BRINGING “CULTURE” TO CLEVELAND: EAST ASIAN ART, SYMPATHETIC APPROPRIATION, AND THE CLEVELAND MUSEUM OF ART, 1914-1930

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BRINGING “CULTURE” TO CLEVELAND: EAST ASIAN ART, SYMPATHETIC APPROPRIATION, AND THE CLEVELAND MUSEUM OF ART, 1914-1930

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Dissertation

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ABSTRACT

In the early twentieth century, staff members at the new Cleveland Museum of Art worked to build a well-balanced, cosmopolitan collection of art objects and antiquities from global sources. While objects from Europe were certainly prized, this dissertation examines the unusual preoccupation of the museum’s first director, Frederic Allen Whiting, and first Curator of Oriental Art, J. Arthur MacLean, with sourcing, acquiring, and placing on display the very best examples of art objects and antiquities from China, Japan, and Korea. I argue that these individuals were not motivated by Orientalist fervor to acquire fine examples of East Asian material culture; instead, by engaging in what I call sympathetic appropriation, objects from Asia were carefully displayed in Cleveland’s new museum, where they might serve a broad educational function. These pieces retained their existent cultural cachet even after being placed on display in Cleveland’s museum.

Following a historiographical discussion in the Introduction, my argument unfolds over five chapters and a Conclusion. In Chapter One I discuss the construction of the Cleveland Museum of Art vis-à-vis other large, urbane American museums, placing special emphasis upon the work of the museum’s first Director and Curators to distinguish Cleveland’s museum from peer institutions on the East Coast. Chapter Two focuses upon the impact of the American Arts and Crafts Movement on processes of
collection at the museum. In Chapter Three I examine the motivations that inspired staff at the Cleveland Museum of Art to pay special attention to objects from East Asia. Chapter Four examines the museum’s “Oriental Expedition” to Asia, led by the scholar-explorer Langdon Warner. In Chapter Five I discuss the perceived educational value of Asian art as displayed in Cleveland’s museum.

An analysis of the processes of acquisition employed by staff members at the Cleveland Museum of Art adds complexity to the existent historiography on collecting and appropriation in American museums. Additionally, this dissertation’s examination of the methods of acquisition of East Asian material culture at the Cleveland Museum of Art serves as an excellent case study for analyzing collecting practices at smaller regional American museums in the early twentieth century.
DEDICATION

To Tim, my family, and all those who came before… this is for you.
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Cleveland, Ohio and the Cleveland Museum of Art do not immediately come to
mind when considering the prevalence of Asian art and antiquities in museums in the
United States. One might first think of the Museum of Fine Arts, in Boston, New York
City’s Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Art Institute of Chicago, or the Freer and
Sackler Galleries located on the Mall in Washington, D.C. The curators at the Museum
of Fine Arts and the Metropolitan Museum of Art, starting in the early and middle
nineteenth century, acquired, cataloged, and displayed some of the finest examples of
East Asian art and antiquities available outside of China and Japan. By the turn of the
twentieth century, Charles Lang Freer, Detroit railroad industrialist, determined that the
best home for his extensive collection of East Asian art and artifacts would be a national
museum, to be associated with the venerable Smithsonian Institution in Washington,
DC.1

The development of such fine, urban art museums on the Eastern coast of the
United States is perhaps unsurprising, given the relative wealth and perceived
sophistication of these large urban centers. Coastal cities, like Boston and New York,

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also were important economic centers in the burgeoning global trade of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.\(^2\) The relative cosmopolitanism of these port cities resulted in the popularization of Chinese export goods among regional consumers. These commodities first found their way to North America via the east coast ‘China Trade.’ Export wares, including goods made of porcelain and silver, were produced specifically for this burgeoning market and were some of the first examples of readily accessible Chinese commodities to arrive in North America. Most early export wares featured European or American figures liked Winged Liberty, western-style ships, or idyllic romantic scenes. Later goods produced in China for export were produced in the “Chinese” style, featuring imagery uncommon in American and European decorative arts. By decorating the home with these “Chinese” stylistic elements, called \textit{chinoiserie}, an individual could present him-or herself as a participant in this broader global, and cosmopolitan, system of exchange.\(^3\) This style was still, of course, a construct, and was produced mainly to cater to foreign expectation, rather than accurately reflect Chinese stylistic sensibilities. Nonetheless, the popularization of \textit{chinoiserie} goods did stimulate public interest in Asia amongst nineteenth and early twentieth century Americans. Its popularity “signal[ed]” a “self-conscious embrace of difference … and variety through taste.”\(^4\) Through the nineteenth century, public interest in and appropriation of \textit{chinoiserie} transitioned from mere consumption to an expanded desire to better


\(^4\) Sloboda, 10.
understand Asia through goods produced there, by and for Asian consumers. The new focus on the necessity of possessing ‘authentic’ art objects and antiquities spurred and supported efforts by directors and curators at American art museums to build collections that referenced the cosmopolitan nature of the cities they served. As such, in the late nineteenth century, art museums emerged in major American cities; some of the largest institutions developed in Boston, Massachusetts (incorporated in 1870), New York, New York (incorporated in 1870), and Chicago, Illinois (incorporated in 1879).

Yet smaller museums also emerged in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in cities throughout the Midwestern United States; of these, the new art museum in Cleveland (incorporated in 1913), with its peculiar emphasis upon building a strong and varied collection of ‘Oriental’ art, makes for an excellent case study of the myriad ways that art objects and antiquities from diverse global sources could augment and serve a homegrown civilizing mission. Beginning in the early twentieth century, in Cleveland, a relatively young industrial center located in the Midwestern United States, a newly christened art museum emerged; one which invested heavily upon the acquisition, study and display of Asian antiquities and objets d’art. These objects would, in the minds of both curators and the museum’s first Director Frederic A. Whiting, prove instrumental in the successful realization of the goals of the “civilizing mission” directed at the lower-class urban denizens of the city of Cleveland. They would likewise enhance and elevate the prestige of both the museum, and by default, the city-at-large.

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Local advocacy for the construction of a museum began in the late nineteenth century. Between “1881 and 1890 three” local notables, including Hinman Hurlbut, Horace Kelley, and John Huntington, each set aside bequests for the construction of an art museum in the city of Cleveland, itself a city economically reliant on heavy industry, with a large immigrant population.\textsuperscript{6} J. H. Wade, the grandson of Jeptha Wade donated land for construction of the new museum, so that the structure ultimately sat in the suburban enclave of Wade Park.\textsuperscript{7} Construction commenced in 1913, and, in December of that year, Frederic Allen Whiting was appointed the first Director of the new Cleveland Museum of Art.\textsuperscript{8} Whiting’s background in the burgeoning Arts and Crafts movement informed his strategies for building a comprehensive collection of high quality art objects and antiquities from around the world. Assisting him in this endeavor was J. Arthur MacLean, first Curator of Oriental Art at the museum. Whiting emphasized acquiring objects of both aesthetic and historical appeal; in this way, industrially-employed Clevelanders who visited the museum could expect to experience examples of fine craftsmanship. MacLean focused more on the nascent historical-civilizational pedigree attached to art objects and antiquities.

Taken together, their respective visions helped to guide the early processes of acquisition at the Cleveland Museum of Art, where art objects and antiquities from around the world were acquired for public consumption. Of particular interest here,


\textsuperscript{7} Turner, 2.

\textsuperscript{8} Turner, 4.
however, is the emphasis that Whiting and MacLean placed upon building a strong ‘Oriental’ art collection, alongside examples of European and American art, in the relatively small, urban, Midwestern Cleveland Museum of Art. Whiting believed that there were two types of museums – large institutions, like those at Boston and New York, that possessed “rich … collections” of “Oriental” and “Egyptian” art, respectively.  

He also discussed smaller museums, like those located in “Pittsburgh, Buffalo, Chicago, Toledo, St. Louis, Cincinnati, and Indianapolis,” that possessed “permanent collections of varying importance” but attracted the public “largely through a continuous series of temporary exhibitions of works by modern artists.” Whiting sought to realize a “happy medium” between these polarities in Cleveland. As Evan Turner indicates, Whiting “clearly viewed Cleveland as belonging to the second group of museums,” but he likely “yearned to associate it with the first.” As such, Whiting, in his tenure as Director, sought to produce, in Cleveland, an institution with a “distinct individuality among museums throughout the world,” stating that he and his team “should, at the outset, determine some branch of art which is not adequately represented in any American Museum, selecting if possible a field in which a sufficient collection could be secured without too large an expenditure of time and money.” That distinguishing field was, ultimately, Asian art.

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10 Frederic Allen Whiting quoted in Turner, 5.
11 Ibid.
12 Turner, 5.
13 Frederic Allen Whiting, quoted in Turner, 5.
While Whiting was primarily concerned with quality and value, he was, simultaneously, keenly aware of the cultural cachet that a fine Oriental art collection would entrench in Cleveland. Writing to Denman Ross, a trustee at Boston’s Museum of Fine Arts, Whiting elaborated upon the important role that Asian art objects and antiquities would play in Cleveland’s new museum. Whiting indicated that “the most likely field for the important department which will give the Museum its individual character is China. … I mention China because I have a feeling that within a few years the government is likely to put sever restrictions on the exportation of art objects from China and it seems to me that if we could concentrate our purchase in this field, that we might secure more important collections…”

MacLean tended to support and expand upon these views. In his tenure as Curator of Oriental Art he regularly published celebratory missives in the museum’s Bulletin introducing readers to newly acquired art objects and antiquities from Asia. He believed that Cleveland’s museum needed to be a “well balanced one,” and that this balance could be achieved through working to “interest the people of Cleveland in Oriental things as well as Oxidental [sic] things.”

MacLean believed that “magnificent pieces” of Asian art could help Clevelanders “become impressed with the importance of this foreign art, and on account of the object being first class, large, and therefore impressive, they would find little difficulty in accepting the importance and excellence of the art about which they know so little.”

These ideals


16 Ibid.
gained further support and legitimacy from Langdon Warner, who served as a museum adjunct and, ultimately, leader of the museum’s 1916 “Oriental Expedition” (discussed specifically in Chapter Five).

These sorts of desires, focusing upon constructing an art museum for the benefit of the citizens of Cleveland, were not unique; wealthy cities like Boston and New York supported the construction of fine public institutions in the late nineteenth century also. The purpose of these earlier art museums was clear: they would have an educational end, would possess a “moral mission,” and would “foster national pride and prestige” through the acquisition of myriad art objects from around the world. Early museums, like New York’s Metropolitan Museum of Art and Boston’s Museum of Fine Arts sought to enhance public appreciation of the aesthetically appealing through copious collection and display of objects. This approach to creating a collection rested on the assumption that possession of an object meant having fundamental knowledge about that object; effectively, “to own was to know.” This kind of acquisition-based collection was directly related to the spread of Europeans and Americans around the world in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Imperialist expansion was instrumental in providing material fodder for European, and later American museums to display. Access to these objects likewise fueled European and American perceptions of foreign states. Cleveland may seem far removed from the broader program of “Western” imperialism engaged in at the turn of the twentieth century. However, in the first decade of its

17 Einreinhofer, 33.

existence, the curators of the Cleveland Museum of Art favored and advocated for the acquisition of art objects and antiquities from East Asian nations, especially pieces originating in China, Japan, and Korea. By owning these objects, the museum was able to distinguish itself from competitors located in both similarly sized Midwestern cities, and larger coastal urban centers like New York and Boston. Through this purposeful program of acquisition and display, the curators and director of the Cleveland Museum of Art exercised a form of power which was very much informed by and related to global imperialism.

East Asian art objects and antiquities played a central role in the Cleveland Museum of Art’s formative period (1914-1930). By acquiring these pieces, the museum’s first director, Frederic A. Whiting, and first Curator of Oriental Art, J. Arthur MacLean, sought to distinguish the new museum from larger, wealthier competitors, while still fulfilling the goals of the museum’s more civically-minded patrons. These goals included the purposeful acquisition of East Asian antiquities and art objects of high quality, the education of members of the viewing public through access and display of these pieces, and the implementation of a sense of civic pride. In each situation, the objects themselves were of central importance. As the museum’s leaders saw things, only by purchasing, organizing, and appropriating the historical and civilizational pedigrees of these pieces could Cleveland become a more distinguished, and culturally distinctive, urban area. It is not that these art objects and antiquities were somehow more important in the minds of Whiting and his contemporaries than, say, art objects and antiquities from European nations; instead, their careful acquisition illustrated the elite
and popular desire at the turn of the 20th century to obtain and display decorative objects from China, Japan and Korea.

This glamorization of East Asia’s decorative objects occurred as a byproduct of elite consumption of art objects and antiquities from the region and the production and dissemination of inexpensive export objects and trinkets for popular consumption. Wealthy collectors prominently displayed authentic East Asian items in their homes; later, middle- and lower-class Americans collected facsimiles and displayed them in “cosey corners,” ostensibly to illustrate the “cosmopolitanism” of the home.19 Decorative objects that originated in China, Japan and Korea represented, for many Americans, “tradition” and the “sincerity” of the individual who produced a given object.20 These objects, when placed on display, could serve as suitable, tangible proxies for their regions of origin, while simultaneously illustrating the high level of cultural achievement of the country of production. As David Porter indicates in Ideographia, China, prior to the “humiliations” dealt by European imperialists in the late nineteenth century, “occupi[ed] a distinctive place in the geographical imagination” of Europeans.21 In a “marked contrast to the “primitive” cultures of sub-Saharan Africa and the Americas or to the legendary fallen empires of Egypt, Mexico, and Peru, China was acknowledged the seat

19 For more on “cosey corners” and popular decorating with authentic and popular objects from Asia, see Kristin L. Hoganson, Consumer’s Imperium: The Global Production of American Domesticity, 1865-1920 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 33.


of a great and ancient civilization whose cultural achievements not only reached back four thousand years but also continued to rival those of Europe into the current age.”

In this way, Porter acknowledged that China “stood alone, then, on the oriental horizon as a civilization sufficiently well known and admired to sustain a richly varied array of interpretations and responses” by foreigners. John M. Hobson, in his The Eastern Origins of Western Civilisation, likewise argued that the so-called “West” only “got over the line into modernity because it was helped by the diffusion and appropriation of more advanced Eastern … resources.” While these “resources” were overwhelmingly related to technological innovations, they also included elements of material culture and artistic production. Hobson refers to this regular, sustained system of cultural appropriation as enabling the production of the “oriental West.”

Further, for American collectors from varied economic backgrounds, objects and antiquities from China, Japan and Korea were inherently educational in nature and function – specifically, their acquisition and careful organization within the home aided in the enhancement of the “aesthetic education” of the family unit. Such trends permitted Americans to value and appreciate the historical and civilizational achievements of China and Japan, represented tangibly by fine specimens of art objects

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22 Porter, 2-3. Italics mine.

23 Porter, 3. Italics mine.


25 Hobson, 295.

26 Porter, 129.
and antiquities from East Asia (or for the less affluent, inexpensive export products),
while still effectively denigrating *individuals* who, because of displacement or voluntary
immigration, found themselves living and working in American cities.

Many scholars, including John Kuo Wei Tchen, have discussed the ethnocentric
and racist views that were applied to people from East Asia by Americans in the late
nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, as represented in popular contemporary
discourses.\(^{27}\) Racist stereotyping of Asians occurred more regularly in the wake of
increased Asian migration to North America in the nineteenth and early twentieth
centuries. Asian men were associated with opium consumption; Asian women were
“curiosities” with bound feet.\(^{28}\) Emergent “Chinatowns” were essentialized as sites of
“vice” and violence; these views were likewise linked to enduring stereotypes linking
Asians with “opium smoking.”\(^{29}\) Key as well were efforts by the United States
government to restrict Asian immigration via the medium of the 1882 Chinese Exclusion
Act.

However, there has been little study conducted of more sympathetic, positive, or
even envious views of East Asia, particularly in the wake of Edward Said’s seminal
*Orientalism*. An examination of the acquisition practices initiated at the Cleveland
Museum of Art, along with the views of Whiting, curators, and wealthy donors

\(^{27}\) John Kuo Wei Tchen, *New York Before Chinatown: Orientalism and the Shaping of American Culture

\(^{28}\) Tchen, 101.

\(^{29}\) Mary Ting Yi Lui, *The Chinatown Trunk Mystery: Murder, Miscegenation, and Other Dangerous
complicates the dominant historical view that American perceptions of East Asia in the early twentieth century were solely racist and adds nuance to the Saidian contention that, in general, the citizens of ‘Western’ nations viewed those from the ‘East’ through a lens of “distortion,” which rendered the latter as inferior or backward ‘others.’ Said’s analysis is not monolithic, and as such should not serve as an ideological given when examining cross cultural encounters between Asians and Americans. The construction of the “Orient” could produce both exotic fascination and anxiety in many Americans, especially among those who lived in crowded, dirty, growing cities. This anxiety possessed a dual nature; it could be racist and ethnocentric, yet simultaneously trigger feelings of civilizational inferiority among Euro-Americans when confronted with the rich collective histories and cultural achievements of the people of China, Japan and Korea. The acquisition and display of antiquities and art objects from East Asian nations by the director, curators, and trustees of the Cleveland Museum of Art illustrates the complexity of American perceptions and understandings of the nature of cultural sophistication.

While many Americans measured progress through industry and technological development, these were not the sole characteristics of civilizational greatness; cultural

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31 See Michael Adas, *Machines as the Measure of Men* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2014), xiv. Adas argues that Europeans tended to stress “differences in material culture to set themselves apart from, and at times above, the peoples they contacted overseas.” However, he likewise grants that “often the remarkable achievements of the societies they encountered deflated rather than enhanced European pretensions of preeminence.” Adas here hints at the anxieties that emerged as a result of effective colonial expansion; he also alludes to the reasons behind the collective European (and later American) fixation on industrial prowess. This was one way to assert civilizational authority when confronted with the achievements of stable, ancient societies like those that emerged in China.
development was likewise equally important. An examination of the processes of acquisition and display implemented in the Cleveland Museum of Art’s formative years functions as an excellent case study to further nuance the ways that concepts of ‘progress’ and cultural value were constructed in early twentieth century Cleveland. Said argues that European and American Orientalists viewed the essentialized “East” as a static and unchanging region\textsuperscript{32} when juxtaposed with the rapid pace of social change triggered by “Western” industrialization. However, anxieties and insecurities related to the perceived social and cultural instability caused by these sorts of changes still existed in the minds of many individuals. Encountering art objects and antiquities could assuage some of these fears, since art could symbolically reveal trans-cultural truths; such ideological links served as an expression of continuity and cultural inheritance.

Similar ideas regularly emerged in the public writings of the museum’s first Curator of Oriental Art, J. Arthur MacLean, who believed that displayed art objects and antiquities were capable of transmuting “universal” ideals.\textsuperscript{33} Writing in 1914 about a “fourteen hundred” year old Chinese Buddhist carving, MacLean stressed the quality of the carving, as well as the ability of the object to trigger an emotional response in contemporary viewers.\textsuperscript{34} Although the object’s “strangeness” might be “puzzling” to first-time viewers, MacLean argued that the same could be said for “Byzantine art,” …

\textsuperscript{32} Said, 208.


\textsuperscript{34} Ibid.
“or even, to the uninitiated, the paintings of the European primitives.”  

Engagement alone would allow viewers to appreciate the sculpture as a “masterpiece, even though it speaks in foreign terms.”  

Visitors would thus realize that a finely produced object (here a “Buddhist Trinity”) still retained the power to “enlighten … simply because its language becomes a universal one.”  

MacLean concluded by asserting that art objects and antiquities produced in Asia retained the ability to “reveal to us enlightened moments. May we become more and more familiar with them so that this seeming strangeness may become a thing of the past.”  

The city of Cleveland and its Museum of Art can together serve as an excellent case study to analyze this more nuanced form of Orientalism that developed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Cleveland became the nation's fifth largest city by 1920, possessing an ethnically diverse population of nearly 800,000. 

As a result of its rapid industrial development, the city drew thousands of job seeking migrants from rural domestic enclaves and new immigrants from rural regions in Southern and Eastern Europe. The city's elite, mainly native-born Euro-Americans whose heritage stemmed from Northern and Western Europe continued to dominate the power structure, but increasingly they relied on new immigrants for labor and, at least for Democrats, as a

35 Ibid.
36 Ibid.
37 Ibid.
38 Ibid., italics mine.
base for political power. Living, working, and encountering these new immigrants led to tension and anxiety among the members of Cleveland's Euro-American population. Internally, this could lead in different directions; for some, a call for reform and social welfare legislation, for others Americanization programs and in some circles, restrictions on immigration. It also resulted in Cleveland’s elite adopting a didactic stance towards the burgeoning population; social uplift could be realized through exposure to elements of high culture. In large urban areas on the East Coast, elites turned to the establishment of art and design schools; these ultimately transitioned into some of the best funded museums in the Nation by the early twentieth century. The curators at Boston’s Museum of Fine Arts, and New York’s Metropolitan Museum of Art early on worked to acquire fine examples of artwork; overwhelmingly, these collections were made up of objects from either Western Europe, or the Middle East and North Africa. When Cleveland’s political and social elites began pondering the benefits of building a similar institution locally, they needed to determine the types of objects that would best educate and refine the largely unschooled immigrant population.40 The wealthy Detroit industrialist and self-taught art connoisseur Charles Lang Freer, long a proponent of the civilizational greatness of East Asian nations, inspired the founders and first director of the Cleveland Museum of Art to look to Asia for tangible representations of cultural success. In this way, the first director and curators guided collectors to purchase high quality, culturally significant objects from China, Japan and Korea for the new museum. Through methods

40 Alan Trachtenberg, The Incorporation of America: Culture and Society in the Gilded Age (New York: Hill and Wang, 2007), 142-143.
of acquisition, appropriation and display, Cleveland could tangibly illustrate its own arrival as a bastion of industry and culture in the Midwest. Asian art objects and antiquities, aesthetically pleasing and historically significant, would prove instrumental in the realization of the city’s civilizing and educational missions, and outward projection of civilizational success.

The rapid urbanization, industrialization and population growth of cities like Cleveland reflected the rising global power of the United States. The U.S. surpassed long-time leaders Britain and Germany in industrial production and following the Spanish American War the United States entered the geopolitical world of empire building. In spite of these industrial achievements, many American elites felt a distinct sense of cultural inferiority. This sense became particularly acute when Americans juxtaposed the relatively short history of their nation with the historical pedigrees of European nation states. Measuring themselves against the achievements of Britain, France, and Germany, these Euro-American leaders could boast of industrial and technological superiority, while simultaneously perceiving their own nation as lacking in cultural greatness when compared with European civilizations. As previously indicated, elites in cities like Boston and New York collected objects and antiquities from European states to illustrate and bolster the cultural sophistication of their cities. Yet in the late nineteenth century, cultural leaders and their wealthy benefactors also looked to East Asia for examples of greatness. This trend, quite evident among the founders and leaders of the Cleveland Museum of Art, is less well-documented in the scholarship. Cleveland’s

museum building program illustrates this trend of how Asian nations like China, Japan and Korea were, along with their European counterparts, became sources of cultural capital and inspiration for American collectors. Elements of this case study can also be applied to the collecting habits of elites and benefactors in other American cities developing in this period.

By acquiring and displaying art objects and antiquities from China and Japan, the elites who founded the Cleveland Museum of Art sought to transfer a cachet or pedigree from the ancient, culturally superior ‘Orient’ to the upstart, technologically advanced but culturally inferior United States. By possessing and displaying these art objects and antiquities in Cleveland, the director, curators, and trustees of the Cleveland Museum of Art ensured that the city would be both technologically advanced and culturally relevant; ultimately, physical objects from East Asia were central to the realization of these aspirations. This is not to say that the museum would function as a purely didactic institution; although public education and edification were certainly goals, the processes of collection, appropriation and display enacted at the Cleveland Museum of Art might also be understood within the context of a broader discourse. Specifically, through the act of acquiring and placing on display art objects and antiquities from China, Japan and Korea, together in the context of their own galleries and at times alongside unrelated pieces from other regions and eras, the director, curators and trustees at the museum were participating in the production of what Beth Lord calls heterotopia, or a space of difference “in which contingent fragments of a large number of possible historical series
become evident.” One notable example of this occurred at the Cleveland Museum of Art – a Chinese carved marble Buddha statue, acquired as part of the Worcester R. Warner Collection in 1915, was placed on display in the museum’s Garden Court alongside carved artifacts from the ancient Near East and Classical carvings. Additionally, in its Inaugural Exhibition, the museum administration set aside five of fifteen galleries for the display of art objects and antiquities from the “Orient.” This initial system of display placed Asian art objects and antiquities front and center at Cleveland’s new museum. Conversely, when the Metropolitan Museum of Art moved to its current location adjacent to Central Park in 1880, of twelve galleries only one was set aside for “Chinese and Japanese Art Objects,” which were displayed together in one room on the north end of the museum’s upper level. Beth Lord’s concept of a heterotopia was more apparent in Cleveland, as Asian art objects and antiquities were regularly placed on display, at times in galleries adjacent to similar pieces produced in different regions. Following the Inaugural Exhibition, which ended in September 1916, museum officials retooled the galleries. Gallery X now displayed “a selection of textiles from the Near and Far Eastern countries … being an extension of the textile exhibit in the

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Print Room on the ground floor,” where, presumably, ‘Western’ textiles were displayed.46 As Beth Lord notes, this kind of heterotopia, though “constituent of multiple, discontinuous historical series,” could nonetheless “contribute to progress” in a non-teleological sense, as it destabilized collective beliefs in “fixed” historical events and regional affiliations.47 Lord’s assessment, when viewed in the context of the Cleveland Museum of Art, supports the idea that Asian art objects and antiquities could contribute equally, with pieces from Europe, to the formation of a new culturally distinctive entity. The new museum in Cleveland can thus function as a prime example of a heterotopia, since it provided a counterpoint to the staid, didactic methods of display employed by curators at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston and New York’s Metropolitan Museum of Art. By placing greater emphasis on the arts of Asia, the director and curators at Cleveland’s museum were unwittingly engaging in the formation of a new discourse which presented Asia as an important center of aesthetic and productive inspiration and power.48

The Cleveland Museum of Art thus became a site of cultural tension and, simultaneously, a space that welcomed ethnic difference as a result of their sympathetic appropriation of important art objects and antiquities from East Asian nations, where objects were acquired to enhance the prestige and cultural capital of Cleveland, while simultaneously being celebrated for representing the civilizational successes of their

47 Ibid., 2.
48 Ibid.
places of origin. In her seminal *Edge of Empire*, Maya Jasanoff echoes this concept, arguing that, in spite of the clear relationships between processes of collection, cultural appropriation, and power, “real people in the real world do not necessarily experience other cultures in a confrontational or monolithic way.”

The actions of collectors certainly did serve to shore up and legitimize the power of the appropriating entity (in this case, the Cleveland Museum of Art on behalf of the city and region). However, as Jasanoff indicates, collecting is simultaneously an informal activity, engaged in by individual actors beyond more formal channels of state-directed cultural appropriation.

Certainly individual collectors were motivated by a desire to distinguish themselves culturally; the fact that this distinction was realized via the medium of emulating the actions of their collecting peers in the “Orient” speaks to a certain unusual openness or willingness to both appropriate, but be distinguished via the process of appropriation.

In this way, collecting, as an act of *sympathetic appropriation*, serves to both “reinvent” the collector, and allow the collector to exhibit an appreciation in, and “accommodat[ion]” of, in this case, East Asian art objects and antiquities. David Porter’s contention that individuals conceived of Asia in subjective yet dynamic ways lends further support to the ideas raised by Jasanoff. Porter indicates that China, in the minds of Europeans, was, before the period of European imperial expansion into the

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50 Jasanoff, 8.

51 Jasanoff, 10-11.

52 Ibid.
region, conceived of in terms of history, cultural power, and authority.\textsuperscript{53} Porter indicates that “both the Chinese written language and the Confucian belief system [were] venerated as emblems of stable, legitimate forms of representational authority” by foreigners.\textsuperscript{54} As such, art objects and antiquities produced in China and acquired by foreign consumers could serve as physical markers or representations of China’s relative cultural power and its civilizational achievements.

Historiography

Although much work has been done on the role of museums in society, and separately, on American collection of Asian art, very little has, until recently, focused upon American responses to the arrival of Asian art objects and antiquities in American museums in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. There are no studies focusing upon the specific role that Asian art objects and antiquities played in the so-called ‘civilizing missions’ of American art museums, a gap which this dissertation remedies.

While clearly descended from the same Enlightenment-era ideologies as other contemporary American museums, the Cleveland Museum of Art, through a greater focus on East Asia, complicated and challenged the very discourse upon which it was modeled. A more specific discussion of the methods of acquisition and display enacted at the Cleveland Museum of Art is discussed in Chapter Three, along with an analysis of methods employed by officials working in both east coast museums and smaller,

\textsuperscript{53} Porter, 136.

\textsuperscript{54} Ibid.
Midwestern peer institutions. The corporatized Cleveland Museum of Art, constructed in a pastoral enclave called University Circle mere miles from the factories and steel mills that brought Cleveland much of its wealth, would become an institution of central importance in the “civilizing mission” of this particular Midwestern city in the early decades of the twentieth century, while simultaneously challenging the very didactic ideals and methods which produced it. This, then, is a study of both the development of the Cleveland Museum of Art, and the instrumental role that Asian arts and antiquities played in its formation, growth, and its ultimate mission.

