in their analyses of collectors, Wear continues to cite Muensterberger’s view that ‘collecting is more rarely an activity of women’, stating that this corresponds to his observations in Hong Kong.<sup>873</sup> Yet many of the informants in his doctoral thesis were identified as female, including collectors Lucia Cheung (n. d.) and Alice Piccus (n. d.), auction house staff member Pola Antebi, the HKMoA curator Christina Chu, the curator of the Art Museum at Chinese University of Hong Kong Mayching Kao 高美慶 (n. d.), and the art dealer and gallerist Sandra Walters (1945-2021), all of whom played a key role in the development of private and/or museum collections.<sup>874</sup> K. Y. Ng once stated<sup>875</sup> that female collectors are rare in Hong Kong, but pointed out that there are exceptions – the ones that are known tend to be part of a couple that builds a collection together.<sup>875</sup> The lists of collectors, museum advisers and museum donors examined in this thesis do suggest that Chinese art collecting was mostly a male-dominated activity in this specific time period in Hong Kong – indeed, the Min Chiu Society deliberately excluded women from its membership

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<sup>873</sup> Chang, “Models of Collecting,” 96; Wear, “Sense,” 202-203.

<sup>874</sup> Wear, “Patterns,” 454-456.

<sup>875</sup> Deyuan Liu 劉德媛 and K. Y. Ng 吳繼遠, “Du Ju Hui Yan Tui Chen Chu Xin - Wu Ji Yuan Xian Sheng Fang Tan 獨具慧眼 推陳出新 – 吳繼遠先生訪談,” in *Ming Jia Tan Shou Cang - Jing Yan Pian (Shang)* 名家談收藏 – 經驗篇 (上), ed. Hua Ren Shou Cang Jia Da Hui Zu Wei Hui 華人收藏家大會組委會 (Shanghai: Dongfang Publishing, 2009), 199.

(at least in the early decades of its founding). However, the importance of some female collectors, dealers, curators and auction house staff in influencing the collecting activities of the four male collectors of this study have been noted, such as Helen Ling, Grace Wu Bruce and Rose Kerr. It is clear that much more can be done to build upon the findings of this thesis to challenge the male-dominated narrative, taking into account the increasing number of women who entered the workplace and became active in the collecting field towards the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. As Sarah Cheang states in her examination of the collecting activities of Ellen Thomas-Stanford (1848-1932) in relation to the ‘upper-class, feminine identities’ of Britain in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, when ‘the masculinisation of Chinese ceramics was still nascent’, the acknowledgement of women as collectors can not only challenge the gender bias in definitions of collecting, but also the social construction of ‘diametrically opposed gender identities’.<sup>876</sup> Future studies on 20<sup>th</sup> century Hong Kong collecting would benefit from examining the activities of those like Grace Wu Bruce, Ellie Lynn Alleyne, Susan Chen (in addition to being known as a collector in her own right, she was also known as a supporter of the Hong Kong Maritime Museum which was founded by her husband Anthony Hardy (n. d.)), dealer Charlotte Horstmann (1908-2003) (who was acquainted with Chow), Betty Lo 盧茵茵 (n. d.) (who owns Mengdiexuan 夢蝶軒 with her husband Kenneth Chu 朱偉基 (n. d.)), designer-collector Lo Kai-yin 羅啟研 (n. d.) as well as many other female collectors and dealers whose voices have been overshadowed by their male counterparts.

In addition to this, a group of expatriate collectors including Brian McElney and Adrian Joseph who significantly contributed to promoting Chinese art in Hong Kong also deserve more attention in enriching Hong Kong collecting stories in this multicultural environment. Similarly, other collectible categories of Chinese art which have not been touched upon in this thesis could also be examined in greater detail to give a more comprehensive view of the broad range of categories collected in Hong Kong – these include jade carvings, Yixing pottery, Buddhist art, textiles, furniture and China Trade art.

Thirdly, considering the close relationship between colonial Hong Kong, Britain and China, comparative studies of collecting in these locations could expand upon the findings of this

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<sup>876</sup> Sarah Cheang, “The Dogs of Fo: Gender, Identity and Collecting,” in *Collectors: Expressions of Self and Other*, ed. Anthony Shelton (London: The Horniman Museum and Gardens and Museu Antropológico da Universidade de Coimbra, 2001), 60 & 70.

thesis to offer more specific reference points in the writing of global histories of collecting. For example, the Hong Kong perspectives offered in this thesis could enable a closer reading and better contextualisation of the redispays of Chinese art sponsored by Hong Kong businessmen in shaping global perceptions of Chinese art. Furthermore, the present study provides key historical references that explain contemporary developments in private and institutional collecting in Hong Kong, as exemplified by the opening of the Hong Kong Maritime Museum (2005), M+ Museum (2019), the Liangyi Museum, the Sun Museum and the Hong Kong Palace Museum (planned for 2022).

