

THE ARTS OF CHINA IN SEATTLE

Josh Yiu. *A Fuller View of China: Chinese Art in the Seattle Art Museum*. Seattle: Seattle Art Museum, 2014. 192 pp. ISBN 978-0-932216-71-7.

Chinese Painting & Calligraphy [on-line catalog of the Seattle Art Museum collection]
<<http://chinesepainting.seattleartmuseum.org/OSCI/>>

These two distinctive and excellent works introduce one of the best collections of the arts of China in North America and serve as tributes to two visionary directors of the Seattle Art Museum (SAM). Rather than write a “masterpieces” catalog, Josh Yiu offers an elegant study of the vision and collecting acumen of SAM’s founder, generous patron, and director for four decades, Richard Eugene Fuller, whose passion was Chinese art. And his impact went beyond the museum: in Yiu’s words (p. 21), “his work turned Seattle from a small town to the public-spirited urban city we know today.” Whereas Fuller was largely self-taught in Asian art, Mimi Gardner Gates came to her directorship in 1994 as a recognized academic specialist in Chinese painting, that expertise abundantly evident in the innovative on-line catalog (funded by the Getty Foundation) whose creation she and Josh Yiu supervised. SAM’s director until her retirement in 2009, Gates oversaw a major expansion of the museum, positioning it as an innovative 21st-century institution.

As curator of SAM’s Chinese collection for several years, Yiu became intimately familiar with the holdings and was able to sift the archives for documentation about acquisitions. The result is a compelling “life history” of the first decades of the Seattle collection, from its infancy to adulthood, a history that is coterminous with the maturation of Richard Fuller as a collector. Inspired by his mother Margaret’s modest collection of Far Eastern *objets d’art*, Fuller developed an early interest in jade and snuff bottles, although that enthusiasm often led him to acquire objects he soon understood to be of limited artistic merit and which he then might happily de-acquisition.¹ For students of exchange along the “silk roads” one of the jades he kept that is of particular interest is a Ming-period ewer [Fig. 1],² which cost him \$78 at Macy’s (yes, department stores in those days were often good

sources for high-quality Asian antiquities). The relationship between Chinese ceramics and Central Asian or Islamic-world metalwork is well documented, of course. As James Watt observed, this small ewer “is the earliest Chinese jade carving to display Islamic influence” (quoted, p. 31). It dates to a period when a good many objects made of blue-and-white porcelain were decorated with Arabic inscriptions, and craftsmen in China were not only catering to possibly new domestic tastes but also producing for specific export markets in the Islamic world.

Fig. 1. Chinese nephrite ewer, late 15th-early 16th centuries. H: 8 in. Seattle Art Museum, Eugene Fuller Memorial Collection, 33.77. Photograph by Daniel C. Waugh.





While an early trip to China and then many years later a long encounter in London with a major visiting exhibition from China helped sharpen his acumen, to a considerable degree Fuller's success lay in cultivating the right dealers. When asked about his collecting philosophy in later years, he emphasized that "the true value of art depends on an intangible aesthetic return, which varies with the knowledge and taste of each beholder" (quoted, p. 25). That is, the monetary value attached to a work of art was not the important thing. Indeed, one of the impressive facts which emerges here is how Fuller often swam against the tide of what was currently fashionable in acquisitions of Chinese art, with the result being that many of his lastingly significant purchases cost almost trivial sums. His "first important acquisition" (in 1918?), a tall Wanli period blue-and-white vase [Fig. 2; Color Plate X] cost all of \$10 (p. 28). By 1932, when he was making considerable efforts to broaden the coverage of his collection and was increasingly discriminating, he would pay \$500 for a Tang sculpture of a female polo player [Figs. 3, 4]. While now not an uncommon type (the Musée Guimet in Paris has several wonderful examples), this piece occupies a prominent place in the Seattle collection of Tang Dynasty funerary figurines (*mingqi*). At the time Fuller acquired what is arguably the best of the tomb attendants in his collection [Fig. 5; Color Plate X], only one other example of the type was known, but as in the case of others of Fuller's forward-looking acquisitions, subsequent archaeological ex-

Fig. 2 (left). Wanli period porcelain vase, late 16th–early 17th century, H: 22.5 in. Eugene Fuller Memorial Collection, 54.120. Fig. 3 (below). The current display of Tang-era *mingqi* in SAAM. Fig. 4 (bottom left). Polo player, 7th–8th century, L: 14 in. Eugene Fuller Memorial Collection, 33.7. Fig. 5 (below right). Tomb attendant, late 7th century, H: 27.5 in. Eugene Fuller Memorial Collection, 35.6.

Photographs by Daniel C. Waugh.



Fig. 6. Bronze hand censer, 7th century, Chinese. H: 2.5 in. (6.3 cm); L: 14 ¹⁵/₁₆ in. (37.94 cm); diam.: 4 ³/₈ in. (11.11 cm). Seattle Art Museum, Eugene Fuller Memorial Collection, 39.27. Photograph © Seattle Art Museum.



cavation has turned up almost identical ones that help to contextualize the statue (p. 70). Even though such objects were very rare and not always correctly identified, when Fuller acquired his bronze censer (also Tang period) [Fig. 6] in 1939, he understood that it was to be compared with a famous one preserved over the centuries in the Shosoin (p. 88).

By the early 1930s, Fuller’s collection was already significant, and, given the interest shown in Seattle at a special exhibit which highlighted it, he embarked on an ambitious plan to replace the struggling Art Institute of Seattle with a real public museum, the emphasis in whose collections would be Asian art (p. 46). He and his mother funded the construction of a new building in a hilltop park overlooking the city. To encourage public interest, and appropriate to its focus, they acquired and installed in front of the severe Art Deco façade genuine statuary that had once been part of a “spirit way” leading to a Chinese tomb [Fig. 7]. The camels flanking the entrance became immediate hits, fully justifying Fuller’s instincts despite the fact that some art critics rather disparaged their quality. The camels one sees there today are replicas (still clambered over by children and senior citizens and nowadays featured in selfies), the originals of the Seattle version of a “spirit way” having been moved indoors to the new downtown SAM building that opened in 1991 [see Fig. 30 below] (the original build-

Fig. 7. The entrance to the original building of the Seattle Art Museum, opened on June 23, 1933, as seen today. For a historic photo giving a sense of Fuller’s concept of the “spirit way,” see Yiu, Fig. 27, p. 47. Photograph by Daniel C. Waugh.



ing now houses only the Asian collections as the Seattle Asian Art Museum [SAAM]).