The process outlined in Cleveland complicates several scholarly arguments relative to museums as sources of imperialist or racist power. Bernard Cohn, writing primarily in the 1980s on cultural appropriation and power in British-controlled India, argued that the collection and classification of objects by British authorities in India represented efforts by the metropole, Britain, to exert authority over India by “determining, codifying, controlling, and representing the past.” Cohn indicated that British officials produced “investigative modalities,” or ‘official’ systems for fact-collection and knowledge production, to legitimize their imperial presence in India and better control its large population. For Cohn, museology was an important part of this broader imperial program, since it permitted British officials to effectively produce a history for India. This “power to define the nature of the past” served to further shore up

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56 Cohn, 5.
British control, since, for Cohn, the British believed they were revealing, producing, and gifting a comprehensive history to the people of India.\(^{57}\) Cohn further argued that, in the minds of British imperialist-collectors in India, India was, at-large, a kind of “living fossil bed of the European past;” as such, it served as an excellent static foil to the industrial dynamism of Britain.\(^{58}\) Cohn likewise indicated that British officials in India sought to systematize and delineate the narrative of Indian history in order to juxtapose the chaos and “despotism” of the past with the relative order and stability of the then-present.\(^{59}\) Objects, according to Cohn, were central to the British project of producing a history for India; they represented both the achievements and, more importantly, the failures and collapse of prior civilizations.\(^{60}\) By collecting, classifying, and displaying these ‘relics,’ Cohn argued British officials exerted greater control over India, both ideologically and practically.

Cohn’s argument, heavily influenced by postcolonial theory and Said’s *Orientalism*, does illuminate important issues linked to processes of collection, classification, and display when viewed in the context of imperial expansion. These ideas work particularly well when applied to India as an imperial case study. They are less applicable, however, when viewed in the context of East Asia; specifically, with regard to the collection of art objects and antiquities from China and Japan. European (and later American) travelers to China and Japan were not confronted with regions

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57 Cohn, 10.

58 Cohn, 79.

59 Ibid.

60 Cohn, 93.
lacking “history;” in fact, visitors granted that these regions claimed long periods of stable governance by recognized regional imperial rulers. In some cases, the confrontation with the long civilizational pedigrees of these regions was more likely to produce consternation or even anxiety in European and American visitors. Further, as Maya Jasanoff indicated, many European empires “derived … imperial legitimacy from older, non-European reservoirs of power.” Objects, collected, categorized, and displayed, served as tangible representations of the social, cultural, and political achievements and effective power of their regions and periods of origin. Cohn, while correct, overlooks these more nuanced systems of exchange by focusing wholly on acts of collection as one-dimensional acts of imperial appropriation and control.

Existing scholarship on the collection of art objects and antiquities from East Asia tends to follow the example of Warren Cohen, who in 1992 published his seminal *East Asian Art and American Culture*. In his book, Cohen focused more upon foreign policy than the reception of Asian art objects and antiquities by both wealthy and lower- and middle-class Americans. He argued that the material works of art that entered the United States from the late nineteenth through the early twentieth centuries served to both educate the American public about the nature of Asian art and antiquities (and, consequently, Asia itself as a region), while simultaneously shifting American tastes in products exported by East Asian nations. For Cohen, Asian art, consumed in the late

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61 See Adas, xiv, quoted above, and Porter, 2-3.

62 Jasanoff, 9.

63 Cohen, 16-22.
nineteenth and early twentieth centuries by wealthy American collectors, and later, by their counterparts in burgeoning art museums, was indicative of the rise of the United States as a nation of power and influence. Cohen, then, understood Asian art, at-large, “as an instrument of policy.” Also integral to Cohen’s argument is an analysis of the role of the burgeoning Arts and Crafts movement in early twentieth century America. For Cohen, the Arts and Crafts movement, which placed hand-crafted goods on a virtual social pedestal, was a movement prompted by a mass reaction to the “imminent hegemony of the machine” in the industrial United States.

While this is certainly accurate, Cohen provided little analysis of the reactions of average citizens to the Arts and Crafts movement; also, he overlooked elite attempts to harness the momentum of the movement in order to nurture and develop new notions of ‘tastefulness’ within the ranks of urban-dwelling, often foreign born industrial workers in American cities. Cohen does hint at the fact that the public display of Asian art objects and antiques, and their classification as pieces of artwork, was indicative of the willingness of Americans to “grant dignity to that other culture, to be less contemptuous” of a group often marked as the ‘other’ in the popular press and contemporary media. Cohen also simplistically argues that smaller museums, like the Cleveland Museum of Art, collected Asian art objects and antiques because they were deemed beautiful, and

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64 Cohen, xv.
65 Ibid.
66 Cohen, 30.
67 Cohen, 32.
were also cost-effective purchases.\textsuperscript{68} He overlooks and fails to analyze other reasons why smaller, relatively new art museums like that in Cleveland might wish to acquire and display pieces that originated in East Asia. While Cohen introduces many compelling ideas, he ultimately offers an overview of the state of collecting Asian art objects and antiquities in late-nineteenth and early twentieth-century America. His study, while both useful and informative, ultimately raises many questions that subsequent scholars have attempted to answer in later studies.

Another important text is Russell W. Belk’s \textit{Collecting in a Consumer Society}. While Cohen tackled the foreign policy angle vis-à-vis collecting Asian art objects and antiquities, Belk focuses more broadly upon the role of collecting in, as his title indicates, the burgeoning consumer societies of late nineteenth- and early-twentieth century Europe and the United States. Belk divided his study into two portions: in the first, he analyzed the “phenomenon of collecting” by citizens of industrialized regions, in personal settings; later, he focused upon institutional collecting practices.\textsuperscript{69} Belk argued that collecting, as a part of the “cycle of desire,” functioned as “an enjoyable state of discomfort or pain which eventually gives way to the pleasure of realizing the fantasized object of desire;” this cyclical practice, engaged in by many wealthy Americans in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, was a facet of what Belk labels emergent “modern hedonism.”\textsuperscript{70} While Belk grants that this cycle is “illusory” and ultimately unfulfilling,

\textsuperscript{68} Cohen, 55.


\textsuperscript{70} Ibid., 4.
since it presupposes a continual need to desire, search, acquire, and begin the process again, he ultimately argues that this cycle is a natural tangent to the burgeoning consumer culture of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries.\textsuperscript{71} When analyzing the collecting practices of wealthy American industrialists, like J. P. Morgan, Belk argues that art and/or antiquities, when purchased, served “a need to ‘launder’ money acquired from the still ‘dirty’ business of banking and investment.”\textsuperscript{72} Such practices of acquisition could serve to transform wealthy individuals from magnates and notables to “benefactor[s]” or “patron[s] of the arts;” simultaneously, these collectors would potentially enhance the artistic \textit{cachet} of the United States, by bringing “to the country what did not already exist.”\textsuperscript{73}

Belk’s contention that “the quality and quantity of … possessions [owned by an individual or institution] are broadly assumed to be an index of … successfulness” is fascinating, in that it presupposes a link between the objects sought by collectors and/or groups, and the meanings attached to those objects by individuals.\textsuperscript{74} Although Belk does not follow up on this idea specifically, it raises a compelling issue: the imbuing and attachment of meanings by individuals to objects of art and antiquities. In the case of the Cleveland Museum of Art, it is my contention that the director, Frederic A. Whiting, along with curator J. Arthur MacLean, with the blessing of the CMA’s board of trustees, sought to acquire objects of art and antiquities from East Asia because the objects both

\textsuperscript{71} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{72} Ibid., 50.
\textsuperscript{73} Ibid., 49-50.
\textsuperscript{74} Belk, 87.
arrived with formidable historical and cultural pedigrees intact, and could be further imbued with meanings and signs. Displaying these objects in the CMA could serve to enhance the cultural cachet of the city itself. Further, CMA leaders embodied Belk’s later contention that objects of art often evoked a “sense of past” (in this case an East Asian one) which could be consumed through contemplation or viewing.\textsuperscript{75}

Belk also tackles the connection between museum collecting and imperialism. He supports the idea that the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century craze for constructing and filling museums stemmed from a desire to conquer through consumption. While not incorrect, recent studies\textsuperscript{76} have attempted to nuance these earlier arguments by analyzing specifically what individuals collected, why they collected, and what these particular collections represented both to individuals and later the public.\textsuperscript{77} Belk’s basic argument is that museums developed as an appendage of the growth of consumer culture in industrialized regions (here European nations and the United States) in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. For Belk, museums functioned as spaces that both glorified the individuals who acquired objects and constructed fine collections, and “sacralized” the objects themselves, through categorization and display.\textsuperscript{78} These practices, in Belk’s mind, also served to shore up and legitimize emerging imperialist tendencies. Belk’s contribution to the historiography of collecting and museum studies is, like Cohen’s, important; however he overlooks the role that specific

\textsuperscript{75} Ibid., 91.

\textsuperscript{76} See also Beth Lord.

\textsuperscript{77} Ibid., 102.

\textsuperscript{78} Belk, 117.
objects played in the creation of a historical pedigree in smaller American cities. Further, Belk does not deal with aspects of difference and tension within museum spaces. Although Belk does not specifically address the American acquisition of objects from East Asia, his analysis is nonetheless an important contribution to the historiography of American acts of collection and appropriation at the turn of the century.

Two major works serve as the touchstones for writing about the various ways that Americans perceived, understood, and felt about China. John Kuo Wei Tchen’s book, *New York Before Chinatown: Orientalism and the Shaping of American Culture 1776-1882* examines American perceptions of China in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Christopher T. Jespersen’s book, *American Images of China 1931-1949*, focuses upon the years of the Great Depression and WWII, specifically looking at how popular media mogul Henry Luce portrayed China. Both Tchen and Jespersen argue that American views (and even stereotypes) related to the Chinese state, people, and objects reveal more about American self-perceptions than they do any “facts” about China, the Chinese people, or goods produced in China. Tchen indicates that *chinoiserie* and Chinese-produced goods were tangible marks of social “distinction” in late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth century American homes. This “patrician orientalism” resulted in the conscious consumption of non-essential luxury goods produced in China for foreign markets. These goods, upon arrival in the United States, were “imbued with symbolic meanings;” the goods possessed no tangible or existent historical, social, or civilizational

79 Tchen, 6.
80 Tchen, 22.
pedigree when they arrived in the U.S. – however a pedigree, linked to American perceptions of taste and culture was conferred upon the export objects post-purchase by American consumers.\textsuperscript{81} For Tchen, American perceptions of China, Chinese people and Chinese goods shifted in light of “the changing needs of the nationalist self.”\textsuperscript{82} Tchen indicates that beginning in the late eighteenth century, consumers in the United States sought out goods produced in China because of their tastefulness and “distinction;” as a result, members of the consuming American public viewed China favorably.\textsuperscript{83} Later, as fears related to Chinese immigration to the United States intensified, American perceptions of China, Chinese people and goods produced in China soured. Additionally, American notables like the publisher Henry Luce argued that with the dawn of the “American Century,” China, as the “oldest civilization,” would necessarily have to acquiesce to a subject position.\textsuperscript{84} Writing in a similar vein, Jespersen offers a study of American understandings of China during the interwar and wartime periods of the mid-twentieth century. Jespersen, like Tchen, contends that American views of China can tell contemporary historians more about “Americans’ assumptions about themselves,” than they can about authentic American views of China, its people and export products.\textsuperscript{85} Jespersen focuses upon the efforts of Luce to introduce American readers to China,

\textsuperscript{81} Tchen, 24.
\textsuperscript{82} Tchen, 292.
\textsuperscript{83} Tchen, xx.
\textsuperscript{84} Tchen, 292.
specifically in both *Time* and *Life* magazines. For Jespersen, Americans in the interwar period and wartime periods developed a positive perception of China because they were led to believe, by Luce’s careful story selection that the Chinese were following a ‘uniquely’ American path to self-determination. For Jespersen, felt protective of China, since China functioned as both a foil and proxy. American “paternalism” vis-à-vis China was the norm in the mid-twentieth century, according to Jespersen, since many Americans believed that China was, socially and even historically, very much like the United States.

While Tchen and Jespersen do not specifically deal with the role played by East Asian art objects and antiquities in American attempts at self-determination, their studies are nonetheless important to the arguments presented in this dissertation. Both authors contend, correctly, that citizens of the United States, from a myriad of social and class backgrounds, were aware of China and held particular views about the country, its people, and goods produced there. Although the specific attributes of these perceptions might be fluid, and could certainly be expected to shift with changing political currents in the United States, the mere fact of their existence is telling, since it posits a certain level of comfort with “knowledge” about China, its people, and the things (export goods, or, here, art objects and antiquities) produced there. Tchen’s and Jespersen’s conclusions, then, are broadly supportive of my own contention that art objects and antiquities produced in China and Japan were perceived by Americans (from both the elite and lower classes) as possessing a particular historical veneer or social pedigree. This dissertation,

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86 Jespersen, xviii.
then, will pick up where these authors left off, by analyzing American perceptions of East Asian art objects and antiquities in the context of public display within a newly-constructed Midwestern art museum.

Mari Yoshihara added gender to the analysis of consumerism and Asian art and objects in her 2003 book *Embracing the East: White Women and American Orientalism*. Yoshihara argued that white American women created new identities for themselves by consuming, decorating with, and appropriating goods and objects produced in East Asian nations. For Yoshihara, white American women gained agency through the act of “assign[ing] specific meanings to” goods and/or objects produced in East Asia.\(^87\) This type of what Yoshihara deems “middlebrow Orientalism” was an important facet of the commodification of East Asia by white American women.\(^88\) Through their varying acts of collection and consumption, white American women became agents of imperialism, according to Yoshihara.\(^89\) Yoshihara’s book is a fine example of transcultural scholarship; her arguments can serve to promote discussion on the role of goods and objects from East Asia in the context of “creating” or “imagining” the American self. However, Yoshihara deals primarily with export goods; specifically, she looks at white American women’s consumption of items produced for export abroad. Often these goods were of questionable quality; even if they were advertised as having a particular *cachet*, in reality they were poor imitations of actual antiquities and art objects from China and


\(^{88}\) Yoshihara, 18.

\(^{89}\) Yoshihara, 43.
Japan. But what meanings did consumers give to finer, historically significant objets d’art and antiquities from East Asia? What role did these play vis-a-vis American constructions of self in the late-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries? This dissertation aids, in part, in filling this gap in the historiography by focusing upon the role that antiquities and art objects from East Asia played in the construction of an ideology of civilized respectability in the city of Cleveland. Asian art objects and antiquities, displayed within the context of Cleveland’s art museum, were central components within this broader educational mission. These ideas are explored more substantially in the following two chapters.

Historian Kristin Hoganson offers an argument similar to Yoshihara’s in her seminal *Consumer’s Imperium: The Global Production of American Domestcity*. While the overarching themes of Hoganson’s text are linked to the role that gendered acts of consumption played in creating a sense of “Americanness” in late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century America, she does spend some time discussing, specifically, imported goods and their effect on American perceptions of both foreign nations and the American self. Hoganson grants that the consuming American public found decorating inspiration in numerous places, the museum included; she goes on to examine the popularity of “cosey corners” and other methods of home decoration with “exotic” goods. These goods, when purposefully situated in pleasing arrangements in the home, conveyed, according to Hoganson, a sense of “cosmopolitanism.” Hoganson thus contends, like

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90 Hoganson, 33.

91 Hoganson, 32.
Yoshihara, that American women found ideological inspiration, and a sense of ‘self,’ by consuming, collecting and displaying goods produced in foreign regions (here, the Middle East as well as East Asia). Such acts of “appropriation” of the foreign served to enhance the distinction of the decorator.\textsuperscript{92} Hoganson’s argument is both unique and useful, since it raises a number of issues. First, Hoganson clearly believes that these acts of consumption, engaged in by white American women, smacked of a kind of imperialist fervor to consume, label, and appropriate a culture via the medium of its goods or export products. Hoganson also posits, in a roundabout fashion, that Americans possessed a particular kind of anxiety about the United States’ level of civilizational prestige; specifically, rampant consumption of the foreign could represent a desire to remedy perceptions of “cultural deficiency.”\textsuperscript{93} Hoganson, like Yoshihara, deals primarily with individual consumption of goods produced in foreign regions – specifically, contemporary goods produced for export. She does briefly discuss the hierarchy of available goods (as related to quality), but does not spend time distinguishing between export products and antiquities and art objects that would have arrived in the United States with an existent pedigree or provenance intact. Her contention that all acts of consumption were effectively acts of imperialism is also problematic; although acts of consumption and appropriation are indeed activities related to power differentials, the

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  \item \textsuperscript{92} Hoganson, 43.
  \item \textsuperscript{93} Ibid. Hoganson is not specific in this assertion, however. She indicates that many American decorators (and female consumers) found “cosy corners” to be “unpatriotic,” based upon the premise that there should be no need to purchase and display foreign decorative goods, unless American culture was somehow “deficient.” What is compelling, however, is the notion that appropriation, as an act, could serve to represent something more than mere consumption – a good could be collected and displayed, and \textit{wholly appropriated} (including any attendant historical-cultural pedigree) by the appropriator. This is not discussed by Hoganson, but will be elaborated on in this dissertation.
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notion that all acts of consumption are imperialist acts deserves a more nuanced analysis. Her study is thus significant, but with gaps that this dissertation will seek to fill.

Caroline Frank, in her recently published book *Objectifying China, Imagining America: Chinese Commodities in Early America* similarly argued that the American consumption of goods produced in China revealed less about contemporary American perceptions of China, and more about how early Americans understood themselves. Frank, writing about the Colonial and Early National periods in the United States, argues that Americans conspicuously consumed Chinese export products (here, specifically porcelain objects) as a method of building boundaries between themselves and Great Britain.  

Frank indicates that early American consumers, often living in wealthy, coastal regions with a rich history of global economic exchange, knew little about the history and/or origins of the objects they were purchasing. These objects were, in essence, simply “commodities,” which were “domesticated” upon entrance into the American home. This “ignorance” was, according to Frank, “deliberate;” Americans willfully ignored Chinese characters and imagery on porcelain in an attempt to “obscure … the people and the place behind, or contained within, the prized commodity.” For Frank, the fact that these goods were available in early American signifies the power of the newly-created nation’s economy, and “a sign of magnificent commerce.”

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95 Frank, 21. This argument is very similar to the one proffered by John Kuo Wei Tchen.

96 Frank, 12-13.

97 Frank, 19.
their origin, and any attendant histories were unimportant; what mattered, according to Frank, were the meanings attached to the goods upon arrival in North America. These represented America’s ascendency to a position of power and authority on the global stage; thus, for Frank, Chinese goods, acquired directly from China by American merchants, became a mark of power, differentiation, and even rebellion for Americans seeking to distinguish themselves socially, politically, economically and ideologically from Great Britain. Frank offers a unique take on North American-British relations in the immediate Early National period, by situating Chinese export objects and goods as prisms through which the nature of this shifting American-British relationship could be viewed. Her contention that the provenance of these Chinese export products was unimportant to early American consumers is interesting; while it supports her larger argument to make this statement, it might only apply to export products produced in a contemporary setting. In the context of American consumption of antiquities and art objects, however, such an argument would not stand, as origin, pedigree, and provenance were all important indicators of authenticity for collectors. These same signifiers would also serve to bolster attempts by individuals working in, and with, the Cleveland Museum of Art in its formative period, to simultaneously appropriate objects along with their attendant social-cultural-historical pedigrees for the good of the city at-large.

In creating the Cleveland Museum of Art, its founders and directors possessed a two-fold mission: to educate and Americanize the rural- or foreign-born citizens of the

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98 Frank, 19-24. The irony here is that they sought differentiation through the purposeful acquisition of what their British counterparts viewed as symbols of cultural distinction – however, these symbolic commodities were obtained by American merchants, not British ones; in this way, the goods represented American agency and America’s effective ‘arrival’ as an important trade partner in its own right.

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city of Cleveland, by introducing them to exquisite examples of fine art and fine pieces of artistically-inspired craftsmanship, and to provide Cleveland with needed cultural cachet. But, unlike the work of the directors of museums in New York and Boston, and more like the processes of acquisition and display that later developed at the Freer Gallery in Washington, D.C., Cleveland used East Asian art objects and antiquities to achieve their goals. Few studies have focused upon the collecting practices of a smaller institution like the Cleveland Museum of Art, and none have traced the deliberate collection of Asian art objects and antiquities within the context of a home-grown “civilizing mission.” Further, this study challenges the dominant view in the scholarship that argues that acts of acquisition by members of American museums were always the product of internalized Orientalist ideals.

At the Cleveland Museum of Art, the director and curators engaged in what I call sympathetic appropriation, whereby, through processes of acquisition and display in galleries both set aside specifically for Asian art, as well as zones of mutable display where objects from different regions and eras were presented together, the intangible pedigree or ‘spirit’ of an object was transferred from its region of origin to the museum at-large. The museum’s “Oriental” galleries thus functioned as facsimiles, or copies, of the sites of origin; although not exact they were “faithful,” and permitted the museum to

99 For more on the history of smaller Midwestern art museums, see William Hendon’s Analyzing an Art Museum (cited below), which provides a narrative chronicle of the development of the Detroit Institute of Arts in Detroit, Michigan; Cincinnati Magazine’s Art Palace of the West: Cincinnati Art Museum (Cincinnati: Cincinnati Monthly Pub. Corp., 1992); and Anne P. Robinson, Every Way Possible: 125 Years of the Indianapolis Museum of Art (Indianapolis: Indianapolis Museum of Art, 2008). These books provide a basic narrative history of each respective museum without much analysis of the motivations of directors, curators and benefactors as related to the construction of collections.
engage in a broader act of *mimesis* where objects faithfully displayed still exerted elements of their initial intended functional power.\(^\text{100}\) Charles Lang Freer hinted at a similar idea in a letter to a Chinese art and antiquities dealer, K. T. Wong. Freer believed that when Asian art objects were acquired, they arrived with provenance and pedigrees intact. As a result, when art objects and antiquities from Asia were purchased by, in this case, American collectors, they seamlessly transitioned, *cachet* intact, from their prior Asian owners to American buyers. Freer indicated that Wong, through selling these art objects and antiquities to foreigners, did a service for the United States at-large; Freer stated that these objects, when acquired by American buyers, served to “enhance the *civilization* of the United States,” presumably through a transfer of ownership and, concurrently, *cachet*.\(^\text{101}\)

The concept of *mimesis* discussed here derives from Michael Taussig’s analysis of James Frazer’s *The Golden Bough*, and Yrjo Hirn’s *The Origins of Art*, a source for some of Frazer’s theories related to how human beings produce and interpret meaning.\(^\text{102}\) Hirn’s book was published in 1900; Frazer’s in 1911 – in both texts, the authors refer to, participate in, and contribute to an ongoing academic discourse (sustained by anthropologists Marcel Mauss and Henri Hubert, and the psychologist Sigmund Freud) that analyzed subjective human responses to objects, and the meanings that individuals


\(^{102}\) Taussig, 51.
attached to them by virtue of display. Taussig argues in favor of the application and relevance of *mimesis* in a “modern” setting. In this way, within the space of the museum, objects were placed in galleries that served as “copies” of their original sites of display. As a result of the production of these facsimiles, displayed objects could still retain and even take supporting “power from the original” situation of display or use. Taussig’s discussion of how ideas about *mimesis* circulated in the early twentieth century reveals the relative academic appeal of the concept, manifested as part of a broader cultural zeitgeist emerging in the early twentieth century.

Cleveland certainly conforms to the existent historiography on museums in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that emphasize the didactic role they played in educating the masses through imaginative museum displays. These authors tend to examine the theoretical role of the museum, but limit their analyses to examinations of the museum space as an extension of Enlightenment-era ideals, which sought, in general, to provide public edification through acquisition and display. The Museum of Fine

103 Taussig, 51-52.
104 Taussig, 59.
105 Ibid.
106 Ibid.
Arts, Boston, is a classic example of a space created specifically to house objects representative of a teleological model of history, culminating in the relative modernity of the period occupied by contemporary viewers. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, as well, originated as an “encyclopedic institution,” with a professed goal of “humaniz[ation]” and “refine[ment]” of the population. Nancy Einreinhofer hints at the tension present within museum spaces, but still couches this “democratic/elitist paradox” within the context of post-Enlightenment thought. The American art museum, for her, is simultaneously representative of American wealth and progress, and exceptional American democratic ideals. Einreinhofer indicates, like many other scholars who examine the role of the American art museum in the early twentieth century, that these spaces were the clear descendants of Enlightenment-era beliefs regarding democratic access to resources; however, these cultural resources were only made available to American museums as a result of European imperial expansion abroad. Andrew McClellan, as well, examines the historical role played by museums; he concludes that the “utility” of museums was “measured primarily in socioeconomic terms.”

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110 Einreinhofer, 18.

111 Einreinhofer, 19.

late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries would function as venues for education, recreation, and “a means of marking out the historic cultural character of the society;”¹¹³ these aims were achieved by bringing relatively ‘uneducated’ members of the American public into contact with objects displayed in a very staid, didactic manner. Jeffrey Abt’s discussion of the role of “object teaching” in American art museums likewise points to the necessity of collection, curation through display, and ultimate appropriation of objects through display to the realization of the broadly-defined mission of American art museums at the turn of the century.¹¹⁴ Museum success, then, was deeply rooted in constructing discourses of power over both displayed objects and the visitors who would view them. Texts produced by American art museums tend to either focus on the history of the museum entity (presented in a chronological narrative format), or on specific exhibitions (both ongoing and special to the museum).¹¹⁵ Scholars like Christine Peltre trace the demand for particular objects by specific institutions, linking the collection and display of select examples of Asian art or antiquities to notions of Orientalist consumption or the misrepresentation of these objects through improper display.¹¹⁶


In choosing case studies to examine, these works focus, in general, on the major institutions of the East Coast, ignoring smaller institutions in other regions, such as the Cleveland Museum of Art. The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York and Museum of Fine Arts in Boston both developed early, and were well-endowed by wealthy patrons. In the case of the Freer and later Sackler Galleries in the nation’s capital, many narrative histories were produced which focused heavily upon the personal history of Charles Lang Freer, and his own attempts to build a collection of the very finest examples of Asian art available outside of “the Orient.”

Cleveland’s experience underscores the trends outlined in these earlier scholarly works. At the beginning of the twentieth century, Cleveland was the sixth largest urban center in the United States. With a growing industrial economy that mixed heavy industry with trade and finance, Cleveland in the early twentieth century drew numerous job-seeking migrants and immigrants; as such, the city was ethnically, linguistically, and economically diverse. When a group of businessmen-cum-philanthropists sought to subsidize construction of an art museum and polytechnic college, their goal was simple: educate and Americanize the rural- or foreign-born citizens of the city of Cleveland, by introducing them to exquisite examples of “high art” and fine pieces of artistically-inspired craftsmanship. Although there were several important, wealthy families present in the city of Cleveland, there were not an abundance of cultural institutions which corresponded to the leisure demands of this particular set. In spite of the wealth of these

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118 Weiner and Beal, 43-4.
families,\textsuperscript{119} elites in the East still considered Cleveland somewhat unsophisticated.\textsuperscript{120} If one wanted to shop, one went to New York. Similarly, if one wished to enjoy a season (summer or winter), one headed to the vacation houses on the East coast. Cleveland, in the early twentieth century, was in need of cultural uplift. This would serve to both educate the many members of the city’s lower and middle classes, while at the same time increase the prestige of the city on the national stage. It is thus my contention that the wealthy philanthropists based in the city of Cleveland wished to construct a museum for reasons related to personal prestige, and a desire to educate and ‘uplift’ the bulk of the city’s population via the medium of art. Simultaneously, they wished to make Cleveland (and thus themselves) nationally significant culturally through the construction of a spectacular new, modern museum space, to be filled with objects that collectively represented historical and civilizational pedigree and prestige.\textsuperscript{121}

Yet, Cleveland also moved along a pathway unlike New York and Boston. Like their counterparts at museums in the East, the founders of the Cleveland Museum of Art set out to collect art and antiquities from throughout the world, including Europe.

\textsuperscript{119} Horace Kelley and John Huntington, two wealthy Cleveland industrialists, each provided the money necessary to begin constructing an art museum in their wills. Jeptha H. Wade was also instrumental in providing land and oversight as the new museum was constructed. The Kelley and Huntington bequests were ultimately linked, so that the income could be used in a complementary fashion to aid in construction of the new museum. See Leedy, 9-13; 63.

\textsuperscript{120} Weiner and Beal, 50. Cleveland, in the early twentieth century, was like a “doughnut,” with an “affluent ring encircling an increasingly less affluent core.” While there were numerous industrial jobs for newly arrived immigrants and migrants, there were few refined shopping sectors and theatres, and no museums of substance to speak of.

\textsuperscript{121} See Leedy, 38; and Handbook of the Museum: A Description of the Museum Its Collections and Its Work, 66; 83. The Handbook describes the nature of the artwork on display at CMA, along with discussion of some specific and important pieces, including several Buddha figures, which were accompanied by descriptions which focused on the “three thousand” year history of Chinese artistic endeavors.
However, this group, that included the CMA's first director Frederic A. Whiting, possessed and acted upon an atypical desire to collect East Asian antiquities and *objets d’art*. Asian art and antiquities, with their historical pedigree and craft-like qualities, would thus be instrumental material artifacts in effecting the metamorphosis of the city of Cleveland: from a dirty, industrial, urban, immigrant-filled backwater to a modern, sophisticated city by the lake.\textsuperscript{122} By displaying these Asian art objects and antiquities, then, the Cleveland Museum of Art could, on behalf of the city and its inhabitants, co-opt and claim the cultural and historical pedigree vested in these artifacts. This cultural pedigree could, through display, be transferred to the city itself, instantly enhancing the prestige of the region at-large. It is my contention that because of these reasons, the Director of the Cleveland Museum of Art, along with several early curators and philanthropic collectors, sought so earnestly and specifically to acquire and display East Asian *objets d’art* and antiquities, in the first two decades of the museum’s existence.