It is hoped that pending sources of information will become available in future to illuminate a clearer picture of the development of Chinese art collecting in Hong Kong. For instance, in Hangzhou, there are letters in the Huang Binhong old residence, including those sent to Huang from Low, which are currently not available to researchers. Better access to rare publications, such as the 1950 publications of Shanghai collections authored by Ling and Chow, would also undoubtedly enlighten us further on the stories of Hong Kong collectors.

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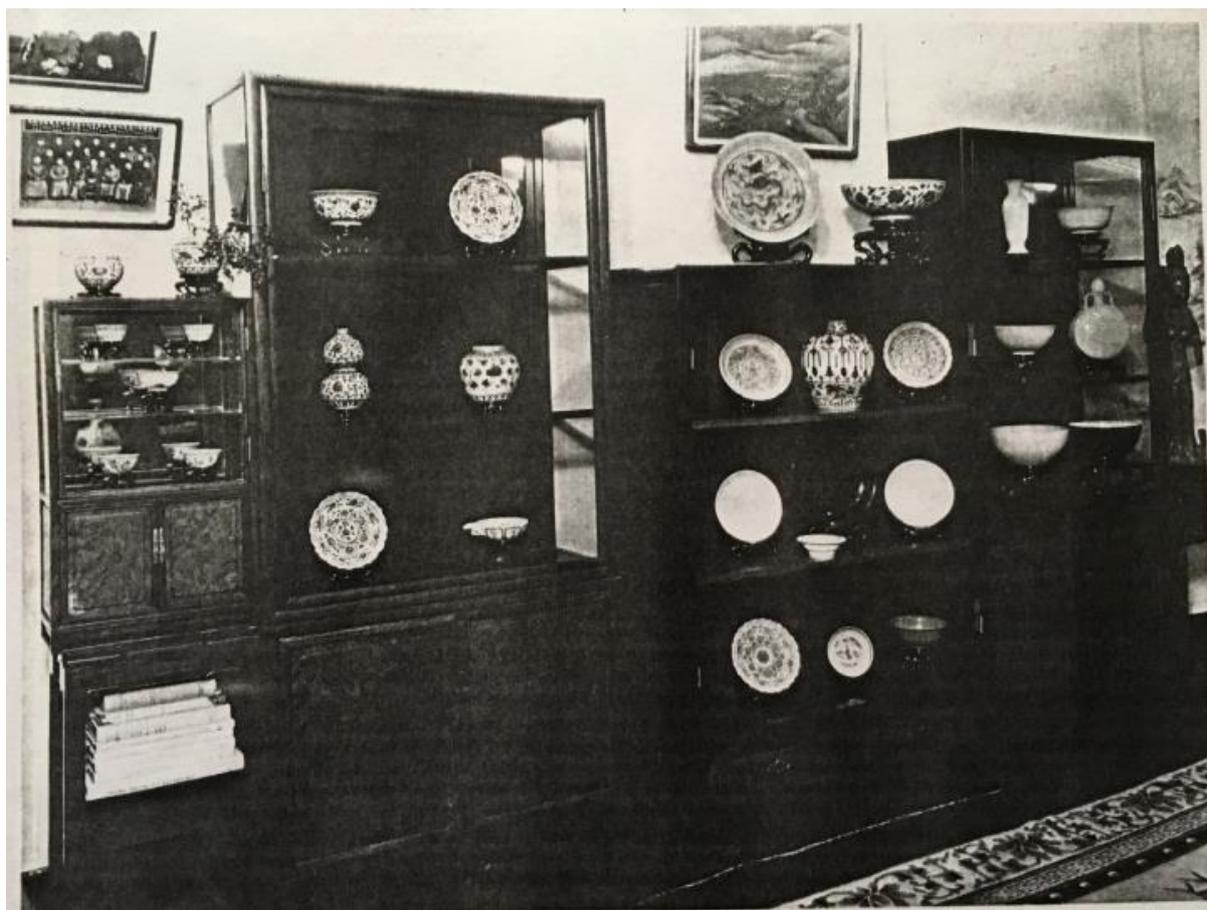
## Illustrations