Fuller understood clearly that the interests of a private collector were not necessarily the priorities that were needed for a public museum (p. 49). So he set about broadening the acquisitions for the new museum and increasingly trying to ensure that only the highest quality works entered the collection. Despite the fact that much of the operating expenses of the museum were being covered by the Fullers (who had deep but not bottomless pockets), there continued to be funds for purchases, and he had basically a free hand in the decisions about what to buy.³

On the eve of the opening of the new museum in 1933, he acquired a set of remarkable embroidered silk bed curtains which probably had been commissioned by the Qianlong Emperor (1736–1795) [Fig. 8, next page; Color Plate XI]. Josh Yiu notes that they “may be the best that exist” [p. 63]. Trips to Japan and London in the mid-1930s both resulted in new acquisitions and contributed to the broadening of Fuller’s knowledge of the field. As a result, Seattle now has one of several elegant, large Song- or Jin-period wooden statues of a seated Guanyin (Fig. 31 below; others are in London, Princeton and Kansas City). The catalyst for the visit to London was the opening of a major exhibition of art on loan from Chinese collections, which provided a unique opportunity to study a broad array of the finest works. Fuller’s purchases in London included another large wooden sculpture, a spirited Yuan-period evocation of a monk at the moment of Enlightenment [Fig. 9].

Perhaps more important for the broadening of the Seattle collection was the development of Fuller’s interest in painting. He acquired what was thought to be a Song-period landscape (Song paintings in general are very rare and highly prized)



Fig. 8 (left). Bed curtains, Chinese, 1735–1796 (Qianlong period). Silk and gold thread, 107 x 70 ³/₄ in. (266.7 x 179.71 cm). Seattle Art Museum, Eugene Fuller Memorial Collection, 33.159.2. Photograph © Seattle Art Museum.



Fig. 9 (top right). Monk at the moment of Enlightenment, Chinese, ca. 14th century. Wood with polychrome decorations, 41 x 30 x 22 in. (104.14 x 76.2 x 55.88 cm). Seattle Art Museum, Eugene Fuller Memorial Collection, 36.13. Photograph © Seattle Art Museum.

Fig. 10 (right). Scholar gazing at the moon. Ma Yuan 馬遠 Tradition (15th century). Ink and color on silk. Overall: 116 ¹/₄ x 48 ⁵/₁₆ in. (295.3 x 122.7 cm); Image: 78 x 41 ³/₄ in. (198.1 x 106 cm). Seattle Art Museum, Eugene Fuller Memorial Collection, 36.12. Photograph © Seattle Art Museum.



[Fig. 10; for detail see below, Fig. 28]. While it then turned out to be a later, Ming work, it remains one of the museum's best paintings. Fuller's cultivation of local patrons in Seattle eventually led to the donation (by Mrs. Donald E. Frederick) of a Song painting that is understandably one of the highlights of the collection [Fig. 11, next page]. Looking back on the time when he was advising the San Francisco Museum of Asian Art on its acquisitions, James Cahill has written somewhat ruefully about how an extraordinary album of landscapes by the innovative late Ming artist Shao Mi 邵彌 [Fig. 12; Color Plate XIII], ended up in Seattle when he could not persuade the decision-makers in San Francisco that it was worth buying.⁴ Later the acquisition of painting and calligraphy became one of the priorities of Mimi Gates. It took an honor roll of donors (she and her husband were among them) to add an important poem scroll dated 1521 by Wen Zhengming 文徵明 [Fig. 13]. Modern works of Chinese calligraphy are now in the collection as well, one a couplet donated by the artist Xu Bing 徐冰 [Fig. 14] to honor Gates on the occasion of her retirement.



Fig. 11 (above). Hawk pursuing a pheasant, by Li Anzhong 李安忠, 1129–30. Ink and color on silk. Image size: 43 1/2 x 16 in. (25.9 x 26.8 cm). Seattle Art Museum, Gift of Mrs. Donald E. Frederick, 51.38. Photograph by Daniel C. Waugh.



Fig. 12 (above right). "Landscape of dreams," by Shao Mi 邵彌, 1638. One of ten album leaves: ink and color on paper. Overall: 11 7/16 x 17 in. (29 x 43.2 cm). Seattle Art Museum, Eugene Fuller Memorial Collection, 70.18.2. Photograph © Seattle Art Museum.

A number of the most important additions to the collection were made during the short period, 1948–52, when Sherman Lee was Fuller's assistant, hired at a time before he earned what would be a huge reputation in the art world. This was a period when the museum began to build a good collection of early bronzes [e.g., Fig. 15, next page] and became one of the first to

Fig. 13 (below). Poem for the painting "Sunset over the Jin and Jiao Mountains," by Wen Zhengming 文徵明, 1521. Ink on paper. Overall size of scroll: 15 3/16 x 454 1/2 in. (38.5 x 1154.5 cm), a portion of which is shown here. Seattle Art Museum. Purchased in honor of Jay Xu and Jennifer Chen with funds from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation Art Acquisition Endowment, Anonymous, Mimi and Bill Gates, The Asian Art Council, Jeffrey and Susan Brotman, Lyn and Gerald Grinstein, Jane and David Davi, 2003.1. Photograph © Seattle Art Museum.



Fig. 14 (right). Couplet: "Learning from the Past, Moving Forward in Time," by Xu Bing 徐冰, 2009. Calligraphy; ink on paper. Dimensions: 53 1/2 x 13 3/4" each sheet. Seattle Art Museum, Gift of the artist in honor of Mimi Gardner Gates, 2010.7.2. Photograph © Seattle Art Museum.