Although the appropriation engaged in by Whiting, MacLean and other collectors of art objects and antiquities from East Asia does reflect, to a certain degree, elements of imperialist privilege, I believe that their methods were simultaneously informed by a

\textsuperscript{122} Transcription of Radio Talk, October 14, 1927, The Cleveland Museum of Art Archives, Records of the Director’s Office: Frederic Allen Whiting, box 8, folder 90. In a public radio address, CMA Director Frederic A. Whiting indicated that the varied goals of the museum included the following: “first, to build up a collection of works of art representing the finest achievement of the world’s civilizations; second, to arrange exhibitions that will afford the people of Cleveland opportunity for enjoying and studying works of art that might otherwise not be available to them; and third, by means of lectures, classes, publications and other contacts with the public, to develop an appreciation for the various arts, including music” (emphasis mine). Whiting continued, stating that the museum “is supported without a cent of cost to taxpayers; the building, its site, and its upkeep being provided through the generosity of Cleveland citizens, by means of trusts, bequests, gifts, and membership dues. The Cleveland Museum of Art, in the eleven years since it was opened, has become recognized as one of the educational institutions which lends distinction to the city” (emphasis mine).
clear appreciation of and admiration for East Asian cultures and histories. This resulted in the creation of a unique situation in Cleveland, which enabled members of the museum leadership and staff to engage in sympathetic appropriation, where objects were acquired to enhance the prestige and cultural capital of Cleveland, while simultaneously being celebrated for representing the collective cultural achievements and historical pedigrees of their places of origin. This argument nuances typical analyses of Orientalism and imperialist appropriation by positing that Americans could both possess and feel threatened by peerless art objects and antiquities from China, Japan and Korea which physically represented the long historical pedigrees of these nations. East Asian nations were not simply a foil for the United States; they could also serve as sources for civilizational enhancement in much the same way that European nations did for museums on the East Coast earlier in the nineteenth century. This dissertation complicates the existent historiography on museums, acquisition and display by offering a critical analysis of the collecting practices enacted at the Cleveland Museum of Art from its inception in 1914 to 1930, by arguing that Cleveland’s museum space was one of difference and tension, and not simply a space of simple appropriation. Objects and antiquities from China, Japan and Korea figured prominently in the manifestation of the Cleveland Museum of Art.

My argument will unfold over the course of five chapters, along with an introduction and conclusion, outlined below. Each chapter examines a particular facet of Cleveland’s museum-building experience, with particular emphasis placed upon the way that the director and curators understood and represented Asian art, both to collectors
(who were simultaneously potential donors), and to the public at-large. This dissertation is based upon numerous primary and secondary sources, including contemporary documents and personal letters and other correspondence from the Frederic A. Whiting collection at the Cleveland Museum of Art’s Ingalls Library Archive, letters from the Charles Lang Freer Papers, housed at the Archives of American Art in Washington, D.C., published museum bulletins from the first twenty years of the Cleveland Museum of Art’s existence, contemporary periodical (newspaper) accounts and articles about the Museum and its goals and activities (specifically the Cleveland Plain Dealer), articles from other contemporary national periodical (journal) sources, and the bulletins from neighboring Midwestern art museums. Secondary sources in the form of monographs, texts and articles on the history of Cleveland, general art history, the history of collecting and display, and the nature of Chinese patterns of collection will also be consulted.

Following the Introduction in Chapter One, Chapter Two focuses upon the cultural and social history of the city of Cleveland, specifically tracing the movement to construct an art museum. This chapter explores the arguments for building an art museum in Cleveland, and some of the goals of the original members of the building committee, and later CMA’s trustees. While the idea of social uplift was clearly foremost in the minds of these individuals, methods for achieving this end were poorly delineated. This chapter also traces the growth and development of the city vis-à-vis rapid industrialization and ensuing European immigration. Two important American art

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123 See Leedy, 20; 63. Members of the original building committee included William B. Sanders, Charles W. Bingham, Jeptha H. Wade, H. C. Ranney, L. E. Holden and Horace A. Kelley. The committee was selected on June 7, 1905, eight years before the official incorporation of CMA in 1913. The museum officially opened on June 7, 1916.
museums, the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (opened in 1876), and New York City’s Metropolitan Museum of Art (opened at the Central Park location in 1880) are profiled, along with an analysis of the impact of post-Enlightenment thought on the collecting practices of these institutions. Since both institutions were modeled on Enlightenment ideals of teleological display and democratization of access, they served as the ‘standard’ of quality for American art museums. Emerging at roughly the same time, but with a more progressive manifesto, the Art Institute of Chicago (opened in 1893 to coincide with the World’s Columbian Exposition) focused more upon social uplift through education. These museums, together, informed the director, curators, and trustees working to establish a similar institution in Cleveland. However, instead of producing a museum focused solely upon a didactic form of display, the Cleveland Museum of Art developed along a different track, at times by displaying objects outside of their expected contexts. Art objects and antiquities from China, Japan, and Korea were displayed in the museum’s Garden Court with pieces originating in other periods and regions. Additionally, some objects, like Japanese block prints, were displayed as valuable representations of a particular method of production. Because of this investment in and appreciation for the provenance and technical skill attached to these pieces, art objects and antiquities from China, Japan and Korea ultimately constituted a valuable, culturally distinctive collection in the new Cleveland Museum of Art.

The third chapter of this dissertation traces attempts by Director Whiting to link the arts and antiquities of East Asia with the emergent Arts and Crafts movement. The origins and basic history of the movement is discussed, along with its ideals and basic
aesthetic principles.\textsuperscript{124} For Whiting, objects of Asian art and antiquities functioned as excellent culturally and historically prestigious examples of Arts and Crafts style objects, made abroad, well before the movement emerged in Europe and the United States. Further, Whiting used these objects to blithely tread the boundary between objects perceived as examples of “fine art,” and those considered examples of “crafts.”\textsuperscript{125} Whiting and his curators felt that Asian art and antiquities could successfully serve as civilizing objects because of their relative aesthetic appeal. Such actions would also help to create a new class of citizen in Cleveland; what Evan H. Turner called “workmen with taste,” a concept explored fully in Chapter Six.\textsuperscript{126} While many Americans considered “fine art” objects to have a European origin, Whiting covertly challenged them, through the acquisition and display of fine examples of Asian art and antiquities, to view these pieces as both art objects and finely rendered crafts. In this way, Whiting could avoid challenging outright existent perceptions on the nature of “art,” or what was “artful,” while simultaneously presenting very fine objects which, in their region of origin or original historical context, served as representations of the finest, most tasteful pieces of artwork. Asian art objects and antiquities were thus relatable to the masses in Cleveland, and their “acceptability” stemmed from their ostensibly “secular” aesthetic appeal. These \textit{objets d’art} would be palatable to the viewing public, since they were aesthetically

\textsuperscript{124} Also important was the museum’s “May Show,” an exhibition initiated in 1919 (by Whiting) to promote the work of local artists and craftspeople. The May Show became an annual event at CMA, until it was halted in 1993.

\textsuperscript{125} Whiting was Secretary of the Society of Arts and Crafts, Boston, and also created and published \textit{Handicraft} journal. For more, see Turner, 32-34.

\textsuperscript{126} Turner, 35.
pleasing and similar to hand crafted pieces being made by members of the burgeoning Arts and Crafts movement. They were both examples of foreign “crafts,” while simultaneously functioning as inanimate ambassadors of the finer artistic traditions of the historically rich and culturally superior nations of East Asia.

Chapter Four analyzes methods the Cleveland Museum of Art used to build a fine and distinctive collection of art objects and antiquities from China, Japan, and Korea. Methods of sympathetic appropriation drove the curatorial acquisition of Asian art objects and antiquities. In this chapter, I analyze the important role played by Asian art objects and antiquities in the realization of the goals and mission of the museum at-large. China’s effective governmental dissolution gave rise to unprecedented opportunities for acquisition of very fine art objects and antiquities; at the same time, Japan, moving full force along a path of “modernization,” sought to slough off signs of their “premodern” past. Many American museums exploited these conditions; Cleveland’s difference centers along lines of apparent appreciation and regard for the impressive historical pedigrees of these regions. The chapter also provides an analysis of methods and patterns of collection by Chinese and Japanese aesthetes living in the city of Cleveland. The interests of many of these individuals, including Whiting, were stimulated early on by Charles Lang Freer. Freer was instrumental in fostering an early appreciation of Asian arts and antiquities, and their potential for supporting the Cleveland Museum of Art’s educational ‘civilizing mission.’ Although the kind of co-option discussed in this chapter might be understood as a facet of Orientalism, it is my belief that the actions of Whiting and his curators did, to a degree, transcend the kinds of crude Orientalist ideologies

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pandered to the public in the form of media (songs, films and books) and consumption (in the form of trinkets produced in Asia). Early Bulletins from the Cleveland Museum of Art provide valuable contemporary evidence for the important role played by objects from East Asia in the early years of the museum. Staff at the museum, including director Whiting, were very interested in acquiring fine examples of Asian art and antiquities in the early years of museum formation. This chapter argues that Asian art and antiquities metaphorically represented, to these individuals, the extraordinary history, culture, civilization, by the nations of China and Japan. Whiting sought to co-opt the prestige present in specific objects from Asian nations via the medium of acquisition and display. Thus the inherent ‘civilizational qualities’ of the objects acquired by the museum would be transposed onto the city of Cleveland itself, through display and proper documentation.

Chapter Five analyzes a defining moment in the history of the Cleveland Museum of Art: the planning and enacting of the so-called “Oriental Expedition.” In 1916, Whiting tasked the archaeologist Langdon Warner, of the Philadelphia Museum, to travel to East- and Central Asia on behalf of the Cleveland Museum of Art. His mission was ostensibly to take advantage of the crumbling political situation in China. Warner was both to purchase objets d’art and antiquities, and, if possible, to excavate in “Chinese Turkestan,” where rumor held that wonderful antiquities and artifacts were being unearthed by Russian rail workers; or in Mongolia, where German gold prospectors had

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hit pay dirt, finding half a dozen tombs “six meters underground.” China itself, in a state of relative dissolution as a result of the 1912 Nationalist Revolution which culminated in the collapse of the Qing dynasty and the establishment of a republic, was ripe for artistic exploitation. In this chapter, I provide a brief overview of Chinese history in the early twentieth century, with particular focus upon the relative corruption of the Republican Government, particularly with regard to bribery and the selling of looted antiquities and art objects to foreign collectors and museums. This chapter lucidly illustrates the means that the director and curators of the Cleveland Museum of Art were willing to embrace and employ to acquire fine examples of Asian art at cut-rate prices. This provides additional support for the larger argument of this dissertation: that the director, curators, and board members of the Cleveland Museum of Art sought, from its inception through the late 1920s, to acquire, along with other types of artwork, fine examples of Asian art and antiquities with the express purpose of using them to help ‘civilize’ the largely immigrant and industrially-employed members of the burgeoning city of Cleveland. Such efforts to ‘civilize’ the masses would be accomplished through

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129 Langdon Warner to Frederic A. Whiting, letter, June 28, 1913, The Cleveland Museum of Art Archives, Records of the Director’s Office: Frederic Allen Whiting, box 13, folder 135. In the letter Warner states that “there happens to be a lull in the purchase of Japanese things owing to the extreme popularity of Chinese. For this reason I believe that you can get hold of some of the finest things and that you ought to take every chance to have them represented [in your collection].”

130 Langdon Warner to Frederic A. Whiting, letter, May 10, 1915, The Cleveland Museum of Art Archives, Records of the Director’s Office: Frederic Allen Whiting, box 13, folder 135. Warner indicates that Whiting told him “that the gentleman who is suggesting the formation of a special Oriental collection for the benefit of your museum [Worcester Warner] was particularly interested in the finer craftsmanship of the East and the history of its development. This seems to be a particularly happy idea, and one that will give unusual opportunity to express individual taste and descrimination (sic) as well as one which will afford unusual scope and variety” (emphases mine).
the display of fine, aesthetically pleasing, and historically significant pieces; thus through their display in Cleveland, their historical-cultural prestige and pedigrees would be transferred to the city at-large, resulting in a (slow) but continuous transition from industrial-backwater, to city of cultural substance.

Chapter Six of this dissertation analyzes the emergence of the Cleveland Museum of Art’s educational program, arguing that while its goals (youth education and broad cultural uplift) were similar to those of other contemporary American art museums, the focus in Cleveland on the central role of Asian art in achieving these ends produced a unique “space of difference.” Whiting, along with curators J. Arthur MacLean and, later, Theodore Sizer, endeavored to enhance Cleveland’s intellectual pedigree by creating an educational department. Members of the educational department traveled to Cleveland’s suburbs providing lectures and access to objects of low quality; children were also educated on-site at annual museum visits. Several of these “hands-on” exhibits contained examples of artwork from East Asia. Educating the public became a core mission of the newly minted museum. Although many museums had educational departments on-site, Cleveland’s was unique, in that its specific goal was to reach most, if not all, local schoolchildren, particularly those living within the Cleveland metropolitan area. In this way, Asian art objects and antiquities could serve multiple purposes at the

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131 Lord, 10.

132 Karl Bolander, Director Columbus Gallery of Fine Arts, to Rossiter Howard, Curator of Educational Work, CMA, letter, September 29, 1926, The Cleveland Museum of Art Archives, Records of the Director’s Office: Frederic Allen Whiting, box 6, folder 57. Bolander writes to ask if he may borrow CMA’s Japanese wood block printing tools, along with several “color proofs with blocks,” since he wishes to use them in lectures with local schoolchildren. The lectures were apparently so successful that Bolander ‘forgot’ to return the items to CMA.
Cleveland Museum of Art: they could educate the masses about Asia and Asian history, while transferring the civilizational and historical qualities of superiority to the city of Cleveland, simply by being acquired and displayed. Lesser specimens could be employed in the education of local children; this gives further credence to the central argument of this dissertation: that objects of Asian art and antiquities were purposefully and specifically singled out, by curators and the director of CMA, with the goal being education and civilizational uplift through contact. The dissertation ends with a conclusion.
CHAPTER II
SITUATING CLEVELAND

Cleveland, Ohio in the late nineteenth century was a multi-faceted entity – a teeming commercial center with over 260,000 residents, a burgeoning industrial powerhouse on the verge, with growing industries in oil refinement and steel and iron production; and a site of unbridled cultural potentiality.¹ The citizens of Cleveland, from newly arrived immigrant laborers to established New England-bred businessmen, subsisted and in some cases got rich off of the explosion of industrially-related processing facilities and linked industries.² However, Cleveland, wealthy, large, and riotous as it was, lacked the veneer of cultural refinement present in other big, established industrially dependent urban centers like New York City and Chicago. Cleveland, then, in the minds of some elite politicians, businessmen, and socialites, was in need of a major cultural overhaul – one which would ultimately result in the creation of some of the most enduring symbols of cultural maturity and social ascendency on the “North Coast.” While the establishment of a school of art, playhouse and orchestra, situated in Severance Hall on the newly


christened Wade Oval on Cleveland’s near east side were certainly accomplishments, the
development of the Cleveland Museum of Art was, by far, the biggest, brightest, and
most powerful symbol of Cleveland’s growth and maturity as a city of culture and taste. ³

More important than the structure itself were the varied objects housed within its walls. The Cleveland Museum of Art’s first director, Frederic A. Whiting, its early curators and the members of the founding Board of Trustees all shared a desire for acquiring art objects and antiquities from around the world. In doing so, the CMA’s founders were among the most fervent followers of an emerging trend in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century United States that championed the creation of large, culturally important museums in rapidly developing urban areas. By emphasizing the construction of a collection of very fine art objects and antiquities from diverse sources, the director, curators, and trustees of the collectively followed patterns of acquisition introduced by their peers in other American museums. However, those responsible for building the collections at the Cleveland Museum of Art all possessed a particular (and almost peculiar) focus on the arts and antiquities of the East Asian nations of China, Japan, and Korea. This emphasis is particularly anomalous given the proposed size of the museum and its location in the Midwest. Whiting, as the first director of the new museum, referenced this relative tension, indicating that the new Cleveland Museum of Art was more akin in size and geographic location to smaller, regional museums than

those serving large metropolitan regions. However, Whiting still believed that the new museum in Cleveland could have an impact upon the city and its residents through the construction of a fine permanent collection comprised of exquisite art objects and antiquities from around the world. While objects from the ‘West’ would certainly be represented, the museum would distinguish itself from its neighbor institutions in the Midwest through the acquisition and collection of art objects and antiquities from East Asia. This idea referenced Whiting’s goal to build the Cleveland Museum of Art into a world class institution like those produced in Boston, New York, and Chicago.

The ambitious project of building an ‘Oriental’ art collection from scratch did, in some sense, reflect broader collecting trends in the United States. The Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, possessed a large collection of art objects and antiquities from Asia. The Museum of Fine Arts established its collection of ‘Oriental’ art in the United States in 1890. However, the Metropolitan Museum of art in New York only established its “Department of Far Eastern Art” in 1915, roughly corresponding with the Cleveland Museum of Art’s own efforts to build a collection representing Asia. The Art Institute of Chicago likewise staged exhibitions of ‘Oriental’ art between 1910-1930, and did

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5 Ibid.

6 Frederic A. Whiting to Denman Ross, letter, May 20, 1914, The Cleveland Museum of Art Archives, Records of the Director’s Office; Frederic Allen Whiting, box 12, folder 131.


possess an ‘Oriental’ art gallery, but did not begin to systematically collect Asian art objects until roughly the postwar period in the mid twentieth century. Other regional peer institutions did not focus exclusively on the acquisition of art objects and antiquities from Asia. In Buffalo, New York, the Fine Arts Academy was established in 1862; this eventually became the Albright-Knox Art Gallery, which was officially dedicated in 1905. The Albright-Knox Gallery specialized in the collection of European and American paintings and plaster casts. The Columbus Gallery of Fine Arts was established in Columbus, Ohio, in 1878; it moved to its current location in 1931, focusing on the collection and display of paintings. Cincinnati’s art museum was incorporated in 1881, and opened in 1886 as the Cincinnati Art Museum. The museum’s original focus was broad, including “marbles and bronzes and casts,” as well as textiles and “five hundred electroplated reproductions of original” metal objects displayed “in the museums of Europe.” While Cincinnati’s museum possessed some pieces from Asia, there was not a stand-alone department of Asian art in the museum. In Indianapolis, Indiana, efforts to build an art museum were initiated in 1883; the John Herron Art Institute

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14 Charles Frederic Goss, Cincinnati, the Queen City, 1788-1912 v. 2 (Cincinnati, S. J. Clarke Publishing Company, 1912), 457.
opened in the city in 1906. In its formative period, the museum’s permanent collection contained “about 80 paintings; some casts; and a collection of miscellaneous art objects.” The museum’s “permanent collection of paintings [was] contemporary in character and [was comprised] mainly of American art.” Although the Herron, later the Indianapolis Museum of Art, does today possess a fine collection of Asian art objects and antiquities, much of the collection was formed in the “1940s and 1950s” as part of the Eli Lilly Collection. The Detroit Institute of Arts in Michigan was incorporated in 1885. In its formative period, the Detroit Institute of Arts was styled as “an American center for Renaissance art” from Europe; art objects and antiquities from Asia, while forming part of these early collections, were not placed center stage. By 1908, the museum possessed 29,500 objects; of those, 1,600, or about 5% were art objects from China and Korea. Although the Detroit Institute of Arts was similar to the Cleveland Museum of Art in terms of size and regional location, the founders of the Detroit museum emphasized Asian art to a lesser degree than did their counterparts in Cleveland.


17 Ibid., 78.


21 Abt, 81.
To further establish the unique nature of the CMA’s emphasis on Asian art, it is necessary to briefly discuss two other American institutions. The Freer Gallery of Art, part of the Smithsonian Institution and located in Washington, D.C., comprised the bulk of Charles Lang Freer’s personal collection of art objects and antiquities from Asia and the Near East. This gallery, opened in 1923 on the Mall in Washington, housed Freer’s “gift” to the United States.\(^{22}\) The gallery was the first comprehensive, public museum devoted to the display of art objects and antiquities from Asia in the United States. Freer likewise ensured that his collection of American paintings be displayed side-by-side with pieces that originated in Asia.\(^{23}\) This effective \textit{heterotopia} reflected similar practices engaged in by the curators at the Cleveland Museum of Art at roughly the same time.

One other important museum devoted to the display of Asian art objects and antiquities deserves to be discussed here. The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, located in Kansas City, Missouri, is renowned for its own fine collection of art objects and antiquities from China, Japan, and Korea. The museum emerged from the bequests of two donors: William Rockhill Nelson and Mary Atkins, opening to the public in 1933.\(^{24}\) Although the benefactors wished to construct a gallery “devoted solely to Chinese art” in Missouri, their plans were only initiated around 1930, well after the founders of Cleveland Museum of Art, under the guidance of Whiting and MacLean, purposefully acquired art objects.


\[^{23}\text{Merrill, 252.}\]

and antiquities from East Asia, adding them to the museum’s permanent collection.25 These prior examples illustrate why the situation at the Cleveland Museum of Art was unique. Although other American museums certainly possessed fine collections of art objects and antiquities from Asian nations, none, at their inception, focused or invested as heavily in the acquisition of these sorts of objects as the Cleveland Museum of Art did in its formative years.26 This makes a case study of the Cleveland Museum all the more compelling for its anomalous nature.

Models of Edification: Boston, New York, and Chicago

The major museums in Boston, New York, and Chicago – the great “palaces for the people” on the east coast of the United States – served as models for ideas and inspiration for the wealthy patrons looking to build a museum in Cleveland: Hinman B. Hurlbut, a railroad executive and lawyer, Horace Kelley, a Cleveland-area real estate investor, John P. Huntington, an industrialist linked to the Standard Oil Company, and Jeptha H. Wade II, the philanthropist grandson of Jeptha H. Wade I, a Western Union Telegraph pioneer.27 Boston’s Museum of Fine Arts was incorporated February 4, 1870, and was closely followed by New York City’s Metropolitan Museum of Art, incorporated


26 More detail on methods of acquisition, and objects acquired, is discussed specifically in Chapters Four and Five.

on April 13 of the same year.\textsuperscript{28} These were followed by the Art Institute of Chicago, the lone Midwestern anomaly, founded in 1879 as an art school and museum. The founding philanthropists involved with each of these “big-city” museums shared a similar goal, which appears as a frequent trope in texts related to art history and emerging museum studies; that goal was to “civilize” and educate members of the urban lower classes, whose teeming numbers made up the bulk of urban populations in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The CMA’s founders, Hurlbut, Kelley, Huntington and Wade, along with their wives and offspring, regularly “civilized” themselves by spending time touring the palaces and artistic splendor of European cities. As such they sought to employ art as a medium to bring a greater level of distinction to American cities, and discernment to the existent faculties of those who lived and worked in American urban factories.\textsuperscript{29} These individuals, who would collectively become trustees in Cleveland’s new art museum, wished to celebrate Cleveland’s cultural ‘arrival’ by investing millions of dollars in philanthropic endeavors.\textsuperscript{30} They equated cultural achievement with civic investment, and identified Boston and New York, along with their respective art museums, as physical representations for the collective civility of the regions at-large. The founding in 1879 of Chicago’s Art Institute finally spurred Hurlbut, Kelley, and


\textsuperscript{29} It is important to note, however, that this “distinction” was generally predicated upon a Eurocentric model. It is my contention that, in the case of Cleveland and the CMA, Asian art would for the first time play a similar role in distinguishing an otherwise ‘culturally deficient’ industrial city from its neighbors, both larger and smaller.

\textsuperscript{30} Turner, 1.

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Huntington to act, since Chicago was viewed as an industrialized Midwestern foil for Cleveland.\textsuperscript{31} To become culturally relevant, Cleveland required greater philanthropic investment in the city’s expanding artistic nodes; for this reason, Cleveland saw the founding of its orchestra and art museum in the late nineteenth century. The rise of Cleveland’s museum of art was directly related to the success of similar institutions in Boston, New York, and Chicago. The Cleveland museum’s civic mission was, to some degree, modeled on those of Boston, New York, and Chicago; however, through the significant focus on acquiring art objects and antiquities from East Asia, the Cleveland Museum of Art became a wholly unique institution.

Among the major East Coast cities, Boston was first in constructing a major museum. The city had long been a terminus of the so-called “China trade,” and the homes of Boston's elite citizens were filled with Chinese porcelains and other examples of exotic “bric-a-brac”\textsuperscript{32} and other examples of chinoiserie, a term that is broadly applied to objects that reflected the “European fantasy vision of China and the rest of the east (Including India, Persia and Japan).”\textsuperscript{33} Bostonians, in the nineteenth century, collected examples of popularly produced export goods from East Asia, as well as some finer examples of Chinese, Japanese and Korean art objects and antiquities. These practices fell into line with activities engaged in by their contemporaries in Britain and on the

\textsuperscript{31} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{32} Hoganson, 14.

\textsuperscript{33} David Beevers, “‘Mand’rin only is the man of taste’: 17\textsuperscript{th} and 18\textsuperscript{th} Century Chinoiserie in Britain” in Chinese Whispers: Chinoiserie in Britain 1650-1930, ed. David Beevers (Brighton: The Royal Pavilion and Museums, Brighton and Howe, 2008), 13.
European continent, specifically in France. European collection of *chinoiserie* objects reflected attempts by new consumers from upwardly mobile middle class backgrounds to distinguish themselves culturally and socially through consumption of “exotic” and cosmopolitan looking objects; in this way *chinoiserie* and “commercial culture” in Europe developed in concert with one another.\(^{34}\) In this way, elite New Englanders might mimic the collecting practices of their contemporaries in Europe; this action could serve to add a second layer of distinction to an activity already intended to increase social prestige through acquisition. The acquisition and consumption of objects of *chinoiserie* was an important way for individuals in New England to acquaint themselves with “the Orient;” however, in most instances, objects of *chinoiserie* were not legitimate art objects or antiquities from Asia.\(^{35}\) Instead, they were proxies, produced either in Asia for Euro-American consumption, or by European or American craftsmen in imitation of Asian art objects and antiquities. These pieces were meant to elicit or stimulate a sense of ‘the East’ in a viewer, but did not (nor could not) accurately represent ‘the East’ for a viewer. The collection of *chinoiserie* objects was, however, an important first step in acquainting members of the public with ‘the East’ in a basic sense. *Chinoiserie* and related goods were popularized in New England and were accumulated as a result of Boston’s historical role as an important port on the Atlantic maritime trade circuit.\(^{36}\) These items, valued for


their ability to confer and enhance “personal prestige” through consumption, were at
times bequeathed for posterity to the city’s proto-museum, the Athenaeum, where they
were housed, hodge-podge, with little effort expended upon organization or proper
methods of categorization.\textsuperscript{37}

In an effort to remedy this issue, elite Bostonians set about incorporating a
museum of arts on February 4, 1870. The new museum’s collection was initially made
up of pieces from the old Athenaeum; as such it served as a visual representation for the
region’s historical links to East Asia via the medium of trade. Elite Bostonians also
sought to employ these objects in an educational manner, to provide social uplift to the
city’s burgeoning (largely immigrant) working classes. Many of these individuals, like
the Boston philanthropist and art collector Martin Brimmer, physician Charles William
Elliot, and historian Samuel Eliot, had in their youths spent time traveling through
Europe\textsuperscript{38}; they were impressed by the fine methods of display enacted at European
museums. Of particular interest to many American travelers in Europe was the success
of England’s South Kensington (later Victoria and Albert) museum, which emerged in
1852 as an extension of the Crystal Palace exhibition. The museum aimed to make fine
arts, and artistically designed objects, accessible to working-class citizens. Many citizens
in Boston felt they should initiate a similar situation in their own city; as a result, the
Museum of Fine Arts, as Boston’s museum was ultimately called, was opened on July 3,
1876. Members of the public visited the following day as a part of local U.S. Centennial

\textsuperscript{37} Frank, 7.

\textsuperscript{38} Hirayama, loc. 3424.
celebrations.\textsuperscript{39} Boston’s museum was conceived and constructed by local elites inspired by Enlightenment principles; these citizens “wished to correct, with education, the city’s perceived indifference to art.”\textsuperscript{40} In this way, the museum was, from the outset, designated an “encyclopedic museum.” As an “encyclopedic museum,” the MFA’s primary goal was to provide its audience with an overview of global artwork, beginning with so-called ‘prehistory’ and culminating in contemporary art objects. Like the encyclopedia itself, the “encyclopedic museum” was a product of Enlightenment thought, which sought to foster individual intellectual development by providing persons with the basic tools necessary to gain insight into a particular object, idea or theme.\textsuperscript{41} Following this (very subjective) introduction, individuals could then create a new narrative based upon both consumed information, and/or firsthand experience of an object, or idea. While some contemporary scholars argue that “encyclopedic museums” functioned as an extension of the power of the state over both its citizens, and the representations of objects within its control, James Cuno indicates that such museums were not necessarily synonymous with systems of hegemonic control. Similarly, as Beth Lord indicated, even


\textsuperscript{40} Hirayama, Kindle Edition, Loc. 118.