**Figure 1**  
Jacob Emil Melchior (1879-1944)  
Chow family archive, Lausanne



**Figure 21**  
 Antique dealers in Beijing, 1930  
 Bottom row from second on the left to second on the right: Woo Chi Chou, Monique Loo, F. J. Abbott and his wife, and Edward Chow  
 Chow family archive, Lausanne



**Figure 32**  
Chow's first exhibition, Shanghai 1946  
Chow family archive, Lausanne



**Figure 4**  
Chow at his first exhibition, Shanghai 1946  
Chow family archive, Lausanne



**Figure 5**  
Chow at his first exhibition, Shanghai 1946  
Chow family archive, Lausanne



**Figure 6**

T. T. Tsui under calligraphy by Amy Tsui in the T. T. Tsui Gallery of Chinese Art, Victoria and Albert Museum, London  
RP/1988/1160 Box 202, Chinese Gallery Tsui Gallery, Press & Public Relations, V&A Archive, London

# Appendix

## Appendix I: Index of Hong Kong collectors and dealers mentioned in this thesis

English Last Name	English First and Middle Name(s)	Chinese Name	Other Name(s)	Hall name, pseudonym or company/museum name	Dates
Alleyne	Selwyn Eugene	程尚文			1930-
Alleyne (née Wong)	Ellie Lynn	程王蘅			1930-
Au	C. H.	歐振雄			1917-1994
Au	Bak Ling	區百齡			1927-2019
Chak	William	翟健民		Chak's 永寶齋	1961-
Chan	Sing-chak				
Chang	Robert	張宗憲		Robert Chang 永元行 Yunhai Ge 雲海閣	1927-
Chang	Ting-chen				
Chang	Pihan C. K.				
Chao	T. Y.	趙從衍		Hall of Wah Kwong 華光草堂	1912-1999
Chater	Catchick Paul	吉席·保羅·遮打			1846-1926
Chen	Yu Chieh	陳玉階			1922-2012
Chen	Susan	陳淑貞		Feng Wen Tang 奉文堂	1940-2014
Chen	J. D.	陳仁濤	Chen Rentao	King Kwei Collection 金匱室	1906-1968
Chen	Kwang Pu	陳光甫			1880-1976
Cheng	Te-k'un	鄭德坤			1907-2001
Cheng	Alice	張永珍			1932-
Cheung	Lucia	張雅燕?			1950? -
Chiu	P. P.	趙不波			
Chow	Edward Tse	仇焱之	Qiu Yanzhi	Qiu Yanji 仇焱記 Qiu Yanzhi Wenwan Hui 仇焱之文玩 Kangxi Zhai/Hall of Disciplined Learning 抗希齋 The Lakeside Pavilion 湖畔軒	1910-1980
Chu	K. K.	朱孔嘉			

Chu	Kenneth	朱偉基		Mengdiexuan 夢蝶軒	
Chuang	Shen	莊申			1932-2000
Chuang	Quincy	莊貴倫			
Chung-ho	Sheung	常宗豪			1937-2010
Fan	Chai	范甲		Wanmei Tang 萬梅堂	
Fung	Peter, Yiu-fai	馮耀輝		Liangyi Museum 兩依藏博物館	1947-
Hardy	Anthony			Sze Yuan Tang 思源堂	
Hei	Andy	黑國強		Andy Hei Ltd. 研木得益	1967-
Hei	Hung Lu	黑洪祿			1933-
Ho	Iu-kwong	何耀光		Chih Lo Lou 至樂樓	1907-2006
Ho	Ping-chung	何秉聰			1918-1999
Ho (née Yeung)	Grace	何楊展翹			1929-2007
Ho	Kuan-wu				
Horstmann	Charlotte				1908-2003
Hotung	Joseph E.	何鴻卿			1930-
Hotung	Robert	何東			1862-1956
Hsu	Shi Hao	徐士浩			1899-1967
Hu	J. M.	胡惠春		Studio of Temporary Enjoyment/Zande Lou 暫得樓	1911-1995
Hu	Shih-chang	胡世昌		Baoyizhai 抱一齋	1924-2006
Huo	Pao-tsai	霍寶材	Huo Baocai		1909-1987
Ip	Yee	葉義		Feng-lo Chu-jan 豐樂主人	1919-1984
Ip	Che	葉智			
Ip	Lai	葉禮			
Jao	Tsung-I	饒宗頤			1917-2018
Jian	Youwen	簡又文	Jen Yu- wen	Ban Yuan 斑園	1896-1978
Joseph	Adrian				?-2010
Kan	Richard W. C.	簡永楨		Zhuyuetang Collection 竹月堂	
Kilburn	Richard				1937-1999
King	T. Y.	金從怡		金才記 T. Y. King & Sons	1904-?
Ko	Shih Chao	葛士翹		Tianminlou Collection 天民樓	1911-1992
Kuo	Ven-chi	郭文基			1944-
Kwan	Siu-Yee	關肇頤			1912-2013