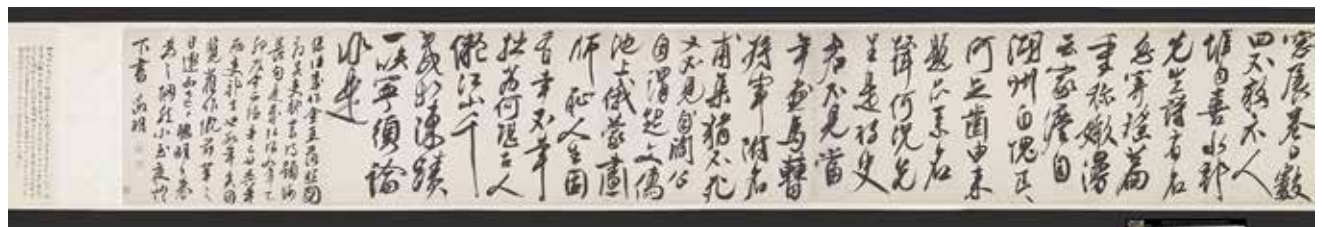




Fig. 15 (above). Bronze you (wine vessel), 11th century BCE (Western Zhou period). Seattle Art Museum, Eugene Fuller Memorial Collection, 56.33. Photograph by Daniel C. Waugh.



Fig. 16 (above right). Painted bowl, Chinese, 3rd century BCE. Wood with lacquer, 10 x 2 ⁷/₁₆ in. (25.4 x 6.19 cm). Seattle Art Museum, Eugene Fuller Memorial Collection, 51.118. Photograph © Seattle Art Museum

develop a serious interest in lacquerware. Arguably the most important example of the latter is a black-on-red dish dating to the Warring State period [Fig. 16; Color Plate XII], a piece found in a documented excavation. Lee himself was a collector; the museum bought from him the superb, large Cizhou ware vase dating to the 13th century [Fig. 17], a work that has inspired both admiration and silly comments about its “vulgarity” (p. 129) on account of its fertility imagery.

The directors in Seattle clearly have an eye for talent, but keeping it proves to be difficult. Lee moved on and up, to become director of the Cleveland Museum of Art. Under Mimi Gates, the curator for Chinese art was Jay Xu, who organized a blockbuster exhibition of the archaeological finds from Sanxingdui in Sichuan. Xu is now the director of the Museum of Asian Art in San Francisco. When Josh Yiu left Seattle, it was to become Associate Director of the Art Museum of the Chinese University of Hong Kong.



Fig. 17. Vase, 13th century (Jin period). Stoneware with black decoration on white slip. H. 35 in. Seattle Art Museum, Eugene Fuller Memorial Collection 48.34. Photographs by Daniel C. Waugh.



If, when Fuller began, Seattle was on no one’s map for its Chinese collections, well before he retired in 1973 (he died three years later), what he had built was widely appreciated by specialists in Asian art, who paid tribute to his excellent taste and his ability to stretch limited financial resources so effectively in a world when huge sums were now being lavished to obtain what in lesser hands sometimes turned out to be works lacking in real merit. The Se-



Fig. 18 (above left). The east wall of the atrium of the Seattle Asian Art Museum.

Fig. 19 (above). *Mi'raj*, illustrated frontispiece from the *Mahzan al-Asrar* of Nizami (Book One of the *Khamsa*), ca. 1550–1600. Note the decorative Chinese cloud motif on the background. Ink, opaque watercolor, and gold on paper. Iranian (Safavid period). Seattle Art Museum, Eugene Fuller Memorial Collection, 47.96.

Fig. 20 (left). Figurine of a wine seller, 8th century (Tang period). Earthenware with polychrome glazes. H: 14^{5/8} in. Seattle Art Museum, Eugene Fuller Memorial Collection, 38.6.

Photographs by Daniel C. Waugh.

attle collection is by no means huge, but it contains excellent examples over a range of genres and periods. Fuller's hand is to be found in all the other areas of Asian art in the museum's holdings, from Gandharan and later South and Southeast Asian sculpture (beautifully displayed in the atrium of SAAM, Fig. 18) to Islamic and Mughal miniatures (the subject of a current small exhibition in the adjoining room, Fig. 19).

Before turning to questions of access and education about the collection, I will indulge in a few notes about some of the objects which, in addition to those already discussed, should be of considerable interest to students of the "silk roads." Let's begin [Fig. 20]



with one of the most widely reproduced works in the collection, a polychrome-painted earthenware depicting a Semitic or Central Asian wine merchant. While such figurines (generally made to accompany the deceased into the afterlife and thus buried in tombs) are among the most popular objects of art from China, the uniqueness of the Seattle wine merchant had raised questions as to its authenticity. Thermo-luminescence testing has confirmed now its early date to the Tang period (p. 102, n. 105). Analogous to the wine merchant is another depiction of a foreigner, wearing a peaked Central Asian cap and hunched under the burden he is carrying [Fig. 21]. He is quite similar to examples well known from the collections of

Fig. 21 (above left). *Semitic peddler*. Tang period (618–906). Ceramic with polychrome paint. Seattle Art Museum, Eugene Fuller Memorial Collection, 33.19.

Fig. 22 (above). *Covered bowls in the shape of a five-petaled flower, with floral patterns, late 8th-early 9th century (Tang period)*. Beaten silver with gilt decoration. D: 9.5 in. Seattle Art Museum, Eugene Fuller Memorial Collection, 45.61.1-2.

Photographs by Daniel C. Waugh.

the British Museum (Museum Nos. OA 1973.7-26.192; 1936.10-12.56) and the Musée Guimet (Museum No. MG 18260). Among the Tang period objects Fuller acquired is a pair of fine silver bowls with gilt decoration [Fig. 22] and a silver cup with a chased pattern of vegetation and birds, whose shape reflects the norms of Sogdian silver from Central Asia [Fig. 23; Color Plate XII]. Opportunities to see such fine examples of Tang silver are rare.⁵



The Yuan (Mongol) Dynasty period in China in the 13th and 14th centuries is often considered to mark the epitome of cross-Asian trade (indeed, this was when Marco Polo and his father and uncle went from Italy to China and back). While eclectic in their religious beliefs, the Mongols in China cultivated close connections with Tibetan Buddhism. One apparent witness to that is a stunning gold- and silver-decorated bronze statue of a Buddha, which is distinguished by what

Fig. 23. *Cup, Chinese, late 7th to early 8th century*. Silver, with chased patterns of lotus, vines, and birds. H: 2.5 in. (6.3 cm.); D: 3 in. (7.62 cm).