\textsuperscript{41} For more on the alleged strengths of “encyclopedic museums,” see James Cuno, \textit{Museums Matter: In Praise of the Encyclopedic Museum} (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011). Cuno argues against earlier studies of “encyclopedic museums” which apply Foucaultian theory to expose the existent power hierarchies present in such entities. Specifically, Cuno disagrees with current, accepted scholarship that argues that museums have been agents of empire (both formal and informal), and that the act of displaying foreign objects and/or antiquities in purposeful arrangements served to bolster hegemonic notions of so-called “Western” superiority.
“encyclopedic museums” could function as “spaces of difference,” where representations of objects were perpetually mitigated by viewers.42

Because the MFA’s trustees were inspired by the example of London’s South Kensington Museum, they sought to “make art contribute to the manufacturing industry” by tailoring exhibits to meet the needs and desires of an audience largely comprised of individuals employed in local industries.43 The South Kensington Museum, founded in 1857, set out to provide the public with an accessible clearinghouse of antique and contemporary examples of decorative art objects.44 Specifically, the administrators of the South Kensington Museum sought to enhance and develop “the quality of British manufactures.”45 This could be accomplished by inviting the public to view objects of the very best quality, so that their favorable design elements could be copied or applied to personal projects and grand industrial initiatives. Students and members of the public were thus encouraged to view objects placed on display throughout the museum; the “art [was] always at the service of education” in the South Kensington Museum.46 In this way, the museum linked itself directly (and unashamedly) to industry, the backbone of the British economy in the mid-nineteenth century.47


43 Ibid.


45 Tompkins, 23.

46 Robertson, 8.

47 I will discuss the CMA’s own push to provide a basic introduction to design elements in Chapter Three.
One issue that Americans had with the South Kensington museum, and other European art museums, was directly related to methods of display. European museums tended to overwhelm the visitor, in the estimation of many American viewers, with displays that were cluttered.\(^48\) Some European museums were, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, employing more systematic measures to ensure visitors had optimal access to view, at the very least, those objects deemed to be “masterpieces.”\(^49\) Boston’s Benjamin Gilman, however, felt that displays in American museums needed to be streamlined and well documented; this would help prevent “museum fatigue” developing among visitors.\(^50\) Although Americans wished to apply elements of the spirit of the South Kensington museum to similar institutions stateside, they simultaneously wanted to make the displays attractive, informative and intelligible. These changes were primarily implemented in the early twentieth century in American museums.

While industry was also important in late-nineteenth century New England, particularly with regard to industrial textile production, the region’s early and unrivaled link to a robust and thriving international exchange of goods provided much more material fodder for both the households of wealthy Bostonians, and later, the entity that would grow into the Museum of Fine Arts.\(^51\) Because of the existence of centuries-long

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\(^49\) Ibid., 124-125.

\(^50\) Ibid., 125.

links with East Asia, householders in New England in general, and Boston in particular, had greater and more comprehensive access to goods produced in East Asia, with the most ubiquitous being those originating in China. Many families might simply own some pieces of export porcelain produced in China; others might possess, or seek out, a tea set of Chinese manufacture, as an aspirational good or mark of status. In his seminal *New York Before Chinatown*, John Kuo Wei Tchen argues that Americans in the 19th and 20th centuries collected Chinese export wares not to absorb any latent cultural ‘aura;’ instead, these objects, like porcelain tea sets, came to represent the American “elite culture” of the period. Tchen calls this the “patrician Orientalism” of elite Americans, who used Chinese export objects to bolster their own aspirations and social status at home. Thus, ownership of a fine Chinese-produced tea set, which would be handed down generationally, came to represent an element of the “distinction … and wealth” of an individual. Tchen argues that “desired Chinese and Chinese-style luxury goods and ideas, imbued with symbolic meanings, were integral to the formulation of a new American individual and nation – an identity to be further reconstituted in the process of exchange.” In this way, Tchen indicates that Americans, on the face, collected Chinese


53 Tchen, 22.

54 Tchen, 24.
export goods to enhance their social status. However, the goods possessed no social
value until introduced into elite (or aspirational) American society; the goods thus gained
cultural value after they were purchased by Americans and assigned a particular status.
Tchen thus identifies an important phase in the development of an early American
consumer identity; however, he deals only with Chinese export wares and does not
discuss antiquities and the potential ‘civilizing influences’ of such items.

While goods like porcelain were relatively commonplace in late-nineteenth
century New England, some individuals did focus on acquiring more “authentic” material
representations of ‘the Orient.’ Edward Sylvester Morse, originally trained as a zoologist
with a specialization in brachiopods, discovered in mid-life an abiding fascination with
East Asian art; this led Morse to spend the rest of his life acquiring rare pieces of ancient
Japanese pottery.\footnote{Whitehill, v. 1, 102. Morse also served as director of the Peabody Academy of Science, ancestor of the contemporary Peabody Essex Museum.} Morse was born on June 18, 1838, in Portland, Maine.\footnote{Michal Moos, ed., \textit{Two Essays on Japanese Archaeology by Edward S. Morse (Introduction)}, accessed April 11, 2015, http://www.seaa-web.org/bul-rep-00a.htm.} He studied
marine biology at Harvard University, and after graduating, traveled to Japan in 1877
where he worked as a “Professor of Zoology and Physiology” at the University of
Tokyo.\footnote{Ibid.} Morse subsequently excavated the Omori shell mound outside of Tokyo,
publishing in 1879 a monograph presenting the results of the excavation.\footnote{Ibid.} When he was
not at work, Morse traveled throughout Japan, documenting and collecting examples of
ancient pottery production. He also acquired examples of contemporary Japanese ceramics, becoming enamored with Japanese aesthetic principles.\textsuperscript{59} After his return to Boston, Morse published \textit{Japanese Homes and Their Surroundings}, vividly describing the style, situation, and furnishings linked to Japanese traditional homes. Morse was particularly struck by the “transcendent merit of Japanese decorative art,” which he believed ought to be preserved intact and not perverted, through “mongrel admixture” with American and European design, into a \textit{chinoiserie}-driven facsimile of an original object or stylistic pretension.\textsuperscript{60} Morse’s position as director of the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology permitted him to play an instrumental role in finding and training several individuals who ultimately became important collectors, connoisseurs, and curators of Asian art and antiquities in twentieth-century America; they included Ernest Fenollosa, William S. Bigelow, and Okakura Kakuzo.\textsuperscript{61} Each of these men corresponded extensively with Cleveland’s founding director, Frederic A. Whiting; they were also collectively friendly with Charles Lang Freer, and Freer’s protégé the scholar-adventurer Langdon Warner. Fenollosa also wrote (and published posthumously in 1913) a definitive guide on understanding Asian art; this book was used as a reference by

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\textsuperscript{59} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{60} Edward S. Morse, \textit{Japanese Homes and Their Surroundings} (Boston: Ticknor and Company, 1886), xxvi.

\textsuperscript{61} Ibid., 105-109. Although born in Massachusetts, Fenollosa spent years teaching and studying in Japan. He was a founder of the Tokyo Imperial Museum. Many of the objects he acquired during his time in Japan ultimately wound up as part of the MFA’s permanent collection. Bigelow, a physician by training, also spent years working in and traveling throughout Japan; he left his entire collection to the MFA. Fenollosa and Bigelow each became Buddhists, taking on new names. Okakura, a Japanese scholar, served as Fenollosa’s assistant while in Japan; he published \textit{The Ideals of the East} in 1904. These men would all become important figures in museum and academic circles in the US.
members of the Cleveland Museum of Art’s curatorial staff. The collections bequeathed to the MFA in the late nineteenth century (directly or indirectly) by Morse, Fenollosa and Bigelow constituted the backbone of the museum’s emerging collection of East Asian art; simultaneously, their collecting practices influenced those of other museums, including the Cleveland Museum of Art.62

In addition to becoming the recipient of the varied material possessions and more systematic collections of Boston’s elites, the entity that became the Museum of Fine Arts had another source of material and ideological sustenance: the Boston Athenaeum. The Athenaeum, founded as a “membership library” in 1807, was itself an institution born of Enlightenment ideals.63 According to Hina Hirayama, the founders of the Athenaeum believed that “the world … [could] be understood by the systematic attainment of knowledge;” as a result, privately donated books, unpublished documents, and pieces of artwork were assembled in the Athenaeum for the edification of the institution’s members (and later visitors).64 While the members of the Athenaeum initially collected European paintings, they did begin, by the mid- and late-nineteenth century to branch out into producing collections and displays of fine examples of decorative artwork; with the goal being to “improve … public taste.”65 The Athenaeum was an early supporter of Boston’s emerging Museum of Fine Arts, and aided the latter institution by providing exhibition


63 Hirayama, Loc. 86.

64 Ibid., Loc. 127.

65 Ibid., Loc. 1379.
space, financial assistance, and ultimately objects, which were initially lent and later donated to the MFA outright.

Boston’s experience in building an art museum was thus intimately linked to the city’s historic economic activities: trade and industry. In order to polish the rough edges of Boston’s public face, elites deemed it necessary to build an art museum; however this art museum should remain true to the bases of the city’s economic success. In this way, the collections ultimately housed in Boston would reflect the city’s global trade links (as in large collections of East Asian export ceramics); however, these ceramics could serve a dual function, as tasteful objects, which acquired their social prestige upon arrival, and which would serve to educate a public in the nature of good taste made tangible. While Boston certainly strove to “civilize” the bulk of the population through display of varied art objects, most of these objects were ‘classic’ examples of fine art objects – they were primarily European oil paintings, carvings, and reproduction plaster casts. While ‘educating the masses’ was certainly a goal in Boston, this edification would come via the medium of either European art objects, or Asian art objects and/or antiquities which were, upon arrival, gifted with a new identity and meaning closely linked to the aspirational goals of a trade-based social group.66 Most of the MFA’s early collection of Asian art objects arrived at the museum as gifts or bequests; the museum didn’t begin seriously collecting Asian art objects and antiquities until the early twentieth century.

New York City’s foray into the world of fine arts began in the post-Civil War period, and was initiated by a clique of wealthy elites, including James Jackson Jarvis,
J.P. Morgan, Cornelius Vanderbilt and members of the Rockefeller family. While Jarvis himself noted that taste had become a commodity valued by wealthy collectors, he was most interested in righting the perceived “cultural deficit” that many felt existed between the fledgling United States and Europe. In the late nineteenth-century, many elites traveled, duty-bound, on the obligatory “Grand Tour,” seeing the ruins of Rome, shopping in the ateliers of Paris, and wondering over the decrepit grandeur of Athens and Alexandria. Upon their return to the United States, many, like Jarvis, were concerned with the lack of tangible historicity and cultural pedigree in the cities of their homeland. They viewed the United States, and New York City in particular, as “a reflection of the entire nation’s moral and spiritual decay;” the city, and nation, could only be delivered through the construction of a temple to the arts, which would, in a secular venue, school the masses in the value of art, history, and civilizational achievement.

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, conceived as an “encyclopedic” museum, was incorporated on April 13, 1870. The museum would not open until a decade later, in 1880. Joseph C. Choate, a New-York based corporate attorney, and one of the founding trustees of the Metropolitan, argued that the museum should function as an educational venue, going beyond a collection of mere “curiosities … for the idle” rich. The purpose of the museum should be to exist as a “democratic institution that by its ‘diffusion of a


68 Tompkins, 19.

knowledge of art in its higher forms of beauty would tend directly to humanize, to educate and to refine a practical and laborious people.” However, Choate also understood that the museum could simultaneously serve as a kind of memorial to the discriminating taste and grand “largesse” of New York’s elite families; he famously argued that these individuals should convert pork into porcelain, grain and produce into priceless pottery, the rude ores of commerce into sculptured marble, and railroad shares and mining stocks – things which shrivel like parched scrolls – into the glorified canvas of the world’s masters, that shall adorn these walls for centuries.

For Choate, the creation of an art museum was an effective win-win for both elites and the urban public. Wealthy people could convert their revenue into art objects, which would be displayed (with great fanfare and recognition) in a publicly funded and publicly accessible museum, which was, ultimately, the “most efficient educator.” In Choate’s mind, this would then raise public awareness about the value and depth of artwork, while simultaneously glorifying the generosity of the wealthy families that participated in the process of museum building.

The founding trustees of the MMA, Choate included, agreed that New York’s new art museum should incorporate Enlightenment ideals to inspire the public with

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71 Ibid., 1082. What is also of note here is Choate’s assumption that the arts which would grace the walls of the MMA “for centuries” would be examples of arts and crafts primarily produced in Europe.

authentic art objects and antiquities, as well as clever reproductions. Although Enlightenment themes dominated the discussions of many founding trustees of the MMA, others had more practical concerns in mind. Specifically, Choate encouraged his fellow trustees to study the success of London’s South Kensington Museum (later re-named the Victoria and Albert Museum). Choate wished to emulate the South Kensington Museum’s success vis-à-vis the collection and display of examples of decorative and applied arts, as a way of disseminating standards of taste, and encouraging members of the public who were associated with New York’s manufacturing industries to take design inspiration from the standard set in the halls of the new museum.

For Choate, then, elements inspired by the success of the South Kensington Museum’s program of hands-on, personalized education could be applied in New York. The MMA would serve two goals, then: one lofty, based upon a patrician desire to achieve immortality through the generous public donation of money and objects to what was deemed a worthy and deserving project, and one more pedestrian, which focused upon educating the public in the history of art and acceptable tenets of design, so that that basic “education” could be parlayed into the corral of industrial production.

Although New York’s Metropolitan Museum of Art clearly strove to provide the public with a primer in the narrative unfolding of global artwork, early acquisitions were Eurocentric. Unlike Cleveland, the Metropolitan Museum of Art did not develop a specific, focused policy of acquiring Asian art and objects. Cornelius Vanderbilt donated
over “seven hundred Italian drawings,” while James Jackson Jarves promised his “Old Master” paintings to the emerging museum.\textsuperscript{75} One collector, Henry Gurdon Marquand, gifted a “Japanese cabinet” to the museum along with a “Moorish smoking room.”\textsuperscript{76} Unlike the connoisseurs of Asian art in Boston, Marquand’s gifts were probably inspired by the late-nineteenth century design trend encapsulated under the title of “cosey corners;” or so-called “Eastern” rooms (or parts of rooms) meant to convey to visitors the high “cosmopolitan” taste of the homeowner or decorator.\textsuperscript{77} The trustees of the Metropolitan Museum of Art authorized the purchase of one thousand pieces of archaic and ancient Chinese ceramics in 1879,\textsuperscript{78} and later did receive a notable gift of over a thousand carved Chinese jade pieces in 1902 as part of a generous bequest from Heber R. Bishop, a corporate businessman. However, for most of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, the Metropolitan Museum of Art focused its acquisition upon “Western” art and antiquities, rather than antiquities and art objects from “the Orient.”\textsuperscript{79} Ancient Egyptian antiquities were initially collected beginning in 1907. The acquisition of these types of objects continued via the medium of a series of Metropolitan museum-funded excavations in the early-twentieth century; however a greater focus was placed

\textsuperscript{75} Tompkins, 69.

\textsuperscript{76} Tompkins, 73.

\textsuperscript{77} For more on “cosey corners” as both tools of empire and representations of rampant Orientalism, see Kristin Hoganson, \textit{Consumer’s Imperium: The Global Production of American Domesticity, 1865-1920}, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2007).

\textsuperscript{78} Howard Hibbard, \textit{The Metropolitan Museum of Art} (New York: Harrison House, 1980), 519.

\textsuperscript{79} Tompkins, 86.
upon the acquisition of art and artifacts from ancient Greece and Rome, with particular emphasis placed upon Cypriot antiquities collected by Luigi Palma di Cesnola.\textsuperscript{80} J.P. Morgan gifted a massive collection of Byzantine artwork and antiquities to the museum following his death in 1913.\textsuperscript{81} Perhaps the best example of this Eurocentric focus was John D. Rockefeller, Jr.’s gift of a large collection of Medieval and Renaissance art from Europe, to be housed in a series of re-constructed architectural fragments from European monasteries and abbeys. While The Cloisters, an off-site branch of the Metropolitan Museum, wasn’t physically constructed until the 1930s, the objects they housed were acquired earlier, during the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century craze for all things old and European. The Metropolitan Museum of Art only formed the Department of Far Eastern Art in 1915, and did not seriously begin to collect Near Eastern art in earnest until the 1930s.\textsuperscript{82} The museum’s “Astor Court,” a reproduction of a Chinese Ming-era courtyard home in which numerous examples of Ming-era furniture and ceramics were displayed, was only opened in 1981 (a stark delay when juxtaposed with CMA’s continuing focus on the arts and antiquities of East Asia).

Like Boston’s Museum of Fine Arts, and New York’s Metropolitan Museum of Art, Chicago’s own Art Institute had its origins as an educational entity. Chicago’s elites, including Charles L. Hutchinson and Martin A. Reyerson, both sons of local business

\textsuperscript{80} Hibbard, 28; 65. Cesnola would later become the first director of the MMA in 1879.

\textsuperscript{81} Ibid., 97.

\textsuperscript{82} Tompkins, 225. Of note here is the fact that the Cleveland Museum of Art, in its infancy in 1915, from the start valued the arts and antiquities of China and Japan. It should also be noted that a collection of Near Eastern/Islamic metalwork was gifted to the MMA in 1891; however systematic collection of artifacts from the region wasn’t initiated until the 1930’s. See Hibbard, 106, for more information.
magnates, sought to bring gentility to the Midwestern frontier via the medium of publicly displayed fine art. The ancestor of the Art Institute, the Chicago Academy of Design, was established following the Civil War in 1866. It grew into the Chicago Academy of Fine Arts, which was officially incorporated on May 24, 1879; its purpose was to create a “school of art and design,” which would also maintain “exhibition[s] of collections of objects of art” for public consumption.\(^8\) The Academy of Fine Arts was supplanted by the Art Institute of Chicago, which was founded in December of 1882.\(^9\) The Art Institute, in its formative years, had no permanent building; it shuttled from rented rooms to small structures (that it quickly outgrew). The AIC finally found a permanent home following the staging of the 1893 World’s Columbian Exposition – the hall which was constructed for the use of the members of the World Congress was officially transferred to the care of the AIC following the Exposition.\(^8\)

In its formative decades, between 1879 and 1893, the Art Institute was guided by long-term president Charles L. Hutchinson. Hutchinson’s father was an early member of the Chicago Corn Exchange Bank, and sat on the Chicago Board of Trade.\(^9\) After traveling through Europe, North Africa and the Middle East, Hutchinson returned to Chicago energized, and with a desire to help construct an art museum to rival the more venerable institutions situated in East Coast cities. The majority of the Art Institute’s

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\(^9\) Ibid.

\(^8\) Maxon, 8.

early, permanent collection was made up of paintings, antiquities from the Mediterranean region, and, in an attempt at didactic display, a collection of plaster casts of important ancient and medieval architectural pieces.\textsuperscript{87} Hutchinson’s priority, however, was to gain the interest of both wealthy Chicagoans, and members of the region’s middle- and working classes.\textsuperscript{88} This was accomplished through skillful management, and cleverly promoted events meant to draw public interest. Specifically, lectures and loan exhibitions were advertised to great effect.\textsuperscript{89} Hutchinson also worked to promote the connection between the museum’s collections (largely of prints and paintings) with the Art Institute’s school; the curriculum at the school focused upon the applied arts, and was considered one of the “best and largest” of its kind in the country.\textsuperscript{90} As the museum gained legitimacy, wealthy Chicago-based collectors began donating objects to the Art Institute. While most collected ‘traditional’ art objects like Old-world paintings and etchings, some, like coal magnate James W. Ellsworth, did construct more unexpected collections which included some examples of the arts of East Asia.\textsuperscript{91}

The Art Institute of Chicago officially opened to the public in the building that today fronts South Michigan Avenue in December of 1893. Stylistically, the museum’s

\textsuperscript{87} Maxon, 8.
\textsuperscript{88} Hilliard, 24.
\textsuperscript{89} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{91} Hilliard, 16. Ellsworth collected a patchwork of objects, ranging from modern paintings, to Greco-Roman pieces and Chinese porcelain. However, Ellsworth seemed to collect things that pleased him personally; there was little systematic attempt to single out a specific type of artwork because of and preconceived notions of value or prestige.
design was intended to replicate European architectural ideals; it was “worthy of standing alongside the older cathedrals, monuments, and palaces of Western civilization.”

Unlike Boston’s Museum of Fine Arts, or New York’s Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Art Institute was not intended to offer an encyclopedic overview of global art and design. Instead, its small collections of paintings and sculpture were arranged according to more contemporary “European trends in museum display;” which employed informative cards and plaques next to objects, and which limited the number of objects on display in a given gallery. This is further evidence of attempts by the Art Institute’s founders and trustees to link the museum to the cultural pedigree of Europe. The Art Institute regularly hosted loan exhibitions; generally, these exhibitions featured examples of European painting and decorative arts, as well as examples of the applied arts, ostensibly to help develop the ‘taste’ of attending individuals. From its early days, then, the trustees and curators at the Art Institute of Chicago sought out excellent examples of fine European paintings. There were intermittent exhibitions of Asian art at the Art Institute, including a show curated by Frank Lloyd Wright, the architect and Arts and Crafts innovator, who displayed pieces from his personal collection of East Asian art objects in 1905. Like its counterparts in Boston and New York, though, The Art Institute's permanent collection and temporary exhibitions program tended to focus more upon

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92 Hilliard, 34.
93 Hilliard, 34-37.
94 Hilliard, 37.
European and American art and design, rather than the arts of Asia. The Art Institute’s department of Oriental Art was only established in 1921, well after Cleveland began specifically acquiring fine East Asian art objects and antiquities. Curators at the Art Institute have only recently begun to make significant purchases “in the fields of Japanese and Indian sculpture;” however this can be interpreted as a move to balance out a collection that historically favored “Western” art over objects from the “East.”

East Coast art museums, like the Museum of Fine Art, Boston and the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York originated as “encyclopedic museums;” that is, they were built to house objects representative of all regions and historical periods. Visitors encountered objects arranged according to type or region; there was no accompanying explanatory text or information to assist viewers with contextualization. Trends in museum display changed beginning in the early twentieth century, as Progressive social reforms initiated a shift in elite circles regarding the mission of the art museum. Boston’s Museum of Fine Arts was conceived of, now, as the “crown” of Boston’s “educational system.” Likewise, the Metropolitan Museum of Art emerged

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96 Maxon, 16.

97 Ibid.


100 Einreinhofer, 36
as a “force for good” in a “democratic society.” In both cases, the art museums functioned as extensions of Enlightenment-era ideals that stressed the necessity of democratizing access to superlative, authentic art objects. The desired outcome was ‘social uplift.’ To achieve this end, by the early twentieth century, museum officials worked to provide informative textual context alongside works of art; this was enhanced by the production of educational pamphlets and museum guidebooks. Efforts that encouraged visitors to actively engage in their own edification within the museum marked a major shift in how museum educators, and members of the visiting public, viewed the role of the museum at-large.

Further, American art museums were broadly reorganized to provide public access to a curated collection of select pieces of extraordinary quality and educational value; less-valuable objects were placed in storage, in lesser-visited galleries, were displayed in local libraries, or were made part of traveling displays that were part of the museum’s public school outreach efforts. Scholars in fields ranging from history, museum studies, art history and urban studies have documented this trend; however these works have examined larger urban centers along the East Coast and neglected a thorough and more nuanced analysis of the underlying motivations of individuals in prosperous

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101 Ibid., 40.

102 Andrew McClellan, The Art Museum from Boullee to Bilbao (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 123-124. Note: the Cleveland Museum of Art’s outreach efforts are discussed specifically in Chapter Six, which focuses upon the museum as an educator in Cleveland.
interior American cities such as Cleveland, and the means they employed to realize their goals.  

Building a Museum for Cleveland

In many cities across the United States, elite economic, political and cultural leaders supported the construction of museums as a way to assuage their feelings of unease about their city's perceived cultural lag, even as these urban centers became economically and technologically advanced. In Cleveland, the CMA’s founders were troubled by the sticking power of popular stereotypes of the city; a nineteenth century visitor from Philadelphia indicated that the city had great potential, but was nonetheless “in want of finish, as compared with older towns on the Atlantic.” This assessment stuck; debates over the state of “culture” in Cleveland continued through the very late nineteenth century. In the eyes of Americans living in large urban centers on the East Coast, Cleveland was, most certainly, a city of “low culture;” it was a place that suffered from cultural lag, or cultural deficiency, in spite of its rapid industrialization and

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Because the city grew rapidly in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, largely as a result of economic success related to the growth of heavy industry, there was a general sense among elite Clevelanders that the city lacked direction, purpose, and the cultural pedigree that seemed so ubiquitous in larger cities on the East Coast of the United States. A writer in Cleveland’s *Plain Dealer* bemoaned the debased cultural state of the city in 1876, indicating that the city, despite having a large proportion of Gilded-Age moguls to average citizens, was nonetheless a city of “low culture.” The author continued, stating that “some of our gilt-edged people appear to think that there can be nothing here as good as anywhere else – perhaps because they feel their inferiority to folks elsewhere.” The author’s preoccupation with Cleveland’s perceived “low culture” was the result of a flippant editorial comment made the prior year in the *Boston Herald* indicting Cleveland as a city ruled by frivolity and triviality in place of actual cultural development. When Clevelanders failed to attend a lecture on “the first principles of natural science” held at the Case lecture hall (today on the campus of Case Western Reserve University in University Circle), the Boston critic accused them of being, effectively, uneducated and disinterested boors, forming the bulk of the population of a city mired in “low culture.” The editorial staff at the *Cleveland Plain Dealer* responded with a scathing rebuttal, indicating that it was a “gratuitous insult to the

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105 “Is Cleveland “A City of Low Culture?,”” *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, February 8, 1873.

106 “Cleveland’s Want,” *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, April 29, 1876.

107 Ibid.

108 “Is Cleveland “A City of Low Culture?””
people of Cleveland.”\footnote{Ibid.} The Plain Dealer’s editors contended that Clevelanders failed to attend the lecture not because they were uneducated; rather, the opposite must have been true, owing to the superior educational system in place in the city.\footnote{Ibid.} Responses to the perceived insult continued to be published through the mid-1890s. This is indicative of an acute anxiety among individuals living in Cleveland that the city was, perhaps, culturally deficient. Cleveland Plain Dealer journalists, in 1894, argued that the city was superior in terms of its manufacturing potential, and that, in future, it would “assuredly” become a leading American center for cultural development.\footnote{Ibid.} Indeed, the construction of a fine new art museum would remedy this problem, according to an editorial published in 1894 in the Cleveland Plain Dealer.\footnote{Ibid.} The author crowed, “great as Cleveland is destined to be at no distant date in population, manufactures, commerce and wealth, taking rank among the foremost on the continent in all three respects, it will assuredly also hold a leading position \textit{as a city of culture, of refinement and of education turned to its highest uses}. “\footnote{Ibid. Italics mine.} To ensure that these goals became reality, the founders of the Cleveland Museum of Art looked to follow the examples set by the founders of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, and the Art Institute of Chicago. The Cleveland Museum of Art’s founders were motivated by a collective desire to effectively ‘lift up’ the culture of the city; they simultaneously...
engaged in a pointed educational mission intended to reach Clevelanders from all social backgrounds. The museum would thus serve a dual purpose: it would function as a material symbol of the city’s arrival as an entity of cultural distinction, while simultaneously serving as a medium to educate (and transfer intangible aspects of culture to) visitors.

Cleveland’s steady industrialization by the late nineteenth century produced several wealthy and politically influential families. Inspired by the actions of citizens of other large metropolitan regions, like Boston and New York the gilded and well-connected industrialists of Cleveland sought to effect similar change on the North Coast.\textsuperscript{114} Although John D. Rockefeller, who became fantastically wealthy as a result of the success of his Cleveland-centered Standard Oil Company, was approached to help fund the museum, he declined, preferring instead to make charitable donations to New York’s Metropolitan Museum of Art.\textsuperscript{115} As individuals, these Cleveland patrons amassed collections of art objects and antiquities to help bolster their own aspirational social claims. However, from the late 1870’s through the 1890’s, wealthy collectors began to actively seek out institutions to which they might someday leave, as a gift or bequest, these cherished collections. Some collections (and single objects) were displayed at local exhibitions, like the 1878 Cleveland exhibition, which saw fine art objects owned by local elites strategically placed for visual public consumption; individuals could view


\textsuperscript{115} Wittke, 39.
these objects for a modest twenty-five cent admission charge (with the proceeds going to charity). Art activist and philanthropist Sarah Kimball began holding art exhibitions in her Euclid Avenue home in 1880. Two years later, Kimball founded “The Western Reserve School of Design for Women,” with classes being held on-site in Kimball’s home. Other industrialists and socialites, however, longed for a more permanent home for the objects in their collections. Cleveland thus saw the rapid incorporation of new, artistically inclined institutions beginning in the 1880’s, culminating in the incorporation of the Cleveland Museum of Art in 1899. While many wealthy individuals dabbled in the burgeoning Cleveland arts scene, four citizens of means sought to support, financially, the creation and construction of a permanent gallery of art for the city. Their contributions, both financially and in real estate, marked an important shift in Cleveland’s philanthropic movement.

Hinman B. Hurlbut, Horace Kelley, John P. Huntington and Jeptha H. Wade each contributed large sums, in cash and property, to be used in the construction of an art museum in Cleveland. Hurlbut, a New-York born banker and railroad executive, left around half a million dollars to be used toward the creation of an art museum; ultimately, the CMA only received $75,000 due to “overuse” by Hurlbut’s widow.