Kwan	Simon	關善明		Yangzhi Tang 養志堂 Muwen Tang 沐文堂	
Kwok	C. T.	郭正達			1923?- 2009?
Lai	Tak	黎德		Tai Sing Antiques 大成古玩 Songde Tang 頌德堂	
Lai	Loy	黎來		Tai Sing Antiques 大成古玩	1926-2012
Lai	T. C.	賴恬昌			1921-
Lai	Peter	黎志江		Peter Lai Antiques Ltd. 黎氏古玩有限公司	
Lai	Sandee	黎仙蒂		Peter Lai Antiques Ltd. 黎氏古玩有限公司	
Lai	Andrew C. M.	黎志文		Tai Sing Antiques 大成古玩	
Lai	Eugene	黎志祥		Tai Sing Antiques 大成古玩	
Lee	J. S.	利榮森		Bei Shan Tang 北山堂	1915-2007
Lee	Kwok-wing	李國榮			1929-2021
Li	Raymond				
Lin	C. P.	練松柏	Peter Lin	Changqing Guan 長青館	1933-
Liu	Han Tang	劉漢棟			
Lo	K. S.	羅桂祥			
Lo	Alvin			Alvin Lo Oriental Art	
Lo	Betty	盧茵茵		Mengdiexuan 夢蝶軒	
Lo	Kai-yin	羅啟研			
Loh	C. S.	陸菊森			
Low	Chuck-Tiew	劉作籌		Xubaizhai 虛白齋 Studio of Bamboo Shadow and Lotus Fragrance 竹影荷香書屋 Pavilion of Flying Clouds 飛雲閣	1911-1993
Lu	P. C.				
Ma	Kam Chan	馬錦燦			1909-1984
Ma	Chi-tsu				
Macintosh	Duncan				
Mao	Philip Wen-Chee	毛文奇			1915-2004
McElney	Brian S.	麥雅理		Museum of East Asian Art	1932-

Mills-Owens	Richard				
Mok	Kon Seng	莫幹生		Huaci Ge 花瓷閣	1882-1958
Mok	Christopher	莫華釗		Cheng Xun Tang 承訓堂	
Moss	Hugh			Master of the Water, Pine and Stone Retreat 水松石山房主人	1943-
Ng	Kai Yuen	吳繼遠		K. Y. Fine Art 繼遠美術	
Perrell	Helen Elizabeth				1904- 2002
Piccus	Alice				
Tan	Tsze Chor	陳之初		Xiangxue Zhuang 香雪庄	1911-1983
Tang	Cissy K. S.	林勁思		Cissy and Robert Tang Collection 喜聞過齋	
Tang	Robert	鄧國楨		Cissy and Robert Tang Collection 喜聞過齋	1947-
Tso	S. C.	曹紹釗			1910-1995
Tsui	T. T.	徐展堂		Jingguantang 靜觀堂 Villa of Zaiwang 在望山莊 One Step Studio 一步齋 Tsui Museum of Art 徐氏藝術館	1941-2010
Walters	Sandra			Arts Promotion Gallery, Alisan Fine Arts 藝倡畫廊	1945-2021
Wang	Nanping	王南屏		Yu Zhai 玉齋	1924-1985
Wong	T. Y.	王統元			
Wong	Leo, Kwai- kuen	黃貴權		Zhanyuan Tang 瞻緣堂 Jingguan Lou 靜觀樓	1932-
Wong	Harold, Chung Fong	黃仲芳		Hanart Gallery 漢雅軒 Lechangzai Xuan 樂常在軒	1943-
Wong	Pao Hsie	黃寶熙	Wong Pao-hsi	Lechangzai Xuan 樂常在軒	
Wong	Elegant	黃少棠		Ming Gallery 明成館	
Wu Bruce	Grace	伍嘉恩		Grace Wu Bruce 嘉木堂	1949-
Yang	T. L.	楊鐵樑			1929-
Yip	S. Y.	葉承耀		Dr S Y Yip Collection 攻玉山房	1933-
Yuan	G. T.	袁虬初			