Seattle Art Museum, Eugene Fuller Memorial Collection, 42.5.

Photograph © Seattle Art Museum.



Fig. 24. Seated Buddha, Chinese, 14th [- 15th] century. Bronze with inlaid gold and silver thread. 6 1/2 x 4 1/2 x 3 in. (15.88 x 11.43 x 7.62 cm). Seattle Art Museum, Eugene Fuller Memorial Collection, 69.114. Photograph © Seattle Art Museum.

Access and Education

At the beginning of his book, Josh Yiu referred the reader to several published catalogs of the Seattle collection (p. 10). While ultimately one can expect that the museum's website will provide complete on-line access, would not it make sense in the meantime to digitize these mostly out-of-print publications and link them to the website? For in fact, as the discussion which follows will elaborate, SAM's online catalog is still very much work in progress and is far from complete.

The brilliant exception here is the new online catalog of Chinese painting and calligraphy, created with the support of a grant from the Getty Foundation, which can be accessed from the top of the "Collections" page. Users would be advised first to click on "About" to learn about the goals of the project, stated as follows:

...Seattle's collection of 152 Chinese painting and calligraphy has never been studied in depth and is heretofore largely unpublished. For the first time, it is being introduced and made universally accessible through this newly developed online catalogue, which features thoughtful and provocative essays about major works by renowned scholars, with high-resolution, zoom-able images of the works of art, and thorough documentation—including tran-

are variously described as Nepali or Indian features [Fig. 24]. Sherman Lee's inclusion of it in an important exhibition in Cleveland on Chinese art under the Mongols helped persuade the experts that it is a Yuan-period work (p. 149). Most agree that the Yuan period also saw the full flowering of Chinese blue-and-white porcelain, with the production of large vessels suited to Mongol elite foodways and exhibiting a dense array of decorative motifs. While Seattle has a good range of blue-and-white, arguably the most important of its pieces is a 14th-century charger (large dish or plate), which, unusually, has a raised, moulded design for the large flowers and a formally composed garden scene in the center featuring two phoenixes [Fig. 25].⁶ Major donations were necessary for the museum to be able to afford its purchase from Eskenazi in London in 1975.



Fig. 25. Dish with phoenix and flower motifs, early 14th century (Yuan period). Jingdezhen ware; porcelain with underglaze cobalt-blue decoration. D: 18 3/4 in. Seattle Art Museum, purchased in memory of Elizabeth M. Fuller with funds from the Elizabeth M. Fuller Memorial Fund and from the Edwin W. and Catherine M. Davis Foundation, St. Paul, Minnesota, 76.7. Photograph by Daniel C. Waugh.

scriptions and translations of inscriptions and colophons, and seals which are transcribed, identified and located....

This online catalogue is designed to facilitate scholarly dialogue. Readers are encouraged to post comments about the works of art and the accompanying essays, as well as to formulate answers to questions that we put forward under the section "Questions for Thought."

The open-ended nature of the online catalogue represents a significant departure from the standard printed catalogue. In contrast to printed catalogues, which reflect a specific fixed moment in time, the Seattle Art Museum considers the online catalogue an adaptable document that will continue to evolve as the collection of Chinese painting and calligraphy grows. Moreover, in the future we hope other aspects of the Seattle Art Museum collection will be researched, documented and entered online to complement this groundbreaking catalogue.

Before going on to explore the collection the user then is advised to watch the brief instructional tutorial. The design and functionality here are first-rate, with a range of filters on the left which let one select groups of works by artist, period, region, subject and more.

It is appropriate that the first work which appears on a full page with tiles for each item in the collection — the exquisite treatment of plum blossoms by the 15th-century painter Yang Hui 楊輝 [Figs. 26, 27; Color Plate XIII] — is one for which Mimi Gates has written the long and scholarly analytical essay. General readers may be satisfied with the opening summary paragraph of essays such as hers, but if one chooses to "read more," there is so much that can be learned. The

Yang Hui painting opens doors into poetry and the spiritual associations of plum blossoms. The reader learns how the painting's attribution was confirmed and is introduced to a strikingly similar painting in the National Palace Museum in Taiwan. A separate set of links leads to related works in the Seattle collection. There are study questions, a listing of exhibitions and previous publications and additional bibliography. The zoom feature of the catalog, illustrated on the next page [Figs. 27, 28], is a marvel allowing one to see the paintings in intimate detail or focus on seals and inscriptions while reading their translations.

Like a reviewer of a detective novel, I would be depriving readers of the pleasure of discovery were I to devote much more space to this catalog. I would note though that the essays I have examined closely, while perhaps somewhat intimidating for general users where they include, appropriately, the Chinese characters along with translations of their texts, are full of fascinating material which can help one better appreciate more broadly Chinese art. Josh Yiu's essay on Wen Zhenming's poem scroll [Fig. 13 above] offers many insights into the importance of calligraphy in Chinese culture. Yiu's essay on the 2009 couplet by the innovative contemporary artist Xu Bing [Fig. 14 above] offers a fascinating account of the creation of this bold calligraphic piece. Another of the essays which struck me for its personal note, combined with scholarly detachment, is James Cahill's, to which I referred earlier, discussing Shao Mi's album "Landscape of Dreams" [Fig. 12 above].