116 Ibid., 18-19.


118 Ibid. The Cleveland School of Art, which would historically have a close relationship with the CMA, was founded in 1883. The Cleveland Art Association ratified its Constitution in 1894, with its first public show held a year later.

119 “Shrinking Bequest Hits Museum Plan,” Cleveland Plain Dealer, March 26, 1910. While this was still a considerable sum, it was not what trustees expected; hence the outcry.
bequest was linked to that of Horace Kelley, a Cleveland-born, childless real-estate mogul who bequeathed the bulk of his estate, valued at over half a million dollars, to be used to construct and maintain an art museum for Cleveland.\textsuperscript{120} Kelley’s bequest formed the financial basis of the Horace Kelley Art Foundation, overseen by Kelley’s widow, Fannie. The money from Kelley’s bequest was to be used to support the construction of an art gallery and art school in Cleveland (an interesting stipulation that would be echoed by another major donor, John P. Huntington).\textsuperscript{121} Kelley also required that the museum be discerning in its acquisition process; specifically, he sought to prohibit the acceptance of gifts and bequests of objects that lacked “acknowledged [artistic] merit.”\textsuperscript{122} Other museums, including the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City possessed an open-ended acquisitions policy with no regulations in place with regard to bequests and donations; as a result, institutions like the MMA were obliged to accept all donations, even those of a sub-par caliber. By insisting that the infant Cleveland Museum of Art not accept blanket donations, Kelley sought to ensure that the artwork and antiquities displayed would only be of the finest quality. Although much of Kelley’s money was tied up in probate proceedings for over a decade, the executors of the estate and public figures agreed that the money should be applied, as swiftly as possible, to the


\textsuperscript{121} Horace Kelley Art Foundation, \textit{Encyclopedia of Cleveland History}, accessed February 27, 2013, http://ech.case.edu/cgi/article.pl?id=HKAF.

\textsuperscript{122} Leedy, 4.
construction of an art museum in Cleveland, since “a magnificent museum of art would be one of the most profitable investments the city could make.”

While Hinman Hurlbut and Horace Kelley appropriated funds to be used in the context of constructing and maintaining an art museum in Cleveland, the industrialist John P. Huntington wished to stimulate interest in and financially support both an art museum and a polytechnic institute. Huntington, an English immigrant, secured his wealth through shrewd investments in the burgeoning Cleveland oil and shipping industries; as a result, he became, within the space of a few decades, one of the wealthiest men in the city. At 57, Huntington established the John Huntington Benevolent Trust, which set aside $200,000 in support of dozens of local charitable organizations. Huntington also left a substantial sum in excess of $500,000 to be used toward the creation of both an art museum and a polytechnic institute in Cleveland.

Huntington, perhaps acutely aware of his own humble origins in Lancashire, England, sought to construct an institution which would both serve the artistic needs of the city, along with more practical endeavors like enhancing technological know-how. While Huntington clearly believed in the value of public exposure to art and art objects, he also felt that in an industrial city like Cleveland, a more practical approach would be to operate an art museum in conjunction with a polytechnic school, which would provide

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123 “Its Extent Unknown,” Cleveland Plain Dealer, December 14, 1890. The anonymous reporter continued, “A fair share of the attractiveness of Paris to the traveler lies in the Luxembourg, Louvre, and other art galleries.” It is clear that many in Cleveland believed that the construction of an art museum would certainly have a profound civilizing influence on the city at large.

tuition-free courses and training seminars to any student who wished to attend. This polytechnic institute would offer free evening courses, so that men who normally spent their days on the job might have an opportunity to gain additional educational training in their free hours. Huntington’s views are telling, in that they shed light on the perception that many industrialists held with regard to the link between art and experience: Huntington, while interested in providing funds for the creation of an art museum, valued technical know-how almost equally. Huntington believed that his money might only have an effect in Cleveland if applied simultaneously to endeavors to support both the art and craft or applied arts industries.

Huntington espoused ideas shared by other proponents of the emergent Arts and Crafts movement. The movement, initiated in Britain in the late nineteenth century, quickly spread to the United States. Although often characterized as being an antidote to industrialization, the Arts and Crafts movement, and its supporters, were “neither anti-industrial nor antimodern.” Instead, early supporters of the Arts and Crafts movement wished to forge a “new alliance between the crafts and industry” by focusing upon introducing industrial workers to aesthetically pleasing objects and methods of production. The Arts and Crafts movement within the United States was closely linked


126 Turner, 3.

127 Wittke, 28.


129 Ibid.
to popular concepts of “democratization;” in this case, the democratization of access to beautiful, aesthetically pleasing things that were perhaps produced in a factory setting.\footnote{Kaplan, 247.}

Some of the best examples of this phenomenon occurring in the industrial Midwest are related to ceramic and pottery production. Famous potteries thrived in the Ohio River valley town of East Liverpool; likewise, producers like Roseville and Rookwood emerged in the southern sector of the state. These institutions, through the production of high quality, mass produced, but undeniably beautiful objects, blurred the lines between mechanized industrial production and tasteful, handcrafted pieces.

Huntington was supported in this instance by Dudley P. Allen, an early museum trustee, Cleveland surgeon and proponent of the personalization of industrial labor. Allen “realized that one of the weaknesses in our present commercial system is the fact that the enormous scale of production and the almost universal introduction of machinery and subdivision of labor have taken away from the individual workman the sense of personal relationship to his work and that pride in the finished product which existed when one man, or a small group of men, was responsible for the entire production of each object.”\footnote{Frederic Allen Whiting, “The Relation of the Museum to Local Industry,” \textit{Bulletin of the Cleveland Museum of Art} 5 (December 1918): 122. Italics mine.} Allen “further believed that the encouragement of this individual point of view would be the surest way to revive in an increasing group of craftsmen a sense of tradition and responsibility which would inevitably result in the production of a higher order of workmanship.”\footnote{Ibid.}

Allen felt, like Huntington, that the new art museum could serve the
city’s industrial workers by implementing a new system of “sympathetic cooperation” between the museum, local art and polytechnic schools, and local industries. The collections housed in the Cleveland Museum of Art would, with “the cooperation of the manufacturers of Cleveland, [create] a number of important collections for the special benefit of local industries.”

Jeptha Homer Wade I was a New York-born industrialist who accumulated wealth through working and investing in the burgeoning telegraph industry of the middle nineteenth century. His holdings were eventually linked with several other interests across the nation, resulting in the creation of the Western Union Telegraph Company. Wade owned acres of untouched property on Cleveland’s near east side, and in 1881 set about transferring the title of 75 acres of land to the City of Cleveland, for the formation of a park. This park, located along Doan Brook (and roughly correlating today to land between East 105th Street and Euclid Avenue in Cleveland), would eventually be known as Wade Park, and would include the cultural district surrounding Wade Oval, later called University Circle. Wade wished to see his former agricultural estate become public land; much of his bequest was thus used to create Cleveland’s Cultural Gardens, and Fine Arts Garden. In 1892, Jeptha H. Wade II, grandson of original donor Jeptha H. Wade I,  

133 Whiting, “The Relation…”, 123.
134 Ibid.
offered a remaining parcel of 3.75 acres of his grandfather’s former property to the city for the construction of the new art museum.\textsuperscript{137}

By the turn of the twentieth century, the philanthropic efforts of Horace Kelley, John Huntington and Jeptha H. Wade aligned, resulting in the incorporation of what would become the Cleveland Museum of Art in 1899.\textsuperscript{138} Many of the trustees charged with administering the Kelley Foundation fund ultimately ended up serving on the board of trustees of the new museum. The group was made up of a number of prominent Cleveland citizens, including Jeptha H. Wade, John D. Rockefeller,\textsuperscript{139} George H. Worthington, Samuel Williamson and William B. Sanders (both attorneys), Samuel Mather, Charles F. Brush, world-famous inventor of the arc light and many other innovations, and Liberty Holden, who published the \textit{Cleveland Plain Dealer}.\textsuperscript{140} This all-male group was responsible for selecting an appropriate site for the new museum, settling upon stylistic elements and an architectural blueprint, and hiring a director and several curators. At the time of the museum’s incorporation, funds linked to the two largest philanthropic bequests (the Huntington and Kelley funds) were separate entities. The Huntington funds were to be applied to both the construction of an art museum and a

\textsuperscript{137} “Princely is the Magnificent Gift of Mr. J. H. Wade,” \textit{Cleveland Plain Dealer}, December 25, 1892.

\textsuperscript{138} The title “Cleveland Museum of Art” was used by the trustees of the Kelley bequest to refer to those funds; after greater cooperation with the trustees representing the Huntington trust ensued, the title was transferred in 1913 to the new museum corporation, which represented both the Kelley and Huntington bequests. After this title transfer, the Kelley funds were referred to officially as monies of the Horace Kelley Art Foundation. For more information on the legal wrangling between the Kelley and Huntington trustees, see Leedy, 13, and Wittke, 36-40.

\textsuperscript{139} Rockefeller eventually withdrew from participation in this endeavor, choosing instead to focus his philanthropic efforts on New York’s Metropolitan Museum of Art.

\textsuperscript{140} Leedy, 13.
related polytechnic institute. The Kelley monies, which were, at the time, linked to the small bequest from Cleveland industrialist Hinman Hurlbut, were meant to be applied to the construction of an art museum and art school for the benefit of the citizens of the city. Early attempts to link the bequests (so that the processes of construction and acquisition might be more streamlined) failed; representatives and trustees for both the Huntington and Kelley bequests refused to see the monies placed into a single account.

Despite the chorus of municipal demands, and perhaps in spite of the prohibitive legalese which prevented representatives of both the Kelley and Huntington trusts to meaningfully interact, by 1905, cooperation between the trustees of the Huntington and Kelley bequests ultimately prevailed. This new period of cooperation resulted in a set of complicated political maneuverings which permitted trustees serving both bequests to effectively work together to build what would become the Cleveland Museum of Art. Jeptha H. Wade gifted his land to the Kelley trust; the land was thus leased to trustees representing the Huntington bequest for 999 years.\footnote{Wittke, 37.} Although the separate bequests could not be legally combined, each trust could grant money to be applied to the construction of effectively-separate wings of the museum. Trustees representing both bequests thus agreed to the creation of a corporation, which could oversee construction, acquisition of objects, and expenditures from both funds; these actions allowed the trustees to avoid violating the terms of their respective bequests by illicitly mixing funds. However, construction of the museum would not commence for several more years; this obstacle was mainly due to the fact that, despite greater cooperation between the trustees
representing the Kelley and Huntington bequests, the monies in question could never be
combined. There was simply not enough cash available to begin construction of the new
museum.

This cooperation between the various trusts could not come soon enough, since
the citizens of Cleveland were becoming restless. Clevelanders like Huntington, Allen,
Hurlbut, Kelley and Wade were not alone in their desire to construct an art museum
ostensibly for the cultural benefit of the urban population at-large. Beginning in 1900,
journalists at the Cleveland Plain Dealer regularly updated the public on the status of
bequests and gifts made to the city for the construction of a new art museum. Article
titles ranged from the hopeful (“An Art Gallery Almost in Sight”)\(^\text{142}\) to the proud (“The
Beautiful New Cleveland Art Museum, Soon to Grace Wade Park”).\(^\text{143}\) Cleveland’s
citizens were well aware of the museum project, as well as the amount of money donated,
and were clearly looking forward to having a new “world center” for art in their own
backyard.\(^\text{144}\) Numerous articles on the museum and its slow progress appeared in the
city’s newspapers. One, published in June 1905, proclaimed in front-page story that the
“Art Museum is to be a City Reality.”\(^\text{145}\) The article’s author indicated that, “after years
of delay,” planning for the proposed art museum was finally about to begin.\(^\text{146}\)

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\(^\text{142}\) “An Art Gallery Almost in Sight,” Cleveland Plain Dealer, January 29, 1904.

\(^\text{143}\) “The Beautiful New Cleveland Art Museum, Soon to Grace Wade Park,” Cleveland Plain Dealer,
January 17, 1909.

\(^\text{144}\) “Urges a Great Art Museum,” Cleveland Plain Dealer, October 17, 1906.

\(^\text{145}\) “Art Museum is to be a Reality,” Cleveland Plain Dealer, June 6, 1905.

\(^\text{146}\) Ibid.
By mid-1904, representatives of both the Kelley and Huntington bequests had selected a site for the new museum, and ostensibly construction plans were underway. The new museum would be located on a parcel of land, known as Wade Park, which was donated by Jeptha H. Wade. The park was located near the existent Western Reserve University and Case School of Applied Science (these two educational facilities would later merge to become Case Western Reserve University). The location, at a distance of about seven miles from Cleveland’s bustling downtown district, was deemed “ideal” by contemporary Plain Dealer reporters for both its generous four acre size, and proximity to the burgeoning suburban corridor of Euclid Avenue.\(^{147}\) Wade’s land was finally accepted, but no meaningful planning for the construction of the new museum occurred until 1905, when the trustees of the museum finally formed a joint Building Committee that represented the interests of each donor’s Trust. The Building Committee took another two years to select an architectural firm, Hubbel and Benes, who were prepared to begin construction on the Wade land.\(^{148}\)

The group of trustees faced other challenges as well: a municipal reformer and member of Mayor Tom Johnson’s administration, Frederic C. Howe, argued that the new museum ought to be located near the city’s downtown district.\(^{149}\) Howe believed that Clevelanders would be unwilling to travel to the still-relatively-pastoral Wade estate to visit the new museum (despite the relatively short seven mile distance from downtown to

\(^{147}\) Ibid.

\(^{148}\) Turner, 2-3.

\(^{149}\) Wittke, 36.
what is today University Circle). Detractors held that if artwork was housed downtown it might deteriorate rapidly due to the city center’s proximity to its industrial manufacturing enclaves. Cleveland’s Democratic mayor, Tom Johnson, also petitioned the representatives of both the Huntington and Kelley trusts; he lobbied for the designation of several “free days,” and later hours, so that industrial workers and members of the city’s working- and lower-classes could find time to visit the museum.\footnote{Leedy, 13.}

Over these objections, the building committee, along with architects Hubbel and Benes, moved forward with planning and construction at the Wade site.\footnote{Turner, 4.} In spite of calls for extravagant design plans that advocated the construction of separate buildings for each collection, the decision was made in 1907 to construct one building.\footnote{Wittke, 37.} Excavation at the site began in earnest on May 20, 1913.\footnote{Turner, 4.} Although most aspects of the construction of the new art museum were settled by the 1913, there were still lingering legal issues related to the proper manner of disbursement of funds from the Hurlbut, Kelley, and Huntington bequests. Because of Huntington’s stipulation that his money be applied to both the construction of an art museum and a polytechnic institution, the money could not simply be combined with the bequests of Hurlbut and Kelley, and later the donation of property by Wade II. In the early years of the amorphous Cleveland Museum of Art, each bequest had a separate board of trustees; the board was not unified.
until after the official incorporation of the Cleveland Museum of Art on July 2, 1913.\textsuperscript{154} Even then, delicate legal posturing was applied to ensure that the wishes of each of the original donors were respected.

The first building committee for the museum was largely comprised of existent trustees; the committee included H. C. Ranney, Liberty Holden, William B. Sanders, Jeptha H. Wade, Charles W. Bingham and Horace A. Kelley. These men were given the enviable task of traveling throughout the United States and Europe, where they would tour art museums and evaluate those based upon construction, display, and architectural sophistication.\textsuperscript{155} The committee members had $500,000 to work with, and thus were advised to determine the most cost effective, but aesthetically pleasing, architectural styles and methods of display. Of particular interest to committee members was the Albright Gallery in Buffalo, New York. The members of the building committee viewed Buffalo as a kind of “sister city” to Cleveland; both were northern lakeside cities of similar size. Buffalo, like Cleveland, owed its existence to industry, and had a similarly sized population of immigrant industrial workers. The Albright Gallery, constructed of white marble in a Neo-Classical design, inspired many of the members of the building committee to support a similar style for Cleveland.\textsuperscript{156} Cleveland, then, should have a gleaming marble temple;\textsuperscript{157} such an edifice would inspire the people of the city, who

\textsuperscript{154} Wittke, 38.

\textsuperscript{155} “Will at Once Take Up Work,” \textit{Cleveland Plain Dealer}, June 8, 1905.


\textsuperscript{157} For more see Carol Duncan, \textit{Civilizing Rituals: Inside Public Art Museums} (New Jersey: Routledge, 1995), 7-20.
would flock to it to view “society’s most precious objects.” By invoking a Neo-
Classical style, and constructing what would effectively be a classically-inspired temple
to art and taste in Cleveland, the members of the building committee hoped to channel
popular perceptions related to ancient classical culture; such a structure would inspire
“dignity” and “reverence” on the part of visitors to the museum. It would also
“ennoble and teach the greater truths to the citizens of Cleveland through classical form,”
while still “represent[ing] the modern age.” When local architectural firms were made
aware of the fact that this major project had, at long last, been given approval to move
forward, they vociferously and publicly called for the employment of local firms and
workers in the construction of the city’s first art museum. Calling an emergency
summer meeting of the Cleveland chapter of the American Institute of Architects, the
firm of Hubbell and Benes publicly lobbied for the employment of “local men for local
buildings.” The group argued that out of town and out of state architects might bring
more avant garde ideas to the drawing board; however, their lack of experience “on the
ground” would render their designs flat and out of touch with the city and its

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158 Leedy, 56.
159 Ibid.
160 Ibid.
161 “Local Men for Local Buildings,” Cleveland Plain Dealer, June 11, 1905.
162 Ibid.
population.\textsuperscript{163} Hubbell and Benes\textsuperscript{164} were ultimately tapped to helm the project; however, meaningful construction did not begin until 1913.

Although the exterior of the structure tacitly celebrated the achievements of so-called “Western” civilization, the interior room divisions would focus more heavily upon displaying examples of global artwork. Hubbell and Benes presented numerous blueprints to members of the building committee; in each, rooms were set aside for the display of objects of “Oriental art.”\textsuperscript{165} The building committee members ultimately approved construction of a Neo-Classical structure, to be situated on property in Wade Park, with the front of the building facing an artificial lake.\textsuperscript{166} The plan called for a single, rather than multi-floor structure, with fifteen galleries for the display of artwork, along with a central rotunda, a garden court, an armor and textile court. Of the fifteen original galleries, three were set aside for the display of “Oriental art;” thus twenty percent of the new museum’s gallery space would showcase objects of art from Asia (and, in this early period, the Near East).\textsuperscript{167} To further illustrate the importance of Asian art to Cleveland’s new art museum, it should be noted that only one gallery was devoted to the display of Early American Art, one gallery to Prints and Drawings, and one to the artwork and antiquities of Ancient Egypt. Two galleries were also set aside for “Special

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{163} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{164} “Architects for Museum Chosen,” \textit{Cleveland Plain Dealer}, October 7, 1906.
\item \textsuperscript{165} See 1910 Blueprint – Cleveland Museum of Art Floorplan, reproduced in Leedy, 38.
\item \textsuperscript{166} “The Beautiful New Cleveland Art Museum, Soon to Grace Wade Park,” \textit{Cleveland Plain Dealer}, January 17, 1909.
\end{itemize}
Exhibitions,” which, in the first ten years of the museum’s existence, included several events which showcased fine examples of artwork and antiquities that originated in East Asian nations.

Frederic Allen Whiting and the First Collection

Construction on the new museum began with a ground-breaking ceremony on May 20, 1913. Within two weeks, the first director of the Cleveland Museum of Art, Frederic Allen Whiting, was appointed. His appointment was fortuitous – he came from a working-class family and was keenly interested in employing objects as part of a broader educational mission. He also championed the role of the arts as a means for social uplift; he dealt with these ideas as a member of the Society of Arts and Crafts. Because of his existent contacts with collectors, connoisseurs, and art and antiquities dealers, he was uniquely placed to serve the museum as both a collection architect and liaison.

Whiting was born in 1873 in Oakdale, Tennessee. Although his father, Frederic Whiting Sr., was a mining executive, Whiting Jr. was raised and educated amongst the working classes in Lowell, Massachusetts. Whiting early on developed an interest in the emerging Arts and Crafts movement, becoming, in 1900, the secretary of the Society of Arts and Crafts. The American Arts and Crafts movement was an extension of a movement that originated in Great Britain in the mid-nineteenth century. This movement, which emerged in response to burgeoning industrialization and

subsequent mass production in Britain, featured two founding fathers: John Ruskin and William Morris. Ruskin, as an art critic, worked to raise public interest in hand-crafted goods over those produced by machines.\textsuperscript{170} William Morris, a designer, embraced the stylistic sensibilities of Europe’s Medieval and Renaissance periods. Morris advocated for a return to hand-craftsmanship, and argued that craftsmen were at their core individually productive artists.\textsuperscript{171} Growing up in New England in the late nineteenth century, Whiting was exposed to elements of the movement, as a result of his close association with urban workers and craftsmen living in and around Lowell, Massachusetts. Although largely self-taught in the disciplines of art and art history, Whiting distinguished himself through attempts to bridge the perceived gap between “art” and “craft,” artists and craftsmen. Whiting succeeded in this endeavor with the establishment of the journal \textit{Handicraft}, which permitted him to lecture across the nation on the value of art and aesthetic appreciation to average individuals.\textsuperscript{172} Whiting believed that there was “a crying need for the education of the general public in matters of culture and appreciation;” this could be achieved through firsthand access to fine art objects and antiquities.\textsuperscript{173} Whiting’s association with the American Arts and Crafts Movement, and


\textsuperscript{171} Crawford, 22.


\textsuperscript{173} Whiting, quoted in Robertson, 34.
his application of Arts and Crafts sensibilities within the Cleveland Museum of Art, is specifically dealt with in Chapter Three.

Whiting quickly developed a national reputation as an effective “spokesman” for the Arts and Crafts movement, and in 1904 was invited along with his wife Olive Cook Whiting to oversee the Division of Applied Arts at the St. Louis Louisiana Purchase Exposition.¹⁷⁴ His success at the Exposition led to his appointment in 1913 as the director of the John Herron Institute, located in Indianapolis, Indiana. Shortly after his arrival in Indiana, Whiting was approached by the trustees of the Cleveland Museum of Art; they offered him a position as the first director, which would give him the opportunity to effectively oversee the construction of the collection from the ground-up.¹⁷⁵ Whiting was, initially, hesitant to accept the job offered by the trustees of the Cleveland Museum of Art. He had been working for less than a year in Indianapolis, and was leery of taking on the task of supervising construction, and acquiring objects, for a brand new museum. Whiting was also aware of the legal troubles surrounding construction of the museum in Cleveland; he therefore deferred acceptance of the Directorship until ground was broken and meaningful progress made toward the construction of the museum.¹⁷⁶ He first accepted the tangential position of Secretary of the Building Committee in July of 1913; his acceptance of the Directorship was not resolved until December of the same year.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁴ Robertson, 34.

¹⁷⁵ “Authority on Art to Head Museum,” *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, February 18, 1913.

¹⁷⁶ Wittke, 46.

¹⁷⁷ Turner, 4.
During the interim, Whiting wrote almost non-stop to colleagues, contacts, and friends associated with North American museums and institutions of higher education. Whiting hoped, in the coming months, to begin to craft a plan of action to present to the Cleveland Museum of Art’s Board of Trustees. In his letters, Whiting discussed topics ranging from what to collect, how best to acquire objects, the proper medium(s) of display, protocols of accepting and declining bequests, and the most effective ways to massage and finesse potential donors into supporting the new museum. Whiting also focused upon developing strategies to engage average citizens of Cleveland. Perhaps as a result of his time spent working with the Society of Arts and Crafts, Whiting sought to find a way to make the displays of art objects and antiquities at the museum work to “develop the aesthetic consciousness of manufacturers and workmen” living in the city.178 Whiting also wanted to create a meaningful dialogue between the new museum and local public schoolchildren. He argued for the creation of a “children’s room” where programs that served to introduce students to the museum could be held.179 Whiting’s work promoting the museum as an educational asset to the city of Cleveland were very innovative, setting the standard for educational programs at other institutions in the United States.180 It is apparent, then, that Whiting hoped to democratize the museum-going experience, to a degree, in Cleveland.

178 Cited in Wittke, 46. This topic will be explored in greater detail in Chapter Three of this dissertation.

179 Leedy, 52.

180 Einreinhofer, 103.
In seeking an educational arm in the museum, Whiting was very much in line with the expectations of other large American museums. To “Americanize” the masses meant for some introduction to fine pieces of artwork; however, in most museums, these encounters occurred between immigrant children and European paintings. Whiting wanted to do something different in Cleveland; he felt that immigrant children would benefit more from encounters with “concrete objects” than old-master oil paintings. ¹⁸¹ These decorative objects, representative of the cultural achievements of global civilizations, would be effective in catering to these children’s “needs as future workers and craftsmen in American industry.”¹⁸² Whiting, from the beginning of his tenure as director of the Cleveland Museum of Art, worked to make the museum accessible to some of the poorest and most impressionable of the city’s population. He also continued, in Cleveland, to work to bridge the gap between the world of the high “arts,” and that of the craftspeople and industrial workers who largely made up the bulk of the workforce in many industrially-reliant cities. By selecting Whiting, the founders of the Cleveland Museum of Art made their aims plain - the museum would serve as a medium for public education, but it would simultaneously function as an agent of cultural uplift.

Whiting’s decisions, and influence, had a profound effect upon the methods of acquisition and display enacted in the formative years of the Cleveland Museum of Art. As a result of his own personal work within the emerging Arts and Crafts movement, which drew heavily upon the aesthetics of East Asian art for influence, Whiting had an

¹⁸¹ Robertson, 35.

¹⁸² Ibid.
existent appreciation for, and interest in, the arts of the “Orient.” As such, Cleveland rapidly became a center for East Asian art in the United States. Whiting’s relationship with Asian thinkers and dealers, and his application of Arts and Crafts movement ideals within the context of the museum, are explored in more detail in the next chapter.

At the time of his appointment in 1913, Whiting was also in regular contact with Asian writers and art dealers; Kakuzo Okakura and C. T. Loo together had a profound influence on Whiting’s own perceptions of Asian art. Okakura, in his *The Ideals of the East*, argued that traditional (in this case Japanese) modes of production, while antiquated, were nonetheless authentic when applied within the context of Japanese society. He indicated that it was better for Asians to “clothe [themselves] in the web of [their] own weaving … to create for the spirit its own sphere.”\(^\text{183}\) It was thus preferable for Asians to maintain traditional artistic modes of production, rather than attempt to parrot or mimic the industrial mass production of Europe and the United States. As a result, these objects could serve an instructional purpose abroad. C. T. Loo argued that the “lost treasures” of Asia “will be the real messengers to make the world realize our ancient civilization, and culture thus serving to create a love and better understanding” of Asia.\(^\text{184}\) When considering what sorts of objects to collect for Cleveland’s museum, Whiting regularly lobbied for the acquisition of art objects and antiquities from East Asia.

Tasked with building a collection from scratch, and influenced as he was in looking to Asia for acquiring objects, Whiting set out to delineate a plan of action. When


speaking to the art museum’s Board of Trustees in January 1914, Whiting discussed the existent types of art museums in the United States, along with his own goals for the museum in Cleveland. Whiting indicated there were, in the United States, two types of museums: large, popular institutions with powerful, wealthy supporters, and smaller regional museums that distinguished themselves through showing, almost exclusively, rotating temporary exhibitions.\(^{185}\) He singled out the two finest museums in the nation; both were located on the east coast: Boston’s Museum of Fine Arts, and New York’s Metropolitan Museum of Art. These museums were, to Whiting, the best examples of elite institutions; each was “rich in collections and devoted almost exclusively to the exhibition of objects owned by, or lent to, them.”\(^{186}\) Because of the support of a cadre of wealthy benefactors, Boston’s Museum of Fine Arts and New York’s Metropolitan Museum of Art were not dependent upon traveling temporary exhibitions. Whiting’s second group of museums were regionally important, and included those museums present in the cities of “Pittsburgh, Buffalo, … Toledo, St. Louis, Cincinnati and Indianapolis.”\(^{187}\) While Whiting granted that these institutions did have small permanent collections, they were much more reliant upon rotating temporary exhibitions to draw crowds. Whiting indicated that he believed Cleveland’s museum would likely fall into the latter category; however, he argued that this new museum ought to “strive for a happy medium between the restlessness which goes with constantly changing exhibitions and

\(^{185}\) Ibid.

\(^{186}\) Frederic Allen Whiting, quoted in Turner, 4.

\(^{187}\) Ibid.
the monotony of a comparatively small building filled with permanently installed exhibits.”

For Whiting, this “happy medium” could be achieved through the formation of a carefully curated selection of very fine objects from around the world, but especially Asia.

To help him, Whiting arranged for the hire of Curator of Oriental art J. Arthur MacLean, who went on to a similar position at the Art Institute of Chicago and then assume Whiting’s old position as director of the John Herron Institute, located in Indianapolis, Indiana. Whiting also solicited the aid of Detroit industrialist and Asian art connoisseur Charles Lang Freer. Indeed, Freer played a significant role in encouraging Whiting to place his focus on acquiring very fine specimens from East Asia.

Freer was born on February 25, 1854, in Kingston, New York. He was one of six children from a relatively impoverished lower-class family. After forgoing public education, Freer began work for Frank J. Hecker, owner of a rail-car production facility, where he steadily rose through the company ranks until, in 1884, he was made vice president of Hecker’s Peninsular Car Company, located in Detroit, Michigan. Hecker’s company was part of the burgeoning rail industry; specifically, new types of rail cars were produced at the plant in Detroit. The operation was successful enough that, by 1899, Freer was able to retire from business as a self-made millionaire. Perhaps as a

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188 Ibid.


190 Ibid., 14.

191 Ibid.
result of leisure time, or out of a desire to create a notion of aesthetic distinction, Freer
developed an interest in the accumulation of artwork. Although he initially collected
prints and oil paintings, his tastes soon turned to Asian artwork. Specifically, Freer
sought out pieces produced in China, Japan, and Korea. Between 1894 and 1911, Freer
made five separate trips to Asia where he acquired art objects and antiquities of
unsurpassed quality.192 During this period, Freer immersed himself in the study of Asian
art and history. He purchased catalogs, guidebooks, and other texts, and consulted with
Ernest Fenollosa and W. H. Holmes, two of the most distinguished contemporary
American scholars of Asian art. Freer also engaged the services of “native expert[s]”
whose educational background Freer deemed superior to even those of the most educated
American historians of Asian art.193

Freer’s intense interest in Asian art at first might seem puzzling; however, it is
clear from his letters and papers that Asia-in-general represented an idealized realm,
where art reflected nature, women were “madonna and saintlike,”194 and “traditions and
authentic ideals” reigned supreme.195 Freer chronicled his five trips to Asia in hundreds
of letters, and in his diaries, where he recorded his impressions and the “indescribable
delight” he felt when searching the “treasure houses of China and Japan” for objects to


193 Charles Lang Freer to Frank J. Hecker, letter, 17 September 1909, cited in Lawton and Merrill, 82.

194 Charles Lang Freer to Dwight W. Tryon, letter, 7 July 1907, cited in Lawton and Merrill, 20. In this letter Freer further juxtaposes Asian women with their American counterparts who possess “fancies of independence … and other diabolical tendencies…”

195 Charles Lang Freer to Frank J. Hecker, letter, 6 May 1907, cited in Lawton and Merrill, 73.
bring back to Detroit. His early career in the industrial sector likely also influenced his later love of Asian artistic sensibilities – he sought to fill his Detroit home with objects that represented what he viewed as a kind of continuum-with-nature. Although an obvious construct, for Freer, who lived and worked during both the United States’ industrial age and the period of the emergent American Arts and Crafts movement, the arts of China and Japan represented a point of balance and perhaps synthesis. This type of collection also reflected Freer’s desire to distinguish himself culturally; although from a humble background, he created a new persona as collector and connoisseur of Chinese and Japanese art. This represents Freer’s attempt to “assert [his] position in social space,” using Asian art as a metaphor for his recently accumulated cultural capital. Freer’s ultimate goal was not to establish a massive private collection; instead, he sought to build a collection of superior quality, which would eventually be transferred to the United States as a gift. This gift would ultimately serve as an enduring legacy of a man who never married or had children.

Freer, as a self-taught connoisseur of Asian art, argued that these objects would be a good choice for the CMA since they were relatively inexpensive, readily available (due to the social and political unrest in early twentieth century China), were aesthetically pleasing, and were culturally valuable. The underlying implication here was also that

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196 Charles Lang Freer to Frank J. Hecker, letter, 11 April 1907, cited in Lawton and Merrill, 70.

197 Crawford, 34.


these objects, when displayed in Cleveland at the new art museum, could transfer some of their existent historical-cultural pedigree onto the city itself, and its population. This extension of “cultural capital” from collected antiquities and objects of art from China and Japan is discussed extensively in succeeding chapters. Freer even praised Whiting’s goals with regard to purchasing fine examples of Chinese and Japanese artwork, indicating that a relatively small museum, like that envisioned for the city of Cleveland, could with proper planning and a thoughtful program of acquisition rival the collections of museums located in larger, wealthier cities. Freer stated “that smaller museums can be made more valuable artistically and educationally because such institutions can specialize, can obtain finer exhibits, take better care of them, learn more about their nature and place, and offer the people education worth while.”

Freer clearly believed that art museums located in larger American cities like Boston and New York were superior, due to their proximity to wealthy collectors and donors. However, he indicated that a museum located in a city like Cleveland did have the potential to become great if issues related to the collection and specialization were tackled early on. The educational potential of the objects acquired was rivaled only by their cultural, social and historical value, which, when displayed publicly, would, according to Freer, enhance

Freer for writing about the importance of Chinese art, since he can use it to support his own recommendations to the CMA committee on purchases of Chinese art: “… which I shall be glad to show to my executive committee for their benefit when they consider the question of additional purchases.”

Bourdieu, 57.

the “civilization” of the United States itself.\(^ {202}\) The arts and antiquities of East Asia, then, proved instrumental in attempts by Cleveland elites to educate and assimilate the city’s working-class citizenry, collectively ushering them toward a more modern, cosmopolitan existence; simultaneously, the collective, superior historical and civilizational pedigree of these objects could be co-opted by the city of Cleveland through display in its newly constructed art museum.\(^ {203}\)

Freer noted that at the time of the CMA’s founding “interest in the finer arts of China is making tremendous headway throughout England, France and Germany.”\(^ {204}\) If the director and curators of the new Cleveland Museum of Art wished to make the museum a globally-significant center, representative of the culture and distinction of the region, Asian art, so popular in Europe, would necessarily be a central component. Freer, in his correspondence with Whiting, stressed his appreciation for the individual historical pedigrees of Asian art objects and antiquities; for Freer, these were what made each piece subjectively valuable. Freer likewise reflected upon his trip to the ancient Song dynasty capital of Kaifeng; it was a defining and “momentous experience” for him, since the site “had seen the passage of generations of Chinese rulers.”\(^ {205}\) Freer “visited the remains” of


\(^{203}\) J. Arthur MacLean to Mrs. Henry S. (Mary) Upson, letter, December 29, 1914, The Cleveland Museum of Art Archives, Records of the Director's Office: Frederic Allen Whiting, box 8, folder 84. MacLean gushes over the value of Charles Lang Freer’s collection of Asian art, and also indicates that “it has always been my contention that China, next to Egypt, was the most interesting of all nations…”

\(^{204}\) Charles Lang Freer to Frederic A. Whiting, letter, October 10, 1913, The Cleveland Museum of Art Archives, Records of the Director's Office: Frederic Allen Whiting, box 9, folder 108.

\(^{205}\) Lawton, 90.
Kaifeng’s “Iron Pagoda,” a physical example of the tangible historicity of the site and a powerful representation of China’s prior periods of technological advancement. While Freer was certainly an Orientalist, he was, at the same time, enamored with Asia’s past. For Freer, these prior periods of cultural achievement could be experienced via the medium of legitimate art objects and antiquities. Freer recognized that Chinese history was not static but dynamic and fluid. He sought to preserve the tangible elements of the past for study and consumption in the United States, itself still a relatively young nation. As such, Freer counseled Whiting to build his collection in Cleveland by purchasing a few very high quality examples of Asian art; he argued against creating a thoroughly “encyclopedic” system of display in Cleveland, ranting that too many American museums valued quantity over quality, exhibiting “unending cases of objects of inartistic merit” that served no viable purpose and did little more than “fatten the purse of the bagman.” The very best specimens, of the highest quality and with the greatest aesthetic appeal, would best serve visitors to Cleveland’s new museum. Some of the Cleveland Museum of Art’s earliest acquisitions in 1914 were of fine pieces of artwork from China; these included a carved marble head, a vase from the Qianlong period (1735-1796), and a “Buddhist Trinity,” described in an edition of the Bulletin by curator of “Oriental” art J. Arthur MacLean as being a “masterpiece” capable of “enlighten[ing]” the population as a result of the “universal[ity]” of its design. MacLean hoped that this

206 Ibid.

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Cleveland-centered “enlightenment” might trigger a sense of affinity with China, so that any “seeming strangeness may become a thing of the past.”\textsuperscript{209}

Asian art objects and antiquities were central to realizing the goals set by the Cleveland Museum of Art’s director, curators, and trustees. While potentially “strange” in nature, with contact and education, this “seeming strangeness” would be eliminated;\textsuperscript{210} even as these objects were integrated into the fabric of the museum, their pedigrees were \textit{sympathetically appropriated} by the museum on behalf of the population of the city of Cleveland. Through the display of these objects in dedicated “Oriental” art galleries at the museum, the objects’ intangible pedigrees were effectively transferred to the site of display. The galleries, functioning as faithful facsimiles (or copies) of sites of display or use from the regions of origin, nonetheless permitted the displayed objects to exert and/or reflect some elements of their original purpose; thus their pedigrees were preserved, and transferred through display to the museum.\textsuperscript{211} The museum, then, could claim control over the cultural ‘power’ of these objects, since the museum provided the facsimile that permitted the objects to continue to retain, exert, or reflect some element of their original cultural purpose/value.

In an article published in the Metropolitan Museum of Art’s August 1914 \textit{Bulletin}, Whiting discussed the progress being made on the museum in Cleveland.\textsuperscript{212} In

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item \textsuperscript{209} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{210} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{211} Michael Taussig, \textit{Mimesis and Alterity} (New York: Routledge, 1993), 52.
\item \textsuperscript{212} Frederic A Whiting, “The Cleveland Museum of Art,” \textit{The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin} 9, no. 8 (August 1914): 176-177.
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addition to a brief discussion of the location, size and style of the building, Whiting alluded to early acquisitions made by the Cleveland Museum of Art’s curatorial staff. These early acquisitions were split between examples of ancient Egyptian artwork, and Chinese antiquities.\textsuperscript{213} Whiting, concerned that the Cleveland Museum of Art should develop its own “distinct individuality among Museums,” called for the creation of an institution which housed an exemplary collection of “some branch of art which is not adequately represented in any American Museum, selecting if possible a field in which a sufficient collection could be secured without too large an expenditure of time and money.”\textsuperscript{214} Whiting, during his address to the Board of Trustees, planted seeds which he hoped to reap in the future; by focusing upon the potential of the Cleveland Museum of Art to become a showcase for objects not exhibited elsewhere, Whiting was cultivating in the Board members what he hoped would be acceptance of a plan to bring fine examples of Asian art objects and antiquities to Cleveland. He further indicated that the installment of these objects in Cleveland would be culturally beneficial to the city and its inhabitants.

One of the recipients of a number of letters from the newly-appointed Director Whiting was the scholar and adventurer Langdon Warner. Warner, a 1903 graduate of Harvard University, was a self-styled expert in the arts, antiquities, and archaeology of Asia. When he began corresponding with Whiting in mid-1913, he was an Associate Curator at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Whiting, who was interested in forming a distinctive, yet reasonably priced, collection of artwork for Cleveland looked to Warner

\textsuperscript{213} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{214} Frederic Allen Whiting, cited in Turner, 4.
for advice on forming an “Oriental Department” at the Cleveland Museum of Art.\textsuperscript{215} Warner, a frequent correspondent with Charles Lang Freer, a Detroit industrialist and avid collector of East Asian art and antiquities, served as an early intermediary between Freer and Whiting. Although Director Whiting and Freer differed in temperament (Freer was often moody and prone to lashing out verbally; Whiting was measured and pragmatic when approaching conflict), they were similarly inspired to bring fine examples of Chinese and Japanese artwork to the Midwest for the edification of the individuals living in the region. Their collaborative efforts (discussed more fully in succeeding chapters) resulted in a number of fine examples of antiquities and art objects from East Asia placed on display at the Cleveland Museum of Art’s Inaugural Exhibition in 1916. When responding to Director Whiting’s inquiries about the viability of forming a superior collection of Chinese and Japanese artwork for Cleveland, Warner was enthusiastic, telling Whiting that with a little seed money, he might be able to have “a splendid start to make your Oriental Dep’t rank among the first in the World [sic].”\textsuperscript{216} Warner, who was planning an ‘acquisition’ trip to China, advised Whiting on how he should approach formation of an “Oriental” art department in Cleveland, indicating that he should focus on acquiring Chinese and Japanese ceramics while avoiding purchase of examples of “primitive” sculpture, paintings and prints.\textsuperscript{217} Warner continuously wrote of the merit of collecting fine examples of art from East Asia, indicating that a well-plotted and curated


\textsuperscript{216} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{217} Ibid.
collection would “make the other museums sit up and take notice.” Warner’s sentiments were echoed by Freer, who counseled Director Whiting to begin purchasing, as soon as possible, objects from East Asia, stating that since “interest in the finer arts of China is making tremendous headway throughout England, France and Germany, … I strongly advise you to lose no opportunity to secure fine specimens for your Museum.”

Whiting, summarily inspired by the support echoed by both men, sought to employ Warner as an acquisition liaison for the museum while he traveled through China and Japan. Although Warner was willing, Freer forbade it, citing a contractual conflict.

The stage, so to speak, was nonetheless set: Whiting, convinced of the artistic and civilizational merit of artwork and antiquities from China and Japan, was determined to craft a fine collection of these objects for Cleveland’s new museum. This would later bear fruit in the form of the Cleveland Museum of Art’s own so-called “Oriental Expedition,” an acquisition campaign which would be helmed by none other than Langdon Warner. Freer would, also, seek to make restitution for initially denying Warner’s expertise and services to Whiting. Writing in 1914, Freer extended an olive branch: would Whiting like to host the “head of the Oriental Department of the British Museum,” Laurence Binyon, in the context of a lecture to be delivered at the new

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218 Ibid.


220 Ibid.

221 The “Oriental Expedition” will be discussed fully in the fifth chapter of this dissertation.
Such a coup would, according to Freer, raise the prestige of the new museum while also serving to convince members of the Board of Trustees to seriously “consider the purchase of a few specimens of fine Chinese Art.” Whiting readily agreed, speedily composing a reply the next day. He first asked if he might quote Freer in an address to members of the Board, since Freer’s “opinion is bound to carry weight with the trustees.” He then inquired as to Binyon’s fee; if not too exorbitant, Whiting believed he could convince the Board members to fund a lecture. Binyon did ultimately give a lecture in Cleveland, with the rather broad title “The Arts of Asia,” on November 20, 1914. The lecture apparently prompted many in attendance to view Asian art in a more favorable light; by June 1915, Whiting had secured $50,000 of funds to be solely dedicated to the acquisition of art objects and antiquities from China and Japan. This amount, adjusted for inflation, would be equivalent to over $1.1 million USD in contemporary currency. Even more shocking is the fact that this money was readily donated during a period of relative global social unrest.

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223 Ibid.


225 Ibid.


In its formative years, under the guidance of the burgeoning institution’s newly hired director, Frederic A. Whiting, the museum acquired numerous fine examples of Chinese and Japanese artwork. These objects, to be discussed more specifically below, were part of a broader system of acquisition which saw the arrival of the famous Medieval European armor of the Armor Court, alongside Renaissance masterpieces, Roman artifacts, and antiquities from Egypt and the Middle East. While it is clear that the director and curators of the Cleveland Museum of Art wished to collect broadly, object by object, to create a fine, balanced collection, Asian Art did, from the outset, figure prominently in the imaginations of Whiting and curator J. Arthur MacLean.229 Asian antiquities and art objects could, then, serve to distinguish the emerging Cleveland Museum of art amongst peer museums located in the Midwest, while simultaneously providing Clevelanders with exposure to objects they might otherwise not come into close contact. These Asian antiquities and art objects represented the civilizational, cultural and historical pedigree of both China and Japan, and as such, were viewed by the museum’s original director and early curators as valuable additions to the CMA’s growing collection base.230 MacLean, writing in 1915 to Denman Ross, a trustee at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, stated that “our Trustees and my Director, are anxious to have the Museum [be] a well balanced one; that is, they hope to be able to interest the people of Cleveland in Oriental things as well as Oxidental [sic] things and it will be


 absolutely necessary for me to do my very level best in securing the finest specimens of Oriental art that have from time to time come under my observation.” MacLean continued, “I should like to get a few magnificent pieces like the one which you have in Boston so that our public could become impressed with the importance of this foreign art, and on account of the object being first class, large, and therefore impressive, they would find little difficulty in accepting the importance and excellence of the art about which they know so little” (italics mine). MacLean, with Whiting’s stamp of approval, started working while the museum was under construction to acquire excellent objects and antiquities from China, Japan and Korea. Both men believed that these objects, representative of the very best civilizational achievements of their nations of origin, could serve only to enhance the status of the new museum, and members of the viewing public.

While the founders of the Cleveland Museum of Art followed, broadly, the example set by museum founders in Boston, New York, and Chicago, they did differ in one fundamental way. Cleveland’s founders, unlike those working at the other museums profiled, placed a noteworthy emphasis upon the acquisition and display of art objects and antiquities from East Asia. These objects were intended, from the start, to function as individual examples of exemplary aesthetic and material appeal, and as educational tools to help viewers better understand the objects’ regions of origin and the people who originally produced them. This important difference gives insight into shifting American perceptions about Asia, and about the role that the Cleveland Museum of Art’s founders imagined art objects and antiquities from East Asia playing in the city. As

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231 See Einreinhofer, 103-105.
Einreinhofer indicates, the staff at the Cleveland Museum of Art were pioneers in field of developing and promulgating “museum education.” These programs, long “considered a benchmark for American art museums,” provided dynamic displays, traveling exhibitions, free monthly lectures, along with drawing, painting, and art education classes. Similar efforts to educate the public via the medium of the museum were made by John Cotton Dana at the Newark Museum of Art between 1909-1929; Benjamin Ives Gilman, of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, “invented the gallery talk” by 1918. In spite of these efforts, the first museum program to systematically stress the importance of art objects and antiquities as tools for public education was implemented at the Cleveland Museum of Art. Efforts to educate the public are discussed specifically in Chapter Six of this dissertation. Asian art objects and antiquities played a central role in the extension and realization of this educational mission. This emphasis, placed upon the acquisition and display of pieces from China, Japan and Korea, further delineates the Cleveland Museum of Art from its contemporaries in larger American cities, where systematic efforts to educate members of the public within the art museum were slower to develop.

From the outset, the trustees and first director, Frederic A. Whiting, of the Cleveland Museum of Art envisioned creating a collection that would display works of

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232 Einreinhofer, 103.
233 Ibid.
234 Einreinhofer, 102.
235 Einreinhofer, 103.
art and antiquities from around the world. Objects from East Asia (specifically China, Japan and Korea) played an important role in the new museum’s collection. The desire to use these objects in Cleveland’s self-appropriated ‘civilizing mission’ served as a second stimulus for the construction of the Cleveland Museum of Art. Historically, the arts and antiquities of East Asia enjoyed unprecedented popularity in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. These pieces were imbued with popular notions of “cosmopolitanism” and exoticism. 236 By analyzing Director Whiting’s letters and memos, this second stimulus emerges: Whiting, along with the first Curator of Oriental Art, J. Arthur MacLean, set out to distinguish Cleveland (via the medium of its new museum) through collecting, and prominently displaying, objects of art and antiquities that had an origin in East Asia. 237 Whiting and MacLean strove, in the early years of the formation and construction of the museum, to convince trustees of the intrinsic social and cultural value of works of art and antiquities produced in China and Japan. 238


237 For the purposes of this paper, I am focusing specifically upon the arts and antiquities of China, Japan and Korea. When discussing these objects generally, I will simply describe them as arts and antiquities of East Asia.

238 Frederic A. Whiting to Denman Ross, letter, May 20, 1914, The Cleveland Museum of Art Archives, Records of the Director's Office: Frederic Allen Whiting, box 12, folder 131. Whiting wrote to Ross, a trustee at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, about his attempts to convince the Cleveland Museum of Art’s (hereafter CMA) trustees to purchase Asian antiquities and art objects. Whiting stated, “The two trusts who are erecting the building will probably have only sufficient income after the building is paid for to cover conservative running expenses for the building, and we must depend largely for purchases upon funds raised for the purpose in large or small amounts. If we can definitely determine at this time that, for instance, the most likely field for the important department which will give the Museum its individual character is China, and if you and Mr. Freer and other connoisseurs of known reputation should agree on such a field for our activities, I can then go before the board with a much greater chance of carrying my
The Cleveland Museum of Art’s “Inaugural Exhibition” of 1916 was celebrated as a major achievement for both board and trustee members, as well as citizens of the city of Cleveland at-large. The museum was “formally dedicated” on June 6, 1916, and officially opened to the public thereafter.\textsuperscript{239} Speakers like museum President and trustee Judge William Brownell Sanders reflected upon the Herculean odds that the staff of the museum had to overcome to see it open on schedule, stating that despite the fact that the “greater part of the civilized world [was] suffering the horrors of war,” Cleveland’s art museum still opened on time.\textsuperscript{240} This, to Sanders, was a testament to the spirit of the “art-loving people of Cleveland,” who would be served by the museum’s program of “promot[ing] and cultivat[ing] art” in the community.\textsuperscript{241} The museum, in Sanders’ view, would “make … this city a recognized center in the world of art.”\textsuperscript{242} Cleveland’s museum would, according to Sanders, “display examples of the highest art as it has existed in all ages and in all countries;” such displays would naturally serve to promote the broad education of citizens of the city of Cleveland, while simultaneously schooling them in the “intelligent appreciation of art.”\textsuperscript{243} Sanders continued, speaking specifically

\footnotesize{point than if it is my personal opinion not backed by those of men of large experience as collectors and students.” Whiting clearly thought it a good idea to begin purchasing Asian art objects, but wished to have the intellectual support of both Ross, and also the United States’ foremost collector of Asian art objects and antiquities, Charles Lang Freer of Detroit.}


\textsuperscript{240} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{241} Ibid.


about the role that art objects from East Asian nations would play in Cleveland’s museum. According to Sanders, the museum promised “to be rich in possession of the arts of the East,” making Cleveland “rank with the Boston Museum as a richly-filled storehouse of Eastern art.” Sanders’ ideas here help to further clarify the unique position the Cleveland Museum of Art occupied in its formative years. While a regional, Midwestern institution, it nonetheless possessed a stellar, expanding collection of art objects and antiquities of exquisite quality from China, Japan, and Korea. The only other museum in the United States to build such a fine collection of Asian art was Boston’s Museum of Fine Arts. In this way, Sanders, in his speech, illustrated the cachet of the Cleveland Museum of Art – it was small, and located in an industrial city in the Midwest; however, it possessed a growing Asian art collection that could rival that of Boston’s Museum of Fine Arts.

Clearly, two important features become evident about the creation and planning of the Cleveland Museum of Art. First, the founders and leaders of Cleveland’s new art museum, along with other leaders in the city, saw the new CMA as an institution of social uplift, ready to “civilize” and “Americanize” workers and immigrants. Second, Asian art objects and antiquities would play a central role in that effective ‘civilizing mission.’ In Chapter Five, methods of acquisition of art objects and antiquities from Asia are analyzed within the context of the museum’s “Oriental Expedition.” Further, the extent and parameters of the museum’s self-styled ‘civilizing mission’ will be analyzed, along with the role played by the Cleveland Museum of Art’s Educational Department in molding

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the minds of Clevelanders, young and old, by introducing them to the value of art objects and antiquities from East Asia.
CHAPTER III

ART, CRAFT, AND ASIA AT THE CLEVELAND MUSEUM OF ART

By constructing aesthetically pleasing displays filled with quotidian objects and antiquities from around the world, museums, like Cleveland’s Museum of Art, sought to introduce visitors to novel designs, and new methods of artistic production. One of the major movements that played an important role for the CMA was the Arts and Crafts movement. In the early twentieth century, the prevailing stylistic sensibilities of the emergent Arts and Crafts movement were familiar to many citizens of the city of Cleveland. Arts and Crafts sensibilities influenced architecture, design, and methods of display. The ideals of the Arts and Crafts Movement centered on the value of handcrafted and artfully produced objects; this focus on individualized production served as an overt rejection of nascent industrialization and the subsequent mass-production of goods (and even, in some cases, “artwork”). Craft producers “learn[ed] design by applying thoughts to materials” or objects that they encountered.\(^1\) Craftspeople experienced new design ideals through exposure; as Oscar Lovell Triggs suggests, “design … must have reference to something – a building, a table, jewel, lamp, or book.”\(^2\)

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\(^2\) Ibid.
In addition to elevating the work of the “craftsman” the movement served as a point of introduction, for many, to art objects, crafts, and antiquities produced in East Asian nations. Asian art formed an important facet for design inspiration in the broader Arts and Crafts Movement. Asian art objects from China, Japan, and Korea were especially useful teaching tools – they possessed both implicit antiquity and clear aesthetic appeal. Craftspeople, when exposed to ancient, aesthetically pleasing pieces from China, Japan, and Korea, incorporated elements of broadly-Asian design into new pieces, lending them an inherent exoticism, and, perhaps unexpectedly, cachet. These ideals dovetailed with the beliefs of participants in the American Arts and Crafts movement, who collectively rejected, or, in the case of Harvard professor of art history Charles Eliot Norton, mentor of Ernest Fenollosa, were “repulsed” by “the crudely made domestic objects and alienated workers of the Industrial Revolution.” As a result, these individuals championed “a return to handmade objects and the study of past styles and historical artifacts for inspiration.” Norton and Fenollosa publicly presented the arts of Asia alongside art objects produced in pre-industrial Europe. In both contexts, Norton and Fenollosa constructed an ideal of simplicity and authenticity, essentializing methods of production in both pre-industrial Europe and Asia. Of importance here is the fact that members of the Arts and Crafts Movement regarded Asian art objects and antiquities as possessing equivalent cultural value to pieces produced in similar periods in Europe. “Good design,” regardless of the point of production, was of supreme importance to

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4 Ibid.
participants in the Arts and Crafts Movement.\textsuperscript{5} Asian art objects and antiquities were essentialized alongside pieces produced in Europe; because of their collective origin in an idealized pre-industrial past, they were together reimagined and represented as symbols of a more authentic period of production. The display of these objects enabled museums and collectors to sympathetically appropriate and participate in their pre-industrial authenticity. At the same time, the display of these art objects and antiquities conveyed a subtle rejection of contemporary methods of production, and industrial society at-large. These ideals were disseminated amongst members of the Movement as well as average individuals. In describing the appeal of a Han dynasty (206 BCE – 220 CE) bronze vessel, John Lloyd Wright, son of Arts and Crafts design master Frank Lloyd Wright, stated that he “had always loved that bronze – the lines, proportion, the patina, the butterfly handles, the quiet beauty of it.”\textsuperscript{6} Patina, as a tangible measure of antiquity, was an important component in the appeal of the bronze at large – its “quiet beauty” necessitated a recognition of both the object’s great age and aesthetic appeal. As a result, the developing American Arts and Crafts movement was an instrumental force in disseminating information about Asia, and Asian methods of production and goods, to people living in the US.

In this chapter, I examine the impact of Arts and Crafts-era thinkers on the Cleveland Museum of Art’s early twentieth century program of display and sympathetic appropriation of art objects and antiquities from China, Japan, and Korea. Specifically, I

\textsuperscript{5} Ibid.

focus on the role played by Frederic A. Whiting, who, prior to his tenure as first director of the Cleveland Museum of Art, was an influential figure within the developing American Arts and Crafts movement. I argue that this prior exposure to the ideals and philosophies of Arts and Crafts thinkers like John Ruskin (1819-1900), William Morris (1834-1896), Frank Lloyd Wright (1867-1959) and Elbert Hubbard (1856-1915) influenced and enhanced Whiting’s own conception of the intrinsic civilizational value of art objects and antiquities from East Asian nations. Specifically, this appreciation served as the foundation for what would eventually emerge as a program of sympathetic appropriation of the collective cultural patrimony of art objects and antiquities from China, Japan, and Korea by members of the curatorial staff at the Cleveland Museum of Art. An analysis of the efforts made by Whiting, along with the museum’s first curator of “Oriental” art J. Arthur MacLean, to elevate regional appreciation of East Asian art and antiquities provides needed nuance to the contemporary historiography on so-called “Western” collection or acquisition of “Eastern” art objects. While Orientalist ideals certainly influenced interactions between Americans and Asians, many Americans harbored feelings of either cultural inferiority when confronted with the long civilizational pedigrees of East Asian nations, or admiration for the enduring cultural and artistic ideals retained by people living in China, Japan and Korea.

Asian thinkers and art dealers like Kakuzo Okakura, and C.T. Loo capitalized upon, encouraged, and contributed to this emergent school of thought. Okakura disseminated Asia-centric writings7, and Loo constructed new object-centered narratives

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of East Asian history in their catalogs and in personal dealings with collectors and museum officials. While participants in the American Arts and Crafts movement certainly influenced the way people encountered and thought about Asia (in the museum setting), there was simultaneously a movement among industrially-based craftsmen and craftswomen to emulate and appropriate East Asian stylistic elements in their own work. Notable examples from the Midwestern U.S. include the design of Frank Lloyd Wright via the medium of his “Prairie School,” and Ohio-centered ceramic production firms like Rookwood, produced in Cincinnati. Louis Comfort Tiffany likewise appropriated and disseminated elements of Asian design aesthetics in the form of stained glass, ceramic, and metal objects. Collectively, these efforts (engaged in by both curatorial staff dealing with “authentic” art objects and antiquities, and craftspeople producing goods for more pedestrian appreciation and consumption) aided in fostering new levels of appreciation, among Americans, of the civilizational achievements of people from China, Japan and Korea. Ideals developed and promoted by members of the American Arts and Crafts movement, then, served as the bridge that linked “art” to “craft,” collection to consumption, and in a way, they provided a new medium for Americans to conceptualize a civilizational continuum between the so-called “East” and “West.”