There has been little time yet for users to take up the offer of interacting with SAM via this catalog and posting comments. I have already sent some suggestions to the museum staff (outside of the format of the catalog) regarding possible fixes for a few glitches, and

they have been very responsive. One desideratum here would be for them to obtain permissions to use or link to larger images of the paintings cited for comparison in the essays. Over time, I assume, that will become possible. In general, one of the as yet too rare features of museum collection



Fig. 26. "A branch of the cold season," by Yang Hui 楊輝, ca. 1440. Ink on paper. Overall: 30 ⁵/₁₆ x 56 ¹/₁₆ in. (77 x 142.4 cm); image: 12 ³/₁₆ x 25 in. (30.9 x 63.5 cm). Seattle Art Museum, Eugene Fuller Memorial Collection, 51.132. Photograph © Seattle Art Museum.

catalogs is cross-referencing and linking to examples in other collections. The beginning made here should inspire others. As should this catalog project as a whole. This clearly has to be the wave of the future into which more museums should move to make their collections accessible.

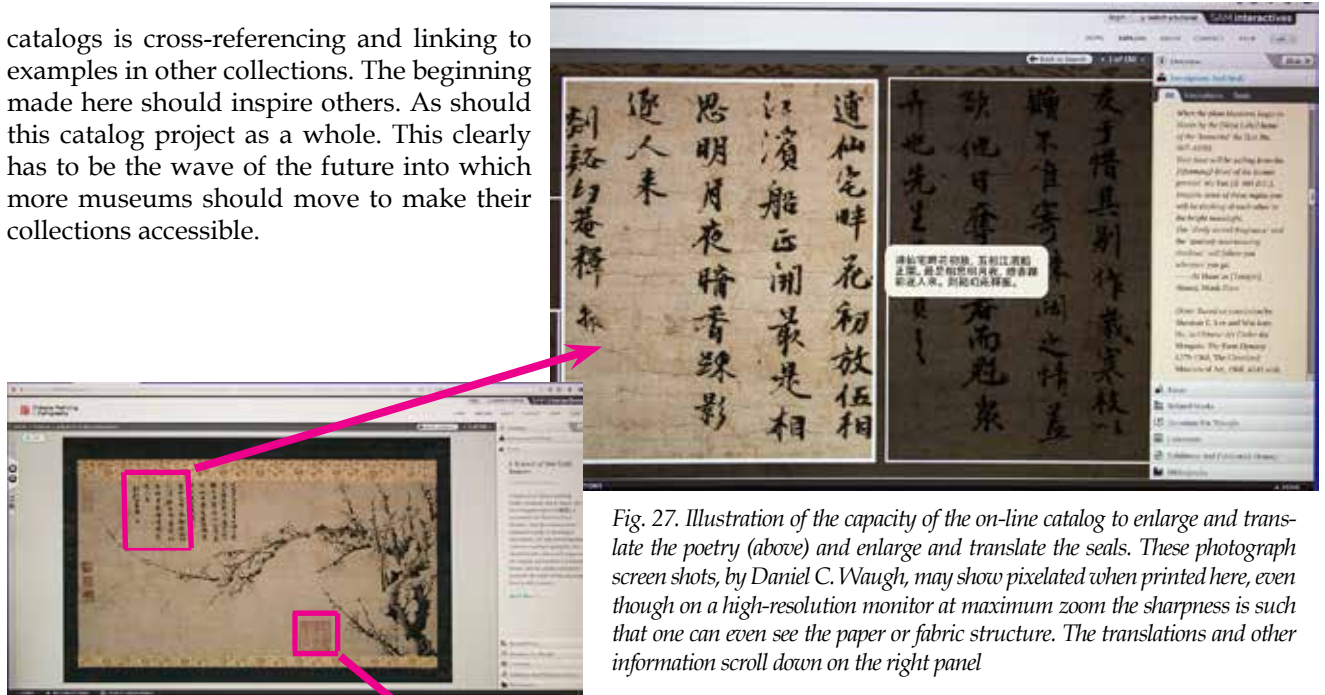


Fig. 27. Illustration of the capacity of the on-line catalog to enlarge and translate the poetry (above) and enlarge and translate the seals. These photograph screen shots, by Daniel C. Waugh, may show pixelated when printed here, even though on a high-resolution monitor at maximum zoom the sharpness is such that one can even see the paper or fabric structure. The translations and other information scroll down on the right panel

Fig. 28 (below). A photograph screen shot at maximum zoom showing detail from the painting of the scholar gazing at the moon (Fig. 10 above; Eugene Fuller Memorial Collection, 36.12).



It would be nice to be able to lavish similar praise on the SAM website as an access point to other parts of the Chinese collection. The website has recently been redesigned, and work on it is ongoing, which means that the comments which follow here undoubtedly will soon be dated. At least as of this writing, there is still much to be done before the Seattle collection is fully available and easily searchable on-line. These remarks are intended to present a kind of “user’s perspective” as of the end of 2014, one which may say as much about the user as about the website itself.⁷

The “Collections” web page by department includes a link to Asian Art, where there are relatively few highlighted objects on the page. Only 14 of these are from the Chinese collection, and very few of those are items which are currently on display in the museum. It seems in fact that the indication of whether any object listed in the online database is on display is not being kept up to date (case in point, Doug Aitken’s “Mirror” installation on the outside of the new SAM wing). While the arrangement of the tiles in the display groups them alphabetically by the rubric for “people” (Chinese, Japanese, etc.), it would have been good to have distinct specific pages for each of those sub-categories. That then would allow for expanding the selection of highlighted works without requiring the user to do excessive scrolling to pick an object. In clicking on any of these tiles, the user brings up a separate page, containing one or more images. None are enlargeable, which is unfortunate, though some offer close-ups of detail. Are the main images anywhere near large enough? – the Freer and Sackler Galleries in D.C. are poised to make available their entire collection in high resolution downloadable images, and they are not unique in this. Included on the SAM website are outdated photos from the museum archive that are inferior to the newer ones and might well have been dropped. The standard for verbal descriptions is a usually brief, and if so, not always very informative paragraph. For many interesting objects in the collection (e.g., the early Chinese bronzes), as yet there are no descriptive paragraphs at all.

When I realized that the limited array of “highlight” objects was not going to get me to other parts of the Chinese collection (aside from the thorough coverage in the new online catalog of the paintings discussed above), I tried various search strategies using the “Search Collection” link. Could I easily locate “Chinese blue-and-white porcelain” or “Tomb figurines,” since both categories include items of interest for the history of the silk roads? While part of the problem was the learning curve for a new user, I concluded that the search mechanism may still need of a lot of work. The “thesaurus” that would allow one to figure out what term to use for certain categories is appar-

ently still not in place; it seems likely that much more needs to be done to equip the system to handle alternative designations that a casual user might put into the quick search box. The most refined chronological divisions under dynasties generally are problematic, especially since datings by dynasty are so problematic to begin with and because the descriptive verbiage in the captioning may not necessarily correspond to the category breakdown offered in the search tool. “Porcelain” as a search term may not bring up all that is captioned as porcelain. “Earthenware” is a useful term, but when should one apply it under “material” instead of just doing a more general search under the “classification” of “ceramic”? Is there any consistent idea of what is a “vessel” as opposed to a “dish” or “bowl”? The country listings lack “China” (!); so the way to get Chinese artefacts is to insert “Chinese” as the supplementary search term under the rubric “people.” I tried several different ways to bring up the link to the page about my favorite figurine of the wine merchant, but he did not always appear when I would have expected to find him. The most general searches are likely to bring up the most options. E.g., just look for works attributed to the “Tang Dynasty,” or do a query for the “classification” of “bronzes” and add the supplementary criterion, “Chinese” – which then brings up an impressive number of items, more than I had been aware the collection holds.

Clearly some of these problems can be at least mitigated if there would be an explanatory page for the search categories being offered and a more detailed indication of search strategies. But I wonder if the problems may lie deeper in the coding for the objects or the search algorithms. There is certainly some inconsistency in captions, where I assume for each item a term has been entered in the appropriate line on a spread-sheet that then provides a searchable file. I would not suggest that the problems I encountered here are unique, but at least some other museums may have figured out some solutions. In sum, at least for now it takes a lot of work and guessing to locate on-line what in fact seems to be a quite extensive cataloguing of the Chinese collection in Seattle (note, however, many of the items listed as yet lack photos or any kind of meaningful description).

Beyond a mere catalog description with a short paragraph, what else might one hope *eventually* to find on a good web page for any object? I would think we need some linked introductory essays (e.g., one on calligraphy, one on the different types of ritual bronzes) and more comparative examples. Should one happen to stumble on the page provided for the wonderful Yuan blue-and-white charger discussed earlier, one finds in fact a number of complementary, informative paragraphs and some comparative photos. That page as it



Fig. 29. The display of many of Richard Fuller's snuff bottles, in the Seattle Asian Art Museum. Photograph by Daniel C. Waugh.

stands is where the user interested in blue-and-white might well start. But how is he or she to know? If a visitor to Seattle wanted to see its good collection of Asian ceramics he or she should also be aware that what is displayed, but a fraction of the whole, is divided between SAAM and a porcelain room (mainly focused from the European perspective) in the downtown museum. It is in the latter that some of the examples of "kraack" wares, the export blue-and-white of the late Ming period, are to be found. One can, at least, download a pdf file on the porcelain room ahead of a visit, in order to see exactly what is in it.⁸ Apart from a rather extensive display of Richard Fuller's snuff bottles in SAAM [Fig. 29], I think that porcelain room is the closest thing we have here to a "study collection." One specifically for Chinese ceramics would be highly desirable.

On a very few of the caption pages for individual objects, along with bibliographic references, are links to explanatory pages on other museums' websites. So far this barely hints at what might be possible. In one of the galleries at SAAM, which currently displays a handful of the early Chinese bronzes, there is an interactive monitor where one can follow the process of how a bronze was cast. This was created by the Princeton Art Museum <<http://etcweb.princeton.edu/asianart/interactives/bronze/bronze.html>>. A link to this resource could be added in the on-line catalog pages for Seattle's Chinese bronzes. Princeton has another page with a similar interactive learning tool for making a Cizhou ceramic vessel <<http://etcweb.princeton.edu/asianart/interactives/ceramics/ceramics.html>>, which would be good to connect somehow with the several fine examples in Seattle.

There have to be numerous possibilities here for reaching out to other museums and sharing the ed-

ucational resources which many of them have created. A substantial annotated listing of portals to major internet resources can in fact be found linked to the SAM's "Programs and Learning" pages <<http://www.seattleartmuseum.org/programs-and-learning/libraries-and-resources/online-resources>>. What I have in mind here as a desideratum though is the specific kinds of focused learning pages, often interactive, which naturally take a huge amount of time to produce. Unless one is provided with direct

links to them where they relate to a given object in the collection, one may not be aware they exist.

SAM has begun to move in this direction. In its small Islamic exhibit in the downtown museum, there is a little computerized set of pages to introduce visitors to Islamic art. All that material seems to have made it into the online catalog, including the audio recordings of a curator discussing a particular topic. When SAM mounted in the downtown museum a beautifully curated exhibition ("Luminous") of its best treasures of Asian art after they had returned from touring in Japan, I was very impressed by the computerized display which had been created to explain the extraordinary Japanese "Deer Scroll" in the Seattle collection. That interactive display offers information about poets, translations of the poems, the ability to zoom in to look at details, etc. (that is, very like what one can do in the new on-line catalog of painting). The "Deer Scroll" feature is available on the SAM website now and linked on the collections page for the scroll <http://www1.seattleartmuseum.org/exhibit/interactives/deerscroll/webSAM_deer.swf>. Another on-line resource, accessible from "Collections Resources" is pdf files of the papers given at a symposium on "Masterpieces of Japanese Painting." There is also supposed to be an interactive catalog, "Discovering Buddhist Art—Seeking the Sublime." but the link to it seems to be dead.

An important part of Mimi Gates's legacy is the Gardner Center for Asian Art and Ideas at SAAM, established at the time of her retirement, which supports an ambitious array of public education programs. It has forged close relationships with the relevant academic programs at the University of Washington and has been expanding considerably on an earlier legacy that dates back to the time of Richard Fuller, when he

would give public lectures on Seattle's Asian art. Any good museum nowadays takes its educational mission seriously, something that arguably was always foremost in Fuller's mind.