The Arts and Crafts Movement

The Arts and Crafts movement originated in England in the mid nineteenth century, largely as a response to British industrialization and the perceived “death” of traditional handicraft industries. Two individuals, John Ruskin and William Morris, were instrumental in delineating the scope and nature of the movement at-large. Ruskin, a
London-born art critic, was one of the first thinkers to articulate a marked distaste for the normalization of industrial society in mid-nineteenth century Britain. Writing in 1853, Ruskin criticized the “slave-master” nature of industry which served to “smother” the souls of laborers through the imposition of tasks which rendered their bodies vessels that were only suitable to “yoke machinery with.” Ruskin’s musings became the rallying cry of Britain’s emerging anti-industry movement, which conceptualized industrialization as a vast ideological “machine” that needed to be, at best, eradicated, or in the least corralled and contained.

Ruskin’s ideals were later championed by William Morris, an Oxford-educated artist and designer who rejected “modern” industrial life and advocated for a return to pre-industrial, medieval aesthetic sensibilities and methods of production. Morris gained success as a “pattern designer” in his decorator firm of Morris, Marshall, Faulkner and Co. His work and ideals were inspired by the rhetoric of Ruskin, to the degree that Morris called for the elimination of “the great intangible machine of commercial tyranny, which oppresses the lives of all of us.” Morris worked tirelessly to combat the rampant industrialization of Britain; he produced textile designs reminiscent of Medieval and Renaissance artwork, and regularly gave lectures on the nature of his work.

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9 Crawford, 22.

10 Crawford, 23.

in the “decorative arts.”"\textsuperscript{12} Morris sought to raise the public’s awareness of the role played by “craftsmen,” who he argued were artists in their own right. He glorified Britain’s pre-industrial periods, arguing that the “decorative arts” produced in these periods were instrumental in supporting popular “enrichment of life.”\textsuperscript{13} He stated that in the past, ““the mystery and wonder of handicrafts were well acknowledged by the world, when imagination and fancy mingled with all things made by man; and in those days all handicraftsmen were \textit{artists}, as we should now call them.””\textsuperscript{14}

Morris’ attempts to raise public awareness and support of domestic “handicraft” industries bore fruit in the late nineteenth century, with the establishment of several new institutions devoted to promoting intuitively produced designs. These societies included “the Century Guild (1882-3), the Art Workers Guild (1884) and the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society (1887),” which ultimately transitioned into the Arts and Crafts Movement at-large.\textsuperscript{15} Of these organizations, the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society had the greatest impact on developing the aims and ideals of what would become the international Arts and Crafts Movement. Members of the Society sought to heighten public awareness of the role of the “artist-craftsman” in designing and producing goods for public consumption.\textsuperscript{16} This would ultimately lead to the creation of “a new

\textsuperscript{12} Crawford, 27.

\textsuperscript{13} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{14} William Morris, quoted in Crawford, 27.


\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., 51.
democratic relationship between the designer, the craftsman and the consumer,” eliminating completely the impersonality imposed on producers and consumers by the existent industrial-factory system. The Society sought, as well, to highlight craft-centered production via the medium of an annual exhibition. In 1888 the “Applied Design and Handicraft” exhibition was established with the primary goal being the promotion of the “decorative arts.”

Critics of the Society claimed that it did not go far enough in its efforts to promote handicraft-centered design. Morris himself “expressed … reservations” with the methodologies employed by the Society since it ostensibly sought to bridge the chasm that emerged between craft- and industrial-methods of production by providing greater opportunities for discourse between craftspeople and factories, and did not call for the utter elimination of industrialized production of artful consumer goods. Morris believed that, ultimately, “the status of the workman” would not be elevated by citing his/her participation in the processes of production. Industrial firms as well were reluctant to participate in early Society exhibitions “for fear of commercial espionage.” Firms only participated in succeeding years as a result of the demonstrated success of the Society, and the growing public interest in attending the exhibitions. In spite of these

17 Ibid.
18 Ibid.
19 Ibid.
20 Livingstone, 52.
21 Ibid.
22 Ibid.
initial hiccups, by the 1890s the Society’s exhibitions were deemed collective successes. As a result, the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society was deemed “enormously influential both in the UK and abroad,” since the sponsored exhibitions served to “raise the standard of … decorative arts” in the public imagination.23 Because of these achievements, the Arts and Crafts Movement at-large was born. The Movement had primary success in Britain, continental Europe and the United States; however, it also had limited appeal in the early twentieth century in Japan under the guise of the new mingei (“folk craft”) movement, implemented by the philosopher Yanagi Soetsu (1889-1961).

The first formal Arts and Crafts society in the United States was established in Boston, Massachusetts in 1897, under the less-than-imaginative moniker of The Society of Arts and Crafts. The American Society was made up of “a small group of architects, educators, craftspeople and collectors,” who together “organized the first crafts exhibition” held in the United States.24 The organization had a simple goal: “to develop and encourage higher standards in the handicrafts” in the United States.25 Later in 1897, the Midwestern architect and designer Frank Lloyd Wright established the “Chicago Arts and Crafts Society” situated in Chicago, Illinois.26 Within twenty years, more than sixty organizations devoted to the promotion of excellence in handicraft production emerged in

23 Livingstone, 55.


25 Ibid.

the United States. One way that the emerging American Arts and Crafts movement differed from the preceding British and continental European movements centered on the ideal of ‘democracy;’ specifically, initiating a movement that would promote so-called “democratic design” principles in the United States. This focus on the democratization of design was likewise linked to latent Socialist ideologies; as such, the movement simultaneously gave rise to American artistic communes, often located in rural regions. One of these communes, situated in East Aurora, New York, was founded by Elbert Hubbard; it eventually became the Roycroft campus. Hubbard possessed a particular affection for Asian art objects and antiquities, arguing that these pieces were physically representative of the “history” of their regions of origin. At the Roycroft commune, artisans-in-residence were encouraged to produce contemporary art objects in the style of those produced in pre-industrial societies. By living a life devoid of industrially-derived conveniences, Hubbard, and others like him, sought to reimagine and reconstruct living situations that were most conducive to the production of thoughtfully designed, hand crafted art objects. The appreciation (and in some cases appropriation) of the stylistic elements of art objects and antiquities produced in both European and Asian contexts was essential to the construction of this ideal. However, even mainstream Arts and Crafts societies championed the production of “‘artistic craft’” objects that could be

27 Ibid.


made available to all Americans. This led to the development of facilities, like the Rookwood factory in Cincinnati, Ohio, that mass-produced artisan designed ceramics for lower- and middle-class consumers.

In this way, the American Arts and Crafts movement was, at its core, focused on enhancing the lives and experience of Americans through supporting the construction and dissemination of beautiful, aesthetically pleasing things, as well as improving the lives of those individual craftspeople who designed and produced aesthetically pleasing objects. As a result of this latent egalitarianism, the American Arts and Crafts movement provided a venue for immigrant artisans, as well as women, to display and present their work. The egalitarian spirit also led many participants in the movement to embrace art objects, antiquities, and crafts produced in other regions; of specific interest to many American Arts and Crafts enthusiasts were objects produced in China, Japan and Korea.

Frederic Allen Whiting

A notable member of Boston’s Society was Frederic Allen Whiting, who in 1900 “became secretary of the Society of Arts and Crafts.” Whiting, in his capacity as secretary worked diligently to promote and enhance public awareness of the value of craft production. In 1904 he was given oversight of the ‘applied arts’ section of the Palace of Fine Arts at the Louisiana Purchase Exposition in St. Louis, Missouri. Whiting indicated that there was a growing appreciation, in the United States, for handicraft

30 Kaplan, 252.
31 Ibid.
production as early as the 1893 World’s Columbian Exposition in Chicago, Illinois.  

Specifically, he cited the growing desire among producers, and academics, to create “a broadened interpretation of the definition of art.” Whiting highlighted Ohio’s Rookwood pottery, indicating that they alone “took advantage of the opportunity” to display their wares, in Chicago, alongside other pieces of ‘artwork.’  

In a critical development, Whiting likewise discussed Japanese art objects that, for the first time at the Columbian Exposition, were displayed in the “Art Department,” rather than in the ‘craft’ pavilion. At the St. Louis Louisiana Purchase Exposition of 1903(?), Native American produced objects were displayed, by Whiting, alongside glass objects made in the New York studios of Louis Comfort Tiffany. This act illustrates Whiting’s willingness to embrace art objects produced by non-white groups as valid contenders for the interest and attention of the public at-large. For Whiting, Asian art and Arts and Crafts went hand in hand.

Following his success at the Louisiana Purchase Exposition, Whiting returned to Boston where he founded what became one of the leading journals of the American Arts and Crafts Movement, Handicraft. Along with the journal, Whiting was a founding member of the National League of Handicraft Societies, which was initiated in 1907 in

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33 Frederic Allen Whiting, “The Arts and Crafts at the Louisiana Purchase Exposition,” International Studio Magazine Supplement 23 (October 1904), CCLXXXV.

34 Ibid.

35 Ibid.

36 Ibid.

37 Whiting, “The Arts and Crafts at the Louisiana Purchase Exposition,” CCCLXXXIX.
Boston. The goal of the League was to streamline and unify the activities of “various societies who are working for the same purpose.” The Journal, under Whiting’s guidance, functioned as “an organ of the League,” providing announcements, and serving as an intermediary between artists, craftsmen, industry leaders, and manufacturers, as well as those luminaries who governed the ideological production of the American Arts and Crafts Movement, and, finally, the American public at-large. The League served “as the national exponent of the ideals which supply the moral energy behind the Arts and Crafts movement,” with a primary goal being the “restoration of the “lesser arts” … which were in the past so eloquent a record of the fact that, under right conditions, the sense of beauty is a natural accompaniment to skill of hand.” As a result of these efforts, the League could “influence … and guide” the work of artisans and craftspeople, making “the arts and crafts movement … a live and progressive element” in American society.

The League was a success, and Whiting, as a result of his association with it and the journal Handicraft, became more well-known in burgeoning American artistic circles. While in Boston, Whiting made the acquaintance of Janet Payne Bowles and Joseph

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39 Ibid., 23.

40 Ibid.

41 Ibid., 27.

42 Ibid., 26-27.
Bowles, editor of the journal *Modern Art*.\(^{43}\) The Bowleses were both active proponents of the Arts and Crafts Movement in the United States - while Joseph worked editing *Modern Art*, his wife, Janet, took classes in philosophy and metalwork.\(^{44}\) Janet found her passion in metal-smithing, and eventually returned to Indianapolis to work as an instructor in “metalwork and jewelry.”\(^{45}\) Likely as a result of this Boston connection, Whiting was offered a position as director of the fledgling John Herron Art Institute, founded in 1902 in Indianapolis.\(^{46}\) Whiting traveled to Indianapolis in June of 1912; however, within months of his arrival, he was offered a more lucrative position as the Director of the as-yet-to-be-constructed Cleveland Museum of Art. This appointment was likely a result of Whiting’s professional connection with Lockwood de Forest, a New York based painter and decorator, whose brother was Robert de Forest was president of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York.\(^{47}\) This offer was made because of Whiting’s professional reputation as a leading proponent of the goals of the American Arts and Crafts Movement, along with his extensive resume and demonstrated success in his service to the Boston Society of Arts and Crafts, the League of Handicraft Societies, and his able editorial work with the journal *Handicraft*. Although torn, Whiting ultimately decided to work in Cleveland, since there he would have greater autonomy in


\(^{44}\) Ibid.

\(^{45}\) Shifman, 16.

\(^{46}\) Shifman, 18.

both determining the creative direction of the museum, as well as in forming the
collection at-large.\textsuperscript{48}

Whiting was appointed Director of the new Cleveland Museum of Art in
December 1913.\textsuperscript{49} He arrived in Cleveland early the following year, and brought with
him a wealth of experience related to the American Arts and Crafts Movement. Whiting
sought to create, in Cleveland, a new kind of museum that embraced both the traditional
“high arts” alongside examples of finely produced “crafts” from around the world. He
argued that Cleveland, as a smaller, regional museum, should “strive for a happy medium
between” staid permanent exhibitions and perpetually changing ones; it should likewise
be focused on acquiring only the very finest examples of both \textit{objets d’art} and crafts.\textsuperscript{50}
Whiting likewise called for the implementation of a new policy of inclusion in Cleveland.
He indicated that “the museum should ally itself positively with the industries of
Cleveland. By enlarging the outlook of artisans … we can positively increase their
efficiency.”\textsuperscript{51} He continued, stating that “the imagination of craftsmen can be
beneficially stimulated and they can be made to realize the possible development of their
capacity in a remarkable way,” if invited to the new museum, where they would be
exposed to finely produced crafts, art objects, and antiquities from around the world.\textsuperscript{52}


\textsuperscript{49} Turner, 4.

\textsuperscript{50} Frederic A. Whiting, quoted in Turner, 4-5.

\textsuperscript{51} Frederic A. Whiting, quoted in Turner, 9.

\textsuperscript{52} Ibid.
Whiting’s prior work with Boston’s Arts and Crafts Society, his experience curating the displays of ‘applied arts’ at the Louisiana Purchase Exposition, and his contacts with active members of various American Arts and Crafts-related societies all contributed substantially to the formation of his own artistic sensibilities. Although lacking formal training, Whiting was keenly aware of the important relationship between “high art” and so-called “craft;” he sought, in his position as Director of the Cleveland Museum of Art, to bridge that perceived divide by placing art objects, crafts, and antiquities on display, together. Whiting’s efforts culminated, ultimately, in the formation of a world-class collection of art objects and antiquities from around the world in Cleveland’s museum. Further, his internalized ideals and attitudes helped give rise to what later became the museum’s purposeful program of sympathetic appropriation of the patrimony of art objects and antiquities from China, Japan, and Korea.

Collectors, Scholars, and Artists on the Value of Asian Aesthetics

Collectors, art dealers, and artists working in the early twentieth century had links to the Arts and Crafts Movement (both in its European and American iterations). These individuals likewise developed, collectively, a peculiar fascination with art objects and antiquities produced in East Asian nations. This interest had its origin in individual travel and contact, as well as, for some, Orientalist fantasy. Although some academics and artisans imagined the ‘Orient’ as a static, unchanging, unified entity, others expressed appreciation for the pre-industrial civilizational achievements of artisans and craftspeople living and working throughout East Asia. Laurence Binyon, scholar of Asian art, argued that the “inner life, the secret genius of [Asian] civilization[s], reveals itself to us above
all in the creative art” produced in the region. Binyon indicated that foreign scholars should pay attention to the collective histories and productive capacities of Asian nations, since “East Asian art “impresses us as a whole by its cohesion, solidarity, order, and harmony;” this “cohesion” served as a foil to the “besetting vice” of “Western life as a whole, so complex and entangled in materials…” In spite of the varied mediums of introduction, this growing interest resulted in the creation of a new element, focused upon expanding awareness of Asian aesthetic ideals, within the broader Arts and Crafts Movement. One of the early proponents of the value of Asian art was the Detroit industrialist Charles Lang Freer (1854-1919). Freer’s interest in Asian art began with his first trip to the region, undertaken in 1894. Freer spent eleven months touring India and Japan, meeting dignitaries and art dealers, and educating himself on the history of these areas. He returned to Asia for an eight-month collecting trip in 1906-1907, starting in the Middle East, and concluding the trip in China and Japan. In 1909, he set out again for Asia spending considerable time in China, where he acquired numerous fine scroll paintings and ceramics from dealers who brought objects to his quarters for personal inspection. His final trip to Asia began in 1911, when he sailed directly for Japan,
followed by a stay in Shanghai. On this trip, Freer visited important historical sites along the Yellow River; two stops were at the grottoes at Longmen (at the modern city of Luoyang), and the ancient Song-dynasty capital of Kaifeng. In all, Freer made five collecting trips abroad; on four of these trips he specifically focused on acquiring fine art objects and antiquities from Asia.

Freer first displayed these newly acquired objects in his home at 71 East Ferry Avenue in Detroit, Michigan. Freer had a unique perspective on the nature of proper display, and regularly placed European or American produced antiques and decorative objects alongside pieces from China, Japan, and Korea. He believed it necessary “to unite modern work with masterpieces of certain periods of high civilization,” since these pieces together possessed “the power to broaden aesthetic culture and the grace to elevate the human mind.” A singular example of this philosophy is Freer’s “Peacock Room,” currently displayed at the Freer Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. The Peacock Room was “originally designed by the architect Thomas Jeckyll for British shipping magnate Frederick Leyland,” as a space for displaying Chinese ceramics. The room was redesigned in 1876-77 by the artist James McNeill Whistler (1834-1903), an artist-artist-

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59 Lawton, 87.

60 Lawton, 90.


protégé of Freer’s. Freer purchased the room in 1904, and had it re-constructed in his Detroit mansion. In Detroit, Freer “filled [the room’s] shelves with more than 200 examples of his own collection of Asian ceramics” and “American tonalist painting.”

Freer, while interested in the age and origin of objects as a measure of value and cachet, was ultimately more concerned with creating an aesthetically pleasing space to display his beautiful acquisitions. He believed that “all great works of art go together, whatever their period,” and demonstrated this belief in-practice first in his Detroit home, and later in display directives to be observed in the Freer Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C.

Although Freer displayed Asian art objects and antiquities alongside contemporary paintings in his home, he insisted that these pieces must be of the finest quality. Freer also kept detailed records of the dynastic and regional origin of the pieces he acquired for his collection. In his letters to Asian art dealers, he regularly referenced the dynastic period and sites of origin of pieces in his collection. Although he preferred pieces made before the Ming dynasty (1368-1644 CE), he was willing to consider later pieces of exceptional quality. In this way, for Freer, Asian art objects and antiquities served as central representations of the level of aesthetic sophistication and productive capacity of their respective regions and periods of origin.

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63 Ibid.
64 Glazer, 220.
65 Ibid.
66 Freer, quoted in Glazer, 222.
Freer’s sensibilities were shared by James Whistler, a painter born in Lowell, Massachusetts. Japanese print art heavily influenced Whistler’s work;68 as such, Freer sought to collect and display it alongside art objects and antiquities from Asia in an attempt to discern “points of contact.”69 Freer was so delighted with Whistler’s use of Asian color-schemes and aesthetic elements that he stated “Mr. Whistler does unite the art of the Occident with that of the Orient;” important to Freer, who sought to create a similar sense of ‘harmony’ in his personal display settings.70 Elements circulating in the broader American Arts and Crafts Movement affected Freer’s ideals regarding art and display. Many individuals who were linked to, or who participated in Arts and Crafts societies in the United States expressed appreciation for the historical durability of Asian civilizations, as well as the high standard of quality present in art objects and antiquities produced in these regions. These ideals both informed, and were informed by, the writings of contemporary scholars of Asian art and history, alongside the work of contemporary artists, architects, and designers; taken together, these ideals produced a timely and symbiotic system of ideological exchange that ultimately made sympathetic appropriation possible at the Cleveland Museum of Art.

In the early twentieth century, scholars and art historians associated with the Arts and Crafts Movement published a number of important texts on the origin, history, and impact of East Asian art. Some of the most influential figures were Ernest Fenollosa

68 Glazer, 221.

69 Charles Lang Freer, quoted in Glazer, 221.

70 Charles Lang Freer, quoted in Glazer, 219.
(1853-1908), Laurence Binyon (1869-1943), and Osvald Sirèn (1879-1966). Each of these men regularly corresponded with Freer. Sirèn maintained a lively correspondence with Whiting, and Binyon delivered one of the museum’s earliest public lectures, on “The Art of Asia,” in November of 1914. Whiting also aided Ernest Fenollosa’s wife in preparing a book from his notes after his unexpected death in 1908. Each of these men worked to expand the serious academic study of Asian art, as well as expand public regard for art objects and antiquities from China, Japan and Korea. An examination of the major contributions of Fenollosa, Binyon and Sirèn highlights their collective importance in influencing the aesthetic sensibilities and collecting habits of individuals like Freer and other prominent collectors associated with the American Arts and Crafts Movement. Because of his personal correspondences with Binyon, Fenollosa and Sirèn, Frederic Whiting’s views were likely influenced by their work. Together they sought to enhance public awareness of the beauty and value of Asian art objects and antiquities within the context of the broader American Arts and Crafts Movement.

Ernest Fenollosa (1853-1908) was born in Salem, Massachusetts, to Manuel Fenollosa, a Spanish pianist, and Mary Silsbee, a local socialite. He was educated at Hacker Grammar School and Salem High School in Salem, before attending Harvard University, where he studied philosophy. At Harvard, Fenollosa worked with Charles

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Eliot Norton, a professor of art history and “early convert to the English Arts and Crafts movement through his friend John Ruskin.” Norton’s ideas had a profound influence on Fenollosa’s own work with Asian art objects. Since Norton and Fenollosa’s focus was on the properties of design and aesthetic appeal, rather than region of origin, they succeeded in convincing collectors of the equivalent value of both Japanese and European art objects. After graduation, Fenollosa worked at Boston’s Museum of Fine Arts, before traveling to Japan at age twenty five to teach “political economy and philosophy” at Tokyo’s Imperial University. Although a successful instructor, Fenollosa found himself enamored with traditional Japanese arts and crafts. In 1888, he established the “Tokyo Fine Arts Academy and the Imperial Museum,” where he served as director until 1890, when he accepted oversight of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston’s “Oriental” art collection. By this time, Fenollosa, considered an authority on the art and antiquities of Japan and China, published Masters of Ukiyo-e in 1896. Although Fenollosa died in 1908, his wife, Mary Fenollosa, used his notes to publish the seminal Epochs of Chinese and Japanese Art: An Outline History in 1912.

74 Roberta Smith, “American Crafts, Cause and Effect.”

75 Ibid.

76 Ibid.


78 Ibid.

*Epochs* was composed of two volumes, and was organized following a linear history of artistic production in China and Japan. Fenollosa believed that it was a “fallacy” to think of Chinese civilization “as standing for thousands of years at a dead level;” instead, he sought to illustrate the dynamic nature of artistic production through each dynastic period in China’s long history.\(^8^0\) He further believed that Chinese and Japanese art could be taken together forming “a single aesthetic movement,” in much the same fashion as art historians in the early twentieth century discerned relationships between the Hellenistic aesthetic present in Greek and Roman art.\(^8^1\) Fenollosa also challenged the wide-ranging “Western” rejection of Asian art, indicating that “Oriental art” was only “excluded from most serious art history because of the supposition that its law and form were incommensurate with established European classes.”\(^8^2\) These art objects and antiquities, in Fenollosa’s mind, were part of a “universal scheme of logic and art,” and should thus be given equal value and attention by European and American observers.\(^8^3\) Fenollosa went on, discussing what he perceived to be “points of resemblance” between color and stylistic production in artwork made in “both hemispheres.”\(^8^4\) He cited Whistler’s work as an important step in reconciling Asian and Euro-American artistic styles.\(^8^5\) Answering critics, Fenollosa indicated that the views

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\(^8^0\) Fenollosa, xxiv.

\(^8^1\) Ibid.

\(^8^2\) Ibid.

\(^8^3\) Ibid.

\(^8^4\) Fenollosa, xxv.

\(^8^5\) Ibid.
expressed in *Epochs* were representative of his own “personal appreciation” of Asian art; however, he questioned if there could ever “be a synthesis that is not personal?” Fenollosa indicated that the purpose of his book was to illustrate the universal power of art, stating “Art is the power of the imagination to transform materials – to transfigure them – and the history of Art should be the history of this power.” He concluded that art was the manifestation of creative impulses, and as such “at creative periods all forms of art will be found to interact.” All art, “Oriental” art included, should, in Fenollosa’s mind, “be judged by universal standards.”

Fenollosa clearly possessed high regard for the arts of Asia, arguing that they should not be viewed in a vacuum, but rather as one facet of a broader continuum of aesthetically pleasing objects produced for appreciation and consumption. He was one of the first respected scholars to actively lobby for the inclusion of art objects and antiquities from East Asia in dedicated museum installations. Like Freer, Fenollosa also believed that beautiful things need not be displayed in exclusive groupings – it was thus permissible and even desirable to place Chinese ceramics alongside pieces produced in American or European workshops. Fenollosa likewise supported Japanese efforts to resist the “Westernization” of the arts, leading Warren Cohen to describe him as a “reactionary Japanophile” who worked to “preserve [the] Japanese ‘essence’” in the

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86 Fenollosa, xxvi.
87 Fenollosa, xxvii.
88 Ibid.
89 Ibid.
context of artistic production. In this way, art objects and antiquities from China, Japan, and Korea ought to be displayed next to contemporary pieces made by European and American artisans and craftspeople. The objects, linked by aesthetic appeal yet grounded in divergent periods and regions of origin, collectively comprised a new “heterogenous” ideal of artistic production and aesthetic appeal – one that rejected the effective “homogenizing” effect of industrialization and mechanized mass production ubiquitous in industrialized nations in the early twentieth century. As a result of Fenollosa’s efforts, art objects and antiquities from East Asia were sought out for their pedigrees, historical value, and aesthetic appeal, by both museum curators and, later, members of the public, who happily purchased locally-made facsimiles if ‘authentic’ art objects were unavailable or unattainable.

Laurence Binyon, born in Lancaster, England, was trained in the Classics and considered himself a talented poet. However, he took a job at the British Museum in 1893, where he worked in the Department of Printed Books. He eventually transitioned to the museum’s Department of Prints and Drawings, and it was his exposure here to globally-produced works of art that stimulated his interest in the art of East Asia. Binyon produced two major texts on Asian art; the first, published in 1908, was entitled

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93 Ibid.
94 Ibid.
Painting in the Far East. This was followed in 1911 by The Flight of the Dragon. Binyon’s reputation was such that Freer asked him to travel to the US on a museum lecture tour. One of those stops was at the Cleveland Museum of Art, where Binyon lectured on November 20, 1915, on “The Art of Asia.”95 Whiting anticipated such a large crowd for this lecture that he “issu[ed] tickets by invitation.”96 By all accounts, it was well-received.

While in Cleveland, Binyon likely lectured on both the history of East Asian artistic traditions, as well as the value, both aesthetically and monetarily, of art objects and antiquities made in China, Japan and Korea. Outlining his stance on the state of public awareness of Asian art in Painting in the Far East, Binyon indicated that one of the primary themes of his book was “to inquire what aesthetic value … Eastern paintings possess for us in the West.”97 Binyon lamented the state of contemporary aesthetic awareness in China and Japan, blaming “time, fire, wars, rebellions, and the armed ravages of Western civilization” as culprits in the destruction of both material and ideological points of reference.98 He later questioned why “Western” artists and historians ignored pieces produced in “the East,” rhetorically asking “Have the Oriental races really been so impotent and uncreative? Do the vague associations of luxury and sensuous magnificence which the “gorgeous East” brings into our minds really represent


96 Ibid.

97 Laurence Binyon, Painting in the Far East: An Introduction to the History of Pictorial Art in Asia Especially China and Japan (London: Edward Arnold, 1908), viii.

98 Ibid.
all that is to be known of it?" Presumably, for Binyon, the answer to both questions was a resounding ‘no.’

Binyon believed that Asian art was just as historically significant as pieces produced in the so-called West. He indicated that the painting traditions of China and Japan formed a kind of continuum or “continuous tradition … maintained and made illustrious by countless artists for two thousand years.” Examples of “Chinese masterpieces” possessed “a strong synthetic power, which differentiate[d]” them from art produced in other regions. However, he went further, arguing that Chinese art, specifically, served as an aesthetic seed for stimulating artistic production “not only [in] Japan in the East, but Persia in the West [which] derived the sources of its art from the fertilizing overflow of that wonderful nation whose history has been the continued absorption from without of barbarous neighbors and invaders, and the imposition on its conquerors of its own civilisation (sic).” Looking beyond the simplistic binaries presented by Binyon, it still is clear that he possessed an unusual admiration for artistic production in East Asian nations. Further, he ascribed the evolving artistic traditions of China and Japan to enduring civilizational pedigrees. The art of Asia, as a result of “its coherence and its concentration” aided in maintaining “this tradition, so old in the East,

99 Binyon, 4.

100 Binyon, 7.


102 Binyon, Painting, 7.
[that] manifests the character of an art that has reached complete development.”

For Binyon, then, the significance of Chinese and Japanese art rested on a vast historical pedigree of production, technique, and aesthetic appreciation. Binyon’s work, along with his active lecture schedule, heavily influenced the sensibilities of participants in both the European and American Arts and Crafts Movements, since his lectures were often subsidized by local Arts and Crafts societies – this was the case when he presented a lecture at the Detroit Museum of Art. Binyon worked to construct a link between the aesthetic superiority of East Asian artisans and craftspeople and Asian civilizational development in general. By appealing to this superiority, Binyon encouraged listeners and readers to reject “Eurocentri[c]” attitudes when confronted with the artistic achievements of Asian artisans. East Asian artwork should not be dismissed by Europeans and Americans; it should be studied, learned from, and celebrated.

Finnish-born scholar Osvald Sirén likewise contributed to evolving academic and popular discourses on the value of East Asian art in the early twentieth century. Sirén, born in Helsinki, was initially educated as a scholar of Italian Renaissance art. In the early part of his career he held positions in Stockholm’s National Museum and University as a scholar of objects from the Renaissance. By the 1920s, however, Sirén’s interests

103 Binyon, 11. Italics mine.


105 Rodner, 20.


107 Ibid.
shifted and he spent the remainder of his career studying and writing about Chinese art objects and antiquities. Sirèn made his first trip to China in 1922; his goal was to study and familiarize himself with Chinese methods of artistic production. Sirèn arrived in China with an already-formed appreciation for Chinese art; he previously wrote that these pieces possessed “emotional expressiveness in abstract form,” and that this “expressiveness” was “not a result of imitation,” but was, rather, an innovation in art production. Sirèn moved within the same scholarly circles as Fenollosa and Binyon, met with dealers associated with the American-based, Japanese-run Yamanaka firm, and admired the work of Japanese aesthete and thinker Kakuzo Okakura, who he affectionately (if offensively) called the “venerated high priest of oriental aestheticism.” He likewise had contact with Charles Lang Freer, who helped further stimulate his interest in the aesthetic value of Asian art.