I can recall participating several decades ago in a grant-funded NEH program for teachers involving University of Washington outreach programs and SAM that focused on "objects of trade." My wife still has vivid memories of a workshop allowing participants to learn about Chinese ceramics and actually handle some of the objects in the collection. Apart from a regular array of films and performances ranging from the Southeast Asian version of "The Vagina Monologues" to traditional Afghan music, one of the star attractions of the Gardner Center now is its "Saturday University" lectures, each series exploring a broadly-based theme that generally will connect historic cultural traditions with the present. One that I was involved in on Central Asia attracted an overflow audience of hundreds. The most recent one, which filled every week the 200-seat auditorium, explored science and technology in East Asia. Christopher Cullen of the Needham Institute in Cambridge introduced the series and played a key role in the selection of topics and speakers.

Into the 21st century

I have to wonder a bit whether Richard Fuller, whose view of Chinese art shaped the first decades of SAM, would be comfortable with the 21st-century museum which has grown out of those ambitious beginnings. He probably would rue the fact that the "spirit way" sculptures he installed to lure the public into his new museum have now been moved indoors in an infamous "stairway to nowhere" that Venturi and Associates designed for the new downtown museum building that opened in 1991 [Fig. 30].⁹ With the further expansion of the downtown museum into the ad-



joining modern office tower in 2007, the main entrance being in the new wing – a move that was essential to SAM's future – both staircase (rightfully) and Chinese sculptures (sadly) languish largely unnoticed.⁹ On the other hand, the idea of luring the public to experience art by bringing art to the public is certainly in accord with Fuller's vision, even if now what one sees on the street is Jonathan Borovsky's huge "Hammering Man" sculpture with its motorized arm and Doug Aitkin's recently installed digital display, "Mirror," that wraps around part of the new wing of the museum. Fuller might have welcomed this as necessary for the greater good of a successful public museum.

As the neighboring Seattle Symphony has also determined, to bring in new audiences seems to require an emphasis on the modern and postmodern. Certainly this message is reinforced in the lobby of the new SAM, where one stands, somewhat nervously, under Cai Guo-Qiang's 蔡国强 eye-catching "Inopportune: Stage One" 2004, "a large-scale installation work consisting of a meticulous arrangement of life-size cars and multichannel tubes that seem to blow up in sequence, symbolizing a series of car explosions." Indeed, work by modern Chinese artists occupies an important place in the museum: one room in SAAM has been featuring Ai Weiwei's 艾未未 "Colored Vases" (2010), and the larger gallery that at one time held Fuller's collection of *mingqi*, hosted a temporary exhibit of Chen Shao-xiong's 陈劭雄 "Ink, History, Media," a captivating display of video and ink drawings created from historic photos. The southern galleries of SAAM currently host the work of the Japanese Neo-Pop artist who goes by the professional name of Mr., timed presumably to coordinate with the downtown museum's "Pop Departures" exhibit. I have not yet had time to explore a new exhibit on at SAAM from late December until mid-June in 2015: "Conceal/Reveal: Making Meaning in Chinese Art." It promises to connect older and newer traditions.

This new emphasis on the modern clearly strains the existing gallery space, although fortunately many of the best items in the older part of the Chinese collection (in the first instance, ones acquired by Fuller) are still to be seen, in the company of some outstanding similar works from private collections that one can hope eventually will be donated to the museum. Over the last year or two, for example, there has been a lovely selection of celadons, including some of

Fig. 30. The "grand staircase" (a.k.a. "Art Ladder") in the Venturi wing of SAM, the statues having been moved from in front of the original SAM building in Volunteer Park. The camels are out of sight farther up the stairs. Photo by Joe Mabel. Source: <http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/4/4e/SAM_Art_Ladder_02.jpg>.



dramatic size. It is not as though the historic core of the Seattle collection is really being consigned to the dustheap of history. Josh Yiu's book was published in conjunction with a like-named exhibition in SAAM that highlighted Fuller's legacy. "Luminous" <<http://www1.seattleartmuseum.org/luminous/>>, one of the best recent exhibitions held in the large galleries of the downtown museum, displayed SAM's masterpieces of Asian art after they had returned from a successful tour in Japan [Fig. 31]. The exhibition included an inspired installation commissioned from contemporary artist Do Ho Suh <<http://www1.seattleartmuseum.org/luminous/doho.html>>, through which the visitor passed to be met by the remarkable early 17th-century Japanese painted screens depicting "Crows," yet another of Richard Fuller's important acquisitions. Thus one could experience what was expressed in Xu Bing's couplet presented to Mimi Gates on her retirement: "Learning from the past, Moving forward in time" (or its reverse: "Learning from the present, moving backward in time"?).

Yet one can dream of the day when one of Seattle's philanthropically generous moguls, far better heeled than Richard Fuller ever was, would allocate even a fraction as much for Asian art in the city as for, say, basic science research or, heaven help us, a professional sport franchise. A visionary donation might make possible an addition to SAAM re-

Fig. 31. Images from SAM's "Luminous" exhibition. Left to right: In the foreground of a display of Buddhist sculpted heads, a late 7th-early 8th-century (Tang period) head of a Buddha (Eugene Fuller Memorial Collection, 39.29); detail from a statue of a seated Guanyin, 10th-late 13th century (Song period) (Eugene Fuller Memorial Collection, 35.17); a standing Bodhisattva, early 8th century (Tang period) (Eugene Fuller Memorial Collection 34.64). Photographs by Daniel C. Waugh.

spectful of the existing architecture and its surrounding park, a space that then could allow much more of the Asian collections to be available to visitors on a permanent basis. After all, we can continue to be inspired by the "intangible aesthetic return" of the objects Fuller acquired, such as this evocative dry lacquer head of a luohan [Fig. 32], which I first saw years ago in the basement storage rooms but to our good fortune is currently on display. So many of these works invite us to return and contemplate them anew on every visit.

-- Daniel C. Waugh
University of Washington (Seattle)



Fig. 32. Head of a Luohan, 10th-12th century (Song period). Dry lacquer and glass. H: 17 1/4 in. Eugene Fuller Memorial Collection 40.20. Photograph by Daniel C. Waugh.

Notes

1. His collection of snuff bottles that remain in the museum is still recognized as being a very important one. See Fig. 29.
2. Note that the ewer is green, even if Yiu's book, Fig. 12, p. 32, depicts it as gray.
3. The Fuller legacy in the collections is denoted under two important rubrics. His own collection and the purchases for the museum which grew it bear not his name but rather that of his father: "The Eugene Fuller Memorial Collection." An endowment in his mother's name is "The Margaret E. Fuller Purchase Fund."
4. See his essay on the album which was commissioned for the on-line catalog of the Seattle paintings.
5. Both the British Museum and the Victoria and Albert in London have quite a few pieces of Tang silver, but of different forms or techniques. A dish in the Musée Guimet is very similar to one of the Seattle dishes. One of the more spectacular collections of Tang precious metalwork was auctioned off at Sotheby's in May 2008, with a number of the best pieces being bought for a museum in Qatar. The item most similar to Fuller's, was a covered dish bought by the famed London dealer Giuseppe Eskenazi for nearly 1.6 million British pounds. It is lot 64 and may be viewed on-line <<http://www.sothebys.com/en/auctions/ecatalogue/2008/masterpieces-of-chinese-precious-metalwork-early-gold-and-silver-early-chinese-white-green-and-black-ware-l08211/lot.64.html>>. For a somewhat sensationalized news account of the sale, see Suren Melikian, "Whiff of mystery hangs over sale of China objects," *The New York Times*, May 23, 2008 <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/05/24/arts/24iht-melik24.1.13157032.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0>, accessed 3 December 2014.
6. The rareness of the Seattle dish is indicated by the fact that in the huge collection of the British Museum, there is appar-

ently only one roughly analogous example of a Yuan-era blue-and-white porcelain with the raised flowers in the design (Museum no. 1951.1012.1). The famous collection of Safavid Shah Abbas at Ardebil had a dish with a nearly identical design in the outer rings (including the raised floral images) but a central design that only very selectively replicates a motif found on the dish in Seattle. The Topkapi Saray collection in Istanbul, has a dish with a much more closely related design in the center, but which otherwise is different. The Ardebil and Topkapi dishes are nos. A.15 and T.15 respectively in T. Misugi, *Chinese Porcelain Collections in the Near East: Topkapi and Ardebil*, 3 vols. (Hong Kong: Hong Kong Univ. Pr., 1981).

7. I should also qualify my remarks by stressing that I have accessed the web pages only using a desktop computer with a mouse. I assume the redesign of the website in part is to accommodate access by mobile and other touch-screen devices.

8. The guide to the Wyckoff porcelain gallery is <http://www.seattleartmuseum.org/Documents/SAMPorcelain-Guide_4mg.pdf>. An excellent overview of porcelain, drawing extensively on Seattle's collections, is Julie Emerson, Jennifer Chen, and Mimi Gardner Gates, *Porcelain Stories: From China to Europe* (Seattle: Seattle Art Museum in association with University of Washington Press, 2000).

9. The construction of the downtown building was fraught with controversy, as the available site and funding required considerable revision and downsizing of the original architectural plans. In effect, Venturi re-cycled his design for the Sainsbury wing of the National Gallery in London, where the "grand staircase" actually connects in a meaningful way to both the older building and the new annex. The expansion of SAM has also included the creation of a beautifully situated outdoor sculpture park overlooking Puget Sound and the Olympic Mountains.

PLATE X

Waugh, "Arts of China," p. 138.



Vase. Chinese, late 16th – early 17th century. Porcelain with molded and underglaze-blue decorations. 22 ¹/₂ x 9 ³/₄ in. (57.2 x 24.77 cm). Seattle Art Museum, Eugene Fuller Memorial Collection, 54.120.

Photograph © Seattle Art Museum



Tomb attendant. Chinese, late 7th century. Earthenware with glaze, gilt, and paint. 27 ¹/₂ x 11 x 10 ⁵/₈ in. (69.85 x 27.94 x 26.99 cm). Seattle Art Museum, Eugene Fuller Memorial Collection, 35.6.

Photograph © Seattle Art Museum

PLATE XI

Waugh, "Arts of China," p. 140.



Bed curtains, Chinese, 1735–1796 (Qianlong period). Silk and gold thread, 107 x 70 ³/₄ in. (266.7 x 179.71 cm). Seattle Art Museum, Eugene Fuller Memorial Collection, 33.159.2.

Photograph © Seattle Art Museum

PLATE XII

Waugh, "Arts of China," pp. 142, 144.



(top) Painted bowl, Chinese, 3rd century BCE. Wood with lacquer, 10 x 2 ⁷/₁₆ in. (25.4 x 6.19 cm). Seattle Art Museum, Eugene Fuller Memorial Collection, 51.118.

(bottom) Cup, Chinese, late 7th to early 8th century. Silver, with chased patterns of lotus, vines, and birds. H: 2.5 in. (6.3 cm.); D: 3 in. (7.62 cm). Seattle Art Museum, Eugene Fuller Memorial Collection, 42.5.

Photographs © Seattle Art Museum

PLATE XIII

Waugh, "Arts of China," pp. 141, 146.



(top) "Landscape of dreams," by Shao Mi 邵彌, 1638. One of ten album leaves: ink and color on paper. Overall: 11 ⁷/₁₆ x 17 in. (29 x 43.2 cm). Seattle Art Museum, Eugene Fuller Memorial Collection, 70.18.2.

(bottom) "A branch of the cold season," by Yang Hui 楊輝, ca. 1440. Ink on paper. Overall: 30 ³/₁₆ x 56 ¹/₁₆ in. (77 x 142.4 cm); image: 12 ³/₁₆ x 25 in. (30.9 x 63.5 cm). Seattle Art Museum, Eugene Fuller Memorial Collection, 51.132.

Photographs © Seattle Art Museum