Sirèn published several books through the 1920s, in English and Swedish, and contributed to a popular anthology, The Romance of Chinese Art, published in 1929. The ideals introduced in this book are useful to examine, even though it emerged well after the end of the Arts and Crafts Movement. These ideals are representative of Sirèn’s own beliefs regarding the value of art objects and antiquities produced in East Asia, making the book an excellent resource in a broader examination of academic trends created in the

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109 Osvald Sirèn, quoted in Torma, loc. 475.

110 Discussed in detail below.

111 Osvald Sirèn, quoted in Torma, loc. 573.
early twentieth century. The title itself is telling, and indicates that the authors, including Sirèn, regarded Chinese art positively. Chinese art is introduced as emerging roughly on par with artistic production in the so-called “West.” The authors argued that Chinese art was likely neglected “perhaps because the East did not produce … efficient battleships;” however, they indicate that it was as a result of artistic and technological innovation in China that “made possible these modern battleships.” In the following chapter on “Aesthetic Development of China,” Chinese art is described as exhibiting a “mastery of technique” was “never … surpassed” by artisans in any other region. Over the course of four separate trips to Asia, Sirèn toured the ruined Tang-era Buddhist grottoes at Longmen, and met with the deposed emperor Puyi. He waxed poetic on the need to preserve the “decaying” art and architecture of China, which still retained beauty and “touch[es] of past grandeur.”

Sirèn, like Fenollosa and Binyon, was an instrumental figure in disseminating positive, appreciative ideals about the global need to re-evaluate and ascribe value to art objects and antiquities produced in East Asia. The work of these individuals influenced both collecting practices, as well as methods employed by dealers to make East Asian art objects attractive to collectors in the early twentieth century. Part of a confluence of academic currents that promoted appreciation of non-Western art, and those in the

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113 Ibid.

114 Ibid., 13.

115 Osvald Sirèn, quoted in Torma, loc. 1876.
broader Arts and Crafts Movement that championed aesthetic appeal above all other considerations, together they helped form the foundation for the ideas of sympathetic appropriation developed by Frederic Whiting at the Cleveland Museum of Art.

Alongside the work of Americans and Europeans was the promotion of Asian art objects and antiquities as culturally transcendent pieces by Asian thinkers and dealers. Kakuzo Okakura (1863-1913) was perhaps the most influential Asian thinker working in the early twentieth century United States. Okakura was born in Yokohama, Japan, and spent his early career working for Japan’s Ministry of Education. Although successful in Japan, Okakura ultimately left the country for the United States, where, in 1904, he began working at Boston’s Museum of Fine Arts. Okakura worked to positively influence American perceptions on Asian nations, and the value of Asian art, mediated primarily through the lens of Japan and Japanese sensibilities. He published three very influential books: *The Ideals of the East*, *The Awakening of Japan*, and *The Book of Tea*. In these books, Okakura called for a re-evaluation of “Asia” and Asian art. He believed that the only reason Asian art was neglected in the United States and Europe was because people living in those regions were unfamiliar with the civilizational achievements of the Chinese, Japanese, and Korean peoples. Okakura indicated that “so long as the Western world remains so unaware of the varied environment and interrelated social phenomena into which … art is set,” these individuals would be unable to appreciate the techniques and aesthetic sensibilities that produced art objects and antiquities from


Asian artists, in Okakura’s estimation, produced sublime pieces of “industrial and decorative art,” represented as the “heirloom[s] of ages.” He called on Asians to collectively work on “protecting and restoring Asiatic modes” of production and thought.

Okakura believed that Asian art objects and antiquities served as physical markers of innovation and cultural growth; as such, they should be celebrated both in their regions of origin and abroad. In this way, foreigners could learn to appreciate the civilizational achievements and historical durability of China, Japan and Korea as countries, and Chinese, Japanese and Korean citizens could re-awaken a “self-consciousness that [would] build up Asia again into her ancient steadfastness and strength.” At the end of *Ideals* Okakura helpfully included a chart outlining both “Eastern” and “Western” cultural innovations; the chart began with the great Chinese thinkers Kong Fuzi and Laozi, who were equated, by Okakura, with thinkers in ancient Greek and Roman civilizations. Okakura thus sought to make Asian history and art intelligible to foreigners, by listing civilizational accomplishments of people in the so-called “East” and “West” side-by-side, and on equal footing. While he expressed some admiration for foreign “art and literature,” he concluded that, ultimately, the study of the foreign “can in

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118 Ibid.
119 Okakura, 141.
120 Okakura, 143.
121 Okakura, 144.
122 Okakura, 147.
Okakura’s focus on the artistic and ideological achievements of people from China, Japan and Korea stimulated appreciation, on the part of American academics and members of the Arts and Crafts Movement, of art objects and antiquities produced in these regions. Okakura was not, however, the only Asian arguing for greater foreign recognition of the historical and civilizational achievements of East Asians. The prominent Chinese art dealer C. T. Loo also worked to promote appreciation for East Asian art objects and antiquities among Americans.

Ching-Tsai Loo (1880-1957) was a Chinese-born art and antiquities dealer, who, by the early twentieth century, established himself as both a consultant and confidant to many American and European collectors. Loo worked first from Paris, and then from New York. He regularly corresponded with collectors like Freer, and museum officials like Whiting, providing objects on loan with the hope that they would ultimately be purchased. Loo, as a businessman, employed more practical language than Okakura; however, he was still nonetheless instrumental in promoting Asian art in the US and Europe as being representative of the culture and history of Asian nations. He also assigned value to this historicity via the medium of ‘authenticity;’ this created relative tiers of worth related to an object’s age, aesthetic sophistication and cost. In 1923, Loo gifted two objects to the Cleveland Museum of Art; one, a carved limestone Buddha head

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125 Wang, 22.
from the 6th c. CE, and the other, a Song-dynasty tea bowl. Cleveland’s curator of ‘Oriental’ art at this time was Theodore Sizer, who replaced J. Arthur MacLean after his resignation and move to the Art Institute of Chicago. Sizer gushed over the gift of the Buddha head, calling it a “fine” piece and “one of the most generous things” that the museum received. Loo responded that it was a “nice head” that could be “understood as well by the public as by the connoisseur” owing to its size and peaceful expression.

When accused by some of selling off the cultural patrimony of China, Japan and Korea to the highest bidder, Loo defended his actions indicating that if he did not remove and sell these objects, they would not be “preserved” in their countries of origin. He argued that “Art has no frontiers,” and as such, objects should go “forth into the world [to be] admired by scholars as well as the public.” These “lost treasures will be the real messengers to make the world realize our ancient civilization, and culture thus serving to create a love and better understanding of China…” Loo here linked historically significant objects with modern nation-states, indicating that these contemporary countries could claim the pedigree and patrimony of prior civilizations that existed within their contemporary territorial boundaries. In addition, Loo posited that objects could, even in a new, foreign setting, retain the aesthetic and historical power


128 C.T. Loo, quoted in Wang, 193.

129 Ibid.

130 Ibid.
conferred upon them at their point of creation. In this way, even if sold and displayed in a new private or institutional context, these Asian art objects and antiquities were still powerful, tangible, aesthetically appealing representations of the civilizational achievements of China, Japan, and Korea, and were thus worthy of foreign appreciation.

The ideas disseminated by Okakura and Loo that focused upon the historical and aesthetic appeal and value of East Asian art objects and antiquities had a wide-reaching impact in the United States. This can most specifically be viewed in the writings of Elbert Hubbard, founder of the Roycroft campus in western New York, and the later work of architect and designer Frank Lloyd Wright, who wholeheartedly embraced and applied elements of Japanese aesthetic design in his work. These individuals argued for a link between art objects and antiquities from East Asia, notions of social and cultural ‘distinction,’ and appreciation and recognition of the valuable contributions made by members of Asia’s ancient civilizations. Their own collective appreciation (and appropriation) of Asian aesthetic and design elements later influenced the consumption practices of middle- and lower-class Americans, who in the early twentieth century associated Asian art and style with cultural sophistication and distinction.

Elbert Hubbard (1856-1915), a prolific writer interested in the ideals of the American Arts and Crafts Movement, grew up in Illinois and worked as an itinerant soap salesman until 1895, when he established the Roycroft community in East Aurora, New York.¹³¹ There, Hubbard sought to create a vibrant artistic community governed by ideals introduced in the older European Arts and Crafts Movement. Specifically,
Hubbard encouraged artisans to live and work on-site, where they produced quality handicrafts that were sold in the Roycroft shop.\textsuperscript{132} Hubbard also started his own press, the “Roycroft Press,” that he used to publish his own writings and musings.

Hubbard expressed a clear admiration for the founders of the European Arts and Crafts Movement, stating in his seminal \textit{A Message to Garcia and Thirteen Other Things} that he believed “John Ruskin [and] William Morris … to be Prophets of God” worthy of notice by members of the American public.\textsuperscript{133} He likewise wrote appreciatively about Asia, constructing a narrative that would influence other important figures in the broader American Arts and Crafts Movement. Hubbard also published an ongoing series that took readers on \textit{Little Journeys…} to visit the homes and philosophies of individuals he believed were significant. In \textit{Little Journeys to the Homes of the Great}, volume 10, Hubbard introduced readers to his thoughts on China and the work of Confucius.\textsuperscript{134} Hubbard argued that China, far from being a “country crumbling into ruins,” was vibrant and alive, and a place that the “West can not longer afford to ignore.”\textsuperscript{135} China was, according to Hubbard, filled with “many ancient, wise, simple customs and ordinances, coming down from remote centuries;” together they produced “the most stable and the


\textsuperscript{133} Elbert Hubbard, \textit{A Message to Garcia and Thirteen Other Things} (East Aurora, NY: The Roycrofters, 1901), i.

\textsuperscript{134} Elbert Hubbard, \textit{Little Journeys to the Homes of the Great, volume 10} (East Aurora, NY: The Roycrofters, 1916), 43.

\textsuperscript{135} Ibid.
most productive [culture] in the world.”

The Chinese, operating out of the traditions formed in an ancient yet sophisticated country, were capable of producing, in Hubbard’s mind, splendid and aesthetically superior art objects. Hubbard indicated that Americans “sometimes say that we can make anything in America that they can anywhere in the round world… In fact, the exquisite things, requiring great patience, skill and care to think out, and then execute, can only be made by people who have passed thru the pioneer stage in which we, as a people, now linger.”

Hubbard continued, writing about “the wondrous things that have been worked out in the brain and materialized by the deft and skillful fingers of these people who we sometimes scorn.” Hubbard believed that Americans could benefit from exposure to art objects and antiquities produced in East Asia. Further, he indicated that these objects possessed some cachet or “pedigree” – sellers of such pieces “know where they come from, how they are produced, what they are worth.” Such “art treasures” might look very similar to inexpensive knick-knacks, but the authentic piece was more valuable, to Hubbard, because it “had history behind it.”

Hubbard likewise approved of the methods employed in the production of these art objects and antiquities. He wrote that if he “were a teacher in a high school … [he]

136 Hubbard, 48.
137 Elbert Hubbard, A Little Journey to Vantine’s. Italics mine.
138 Ibid.
139 Ibid.
140 Ibid.
would take [his] pupils in companies of a dozen to visit Vantine’s; and there [he] would study the manufacture, the dyeing, the hand-painting, the decoration, and the preparation” of these pieces. An analysis of Hubbard’s views on Asia, and the art objects and antiquities produced there, reveals obvious admiration for the long historical pedigree and civilizational innovations and achievements of China, Japan and Korea. Further Hubbard linked this admiration for artful and aesthetically pleasing production to the Arts and Crafts Movement as he was familiar with it. For Hubbard, Asian art was a valuable untapped field that contemporary artisans should familiarize themselves with; the development of facility with Asian methods of production could only help American artisans and craftspeople to produce more intuitive and artful pieces. Some Americans, like the designer Frank Lloyd Wright, also affiliated with the Arts and Crafts Movement, agreed.

Wisconsin-born designer and architect Frank Lloyd Wright (1867-1959) was an instrumental figure in both the American Arts and Crafts Movement, as well as a renowned collector of Japanese art objects and antiquities. Wright, who was largely self-taught, arrived in Chicago in 1887 after dropping out of the engineering program at the University of Wisconsin at Madison. He was a founding member of the Chicago Arts and Crafts Society, where he called for greater exploitation of mechanized methods of

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141 Vantine’s was a New York-based department store that specialized in selling art objects, antiquities, antiques, and more inexpensive goods from East Asia.

142 Hubbard, A Little Journey to Vantine’s.

143 Meech, 30.
production by craftspeople. Wright argued that the Arts and Crafts Movement would only be successful in the United States if its members embraced mechanized production. He indicated “that in the machine lies the only future of art and craft,” continuing, “that the machine is, in fact, the metamorphosis of ancient art and craft…” Wright granted that machines could only produce limited results, indicating that they might create more aesthetically superior pieces only when directed by a “master mind.” The machine, however, did represent democracy to Wright, and in his mind, Americans ought to make use of democratic means to produce beautiful things. Wright granted that machines could only produce limited results, indicating that they might create more aesthetically superior pieces only when directed by a “master mind.” The machine, however, did represent democracy to Wright, and in his mind, Americans ought to make use of democratic means to produce beautiful things. The machine, for Wright, did the base-work; only a craftsperson, harnessing “the forces of art” would “breathe the thrill of ideality – a soul” into an object. In spite of these unorthodox beliefs, Wright remained a powerful figure in the Midwestern Arts and Crafts Movement, forming the so-called “Prairie School” with friends and fellow designers living and working in Chicago.

Also in Chicago, Wright came into contact with Asian art for the first time – his first employer, the architect Silsbee, collected East Asian art objects. He likely also encountered objects located in pavilions at the 1893 World’s Columbian Exposition, when many Americans had initial exposure to beautiful and aesthetically significant


146 Wright, 88.

147 Wright, 90.

148 Ibid.

149 Ibid.
pieces of artwork from Asia.\textsuperscript{150} As Wright nurtured his interest in Asian art, he worked to make a name for himself as an Arts and Crafts-inspired architect and designer in Chicago. Even so, his interest in Japanese art, specifically, was strong enough that it prompted him to travel to Japan in 1905.\textsuperscript{151} While in Japan, Wright toured important architectural sites and collected block prints (called \textit{ukiyo-e}, or “pictures/images of the floating world”) produced by important Japanese artists of the Edo period (1603-1868), when Japan was governed by the Tokugawa shogunate. He also took note of design elements, exclaiming over the proportions employed in the Shugakuin, “a seventeenth-century imperial stroll on the northern outskirts” of Kyoto.\textsuperscript{152} In describing the garden, Wright was struck by the lack of boundaries separating it from the surrounding countryside. Japanese aesthetic style, to Wright “was like an open book to me … and I knew how to read it. I could read every word in it… It was a great educational experience.”\textsuperscript{153} He later employed similar elements in his own architectural designs; these included perching structures atop natural crags or within aesthetically pleasing natural settings. Wright likewise sought to blur the divide between his designs and the natural world by using natural elements within his design structure – an excellent example of this style is the Fallingwater house, built in over a waterfall in Mill Run, Pennsylvania.\textsuperscript{154}

\textsuperscript{150} Meech, 30-32.

\textsuperscript{151} Meech, 38.

\textsuperscript{152} Meech, 38.

\textsuperscript{153} Frank Lloyd Wright, quoted in Meech, 38.

\textsuperscript{154} For more information on Fallingwater see: http://www.fallingwater.org/.
In 1908 Wright “contributed 218 of his Japanese prints” to a ukiyo-e exhibit at the Art Institute of Chicago.\textsuperscript{155} Other prints were loaned by Wright’s friends bringing the grand total to 655 pieces, “the largest such display ever mounted in America.”\textsuperscript{156} Wright designed Japanese-inspired print stands for the event; these melded Japanese drawing style with Wright’s signature linear display.\textsuperscript{157} Wright, by his own admission, was impressed with Japanese print designs because of their relative simplicity. He stated that “the first and supreme principle of Japanese aesthetics consists in stringent simplification by elimination of the insignificant and a consequent emphasis of reality.”\textsuperscript{158} This type of “unpretentious” artwork, focused upon illustrating and highlighting only what was absolutely essential in a given composition, rendered the Japanese aesthetic into a “delicately sensuous” medium of artistic production.\textsuperscript{159} Japanese design was, for Wright, a “material means … to a spiritual end,” and was capable of speaking “to us a message of aesthetic and ethical import.”\textsuperscript{160} Japanese art “spread its civilizing” influence “because [of] its conventionalizing, simplifying, [and] clarifying influence [on] the arts and crafts of the occident on both sides of the Atlantic.”\textsuperscript{161} In this way, Japan’s “exquisite civilization” had, in Wright’s mind, nothing but a positive influence on the aesthetic

\textsuperscript{155} Meech, 58.
\textsuperscript{156} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{157} Meech, 60.
\textsuperscript{159} Ibid., 143.
\textsuperscript{160} Ibid., 148.
\textsuperscript{161} Ibid.
sensibilities of American artisans and craftspeople linked to and participating in the broader Arts and Crafts Movement.\textsuperscript{162} If American designers, artisans, and craftspeople fully acquainted themselves with East Asian aesthetic principles, via the medium of encountering beautifully rendered art objects and antiquities, it would result in finer, more thoughtful and aesthetically pleasing design in the United States. Members of the American Arts and Crafts Movement believed that art objects and antiquities from East Asia served as physical representations of the civilizational innovations, \textit{cachet}, and historical pedigrees of their regions of origin. As a result of the value placed on these objects by Americans involved in the Arts and Crafts Movement in the early twentieth century, middle and lower class American sought out similar proxies to lend distinction to their own homes. A brief discussion of the popularization of Asian design and aesthetics follows.

\textbf{Popular Asian Art}

‘Authentic’ art objects and antiquities, whether ceramics, prints, religious objects, or \textit{objets d'art} produced by Asian craftsmen in China, Japan, or Korea were valued above effective facsimiles crafted by American artisans, or mere trinkets (sold at emporia like Vantine’s in New York City). These objects retained elements of a particular pedigree or \textit{cachet} that could be appropriated by the possessor via the medium of display; this describes the project of sympathetic appropriation that took place at the Cleveland Museum of Art in the early twentieth century. The collective social-cultural-historical value of an object could be appropriated through a mimetic process of acquisition and

\textsuperscript{162} Wright in Twombly, 147-148.
display; power was retained even as the function of the object shifted from usable piece to artwork. However, the vast majority of Americans could not afford to purchase an ‘authentic’ piece to distinguish their homes; as such stores like Vantine’s became hugely popular destinations where people could inexpensively acquire kitsch and trinkets made in China, Japan and Korea to decorate and make their homes “cosmopolitan” spaces. Vantine’s promised to sell only “Oriental merchandise of unquestionable merit and authenticity” on-site.

The popularization of the Asian aesthetic in early twentieth century America is related, in part, to the emphasis placed on Asian design by members of the American Arts and Crafts Movement. It was likewise the result of unique currents in American culture that permitted citizens to denigrate people from Asia, while still placing a high value on Chinese, Japanese, and Korean civilizations. As a result of the first Sino-Japanese war of 1894-95, China was conceived of as a “slothful” entity, in need of effective awakening by a modern, “progressive Japan.” This frank and offensive ideal indicated that while turn-of-the-century Americans recognized the existence of China’s long historical and cultural pedigree, they were still, in a general sense, of the mind that China was a

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167 Cohen, 30.
‘sleeping dragon,’ once powerful but presently incapacitated. Langdon Warner did challenge this view when he argued that China would, at an indeterminate point in the future, become “powerful” again; as such, acquiring art objects and antiquities from the region was an important and worthwhile endeavor.  

In September 1899, then American Secretary of State John Hay initiated the Open Door Notes with China. The Open Door Notes reflected the United States’ attempt to influence China through “cultural and economic” means. The Notes requested that rival international powers “respect China’s territorial integrity,” while they simultaneously “promot[ed] equal opportunity for international trade and commerce in China” amongst all nations. Interestingly, while the United States sought to display an effectively “altruistic policy” with regard to China, recognizing the value of Chinese goods (both contemporary and antique), Chinese people still faced difficulty immigrating to the United States as a result of the collective Chinese Exclusion Acts, enacted in the late 19th century and on the books until 1943. This distinction helps to clarify the sense of Asia that Americans in the early twentieth century possessed: China, Japan, and Korea were all ancient sites of material and artistic production, and the goods produced in prior periods reflected the cultural distinction of those eras; as such, they were worthwhile objects to acquire given the cultural cachet.

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170 Ibid.


172 Bailey, 41.
they possessed. However, when viewed through a contemporary lens, China appeared more or less ‘backward,’ while Japan was moving toward ‘modernity,’ both within the Japanese archipelago and via the medium of its occupation of Korea. Americans generally rejected Asian people wholesale. However, at roughly the same time, Americans were introduced to East Asian philosophical systems related to Hindu and Buddhist thought; these systems were “integrate[d]” into Western “intellectual concerns” producing a more “affirmative orientalism” that resulted in Americans and Europeans practicing Zen or reading Vedanta literature in an attempt to stimulate enlightened patterns of thought. The presence of “affirmative orientalism” helps to better contextualize the myriad and sometimes divergent views held by Americans toward Asia and Asians in the early twentieth century.

By the early twentieth century, then, Americans at-large were aware of ‘the Orient,’ and certainly many people believed that the region was no longer politically, economically, or militarily powerful. However, simultaneously, Americans were likewise familiar with “the advanced systems of metaphysics, philosophy, and aesthetics spanning five millennia of Asian civilization;” these systems were viewed positively. Such emergent positive ideals coincided with rising notions of “cultural inadequacy” in America’s industrial centers. This perfect storm of appreciation and apprehension

resulted, in the early twentieth century, in an effective ‘scramble’ for all things Asian. If average Americans could not acquire an ‘authentic’ art object or antiquity, they might purchase a trinket. Or, they might visit the atelier of Louis Comfort Tiffany, or Cincinnati’s Rookwood Pottery Company to purchase a homegrown facsimile of Asian cosmopolitanism.

Louis Comfort Tiffany (1848-1933), born in New York City into an already-privileged family, distinguished himself as an artist, designer, and producer of fine stained-glass pieces. Like other participants in the American Arts and Crafts Movement, Tiffany sought to embrace elements of Asian aesthetics and design properties. Inspired by the block prints of famous Japanese artists like Katsushika Hokusai (1760-1849) and Utagawa Hiroshige (1797-1858), Tiffany produced facsimiles in glass that contained elements “adapted from ukiyo-e prints.” Naturalistic-themes abounded in pieces produced by and for Tiffany and Company in the early twentieth century. In addition to glass-work, Tiffany Studios produced repousse silver pieces and sterling tableware adapted from the manga of Hokusai. These “Japanese-infused, richly assimilative” pieces “transformed American mass taste,” resulting in a raised appreciation for the artistic and stylistic achievements of East Asian civilizations.

Cincinnati, Ohio based Rookwood pottery likewise capitalized upon the popularity of Chinese, Japanese, and Korean aesthetics by producing ceramic pieces that

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177 Ibid.
178 Sigur, 139.
reflected Asian design elements. Maria Longworth Nichols, a Cincinnati-area socialite and member of the influential Longworth family founded Rookwood in 1880. She was also a skilled ceramics painter with an interest in the emerging American art-pottery movement. Within three years of its founding, Nichols transferred management, and later ownership of the facility to William Watts Taylor. Rookwood distinguished itself from other American art-pottery outfits by producing fine, one-of-a-kind pieces, with unique designs hand-painted by largely female artisans. Although Rookwood, by the early twentieth century, produced simply-glazed, unpainted ‘production’ pieces, the most highly sought after specimens remained those painted in-house by artisans. The majority of these artisans were American, and most were from Cincinnati; the glaring exception that made Rookwood famous was the potter, painter and designer Kataro Shirayamadani (1865-1948), born in Kanazawa, Japan. Shirayamadani’s impact resulted in the production of ceramic vessels decorated in a decidedly Asian fashion. The success of Shirayamadani’s designs resulted in other prominent Rookwood artisans emulating Asian aesthetic style by producing similarly decorated pieces featuring flowers, birds, and aquatic scenes. These artisans included Albert Valentien, Sara Sax, and Sally Coyne.

Rookwood’s assertion that it was an “American” art-pottery center run by and for Americans, in spite of obvious employment of Asian stylistic elements, supports the idea that, in the early twentieth century, Asian aesthetic principles and design were

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180 Owen, 15.
181 Owen, 27.
182 Owen, 146-147.
equated with many as being synonymous with cultural *cachet* and social distinction. The success of American companies that appropriated, employed, and disseminated Asian aesthetic elements via the medium of objects produced for, effectively, mass consumption reflects the wide-ranging appreciation of East Asian cultural ideals in early twentieth century America. This appreciation, fueled in part by members of the American Arts and Crafts Movement, resulted in an elevation of “Oriental” art as being culturally superior, and representative of the civilizational achievements of millennia of Chinese, Japanese, and Korean artisans. This appreciation was apparent in its highest form at the museum, where ‘authentic’ art objects and antiquities from East Asia represented the pinnacle(s) of “Oriental” stylistic achievement.

**Conclusion**

Participants in America’s home-grown Arts and Crafts Movement had a profound impact on disseminating and normalizing elements of Asian aesthetics and design among upper, middle and lower class citizens. Asian art objects and antiquities, along with American-made facsimiles, were in general positively received by members of the public. These individuals equated cultural sophistication and distinction with art objects and antiquities from China, Japan, and Korea. While trinkets and facsimiles found their way into the homes of lower and middle class consumers, wealthy collectors decorated with ‘authentic’ objects; these objects were eventually donated to art museum collections.

In the case of the Cleveland Museum of Art, Frederic A. Whiting, as the museum’s first director, along with the first curator of “Oriental” art, J. Arthur MacLean, worked to accumulate art objects and antiquities from East Asia that were of “real
They sought to distinguish the museum, and the city of Cleveland at-large, through the acquisition, display, and sympathetic appropriation of the cultural cachet and historical pedigrees of the pieces that ultimately found their way into the museum’s permanent collection. This desire, to focus heavily upon acquiring art objects and antiquities from East Asia, ran counter to the objectives embraced by other similarly sized Midwestern art museums; however it highlights an interesting, if peculiar anomaly at play in early twentieth century Cleveland.

Whiting’s long association with Boston’s Society of Arts and Crafts, and its focus on the aesthetic beauty and cultural value of objects produced by sometimes ancient craftspeople working with simple tools, likely influenced his later work at the Cleveland Museum of Art. His work at the Louisiana Purchase Exposition, and editorial work with the journal Handicraft also influenced the collecting practices he later implemented at the museum. One of the major lessons of the Arts and Crafts Movement was that finely crafted objects could be considered artwork, regardless of origin, age, or social status of the producer. By embracing such ‘craft’ objects as ‘art’ objects, Whiting could both encourage “pleasure” on the part of local craftspeople in their work or production while simultaneously enabling cultural ‘uplift’ via the medium of the sympathetic appropriation of fine and aesthetically pleasing objects from Asia. Whiting further engaged local craftspeople by initiating in 1919 the “Cleveland Exposition of Artists and Craftsmen,”


184 From a John Ruskin quote in Lionel Lambourne, Utopian Craftsmen (Salt Lake City, UT: Peregrine Smith, Inc., 1983), 12.
later called the “May Show.” A unique feature of the annual “May Show” was its relative openness – any local artist or crafts person could enter a piece in virtually any medium. The purpose of the show was to “encourage both collectors and artists;” as such “sales of objects were emphasized.”

Whiting’s desire to blur the distinction between ‘art’ and ‘craft’ resulted in the creation of a more welcoming atmosphere to individuals from all social and ethnic backgrounds at Cleveland’s new art museum – connoisseurs and craftspeople were encouraged to visit and experience the transformative power of the objects placed on display. In its formative period, from 1915-1930, the museum acquired diverse art objects and antiquities from around the world. The museum’s program of sympathetic appropriation, directed primarily at art objects and antiquities from China, Japan, and Korea, was initiated by Whiting and Maclean and resulted in the formation of an early but unprecedentedly fine collection of Asian art in Cleveland. This program of acquisition was, in part, informed by attitudes embraced and disseminated by members of the American Arts and Crafts Movement.

\[\text{Jay Hoffman, et. al., } A \text{ Study in Regional Taste: The May Show 1919-1975 (Cleveland: Cleveland Museum of Art Press, 1977), 9.}\]

\[\text{Ibid.}\]
CHAPTER IV

COLLECTING ASIAN ART AT CLEVELAND’S MUSEUM: 1914-1924

In the years leading up to the opening of the Cleveland Museum of Art, the museum’s first director, Frederic Allen Whiting, along with the first Curator of Oriental art, J. Arthur MacLean, worked in tandem to convince local collectors of the intrinsic cultural value of antiquities and objects of art from East Asian nations. In the museum’s first Bulletin, published in April of 1914, Whiting made his intentions crystal clear: he hoped to convince local notables and collectors of their effective ‘duty’ to purchase objects for and financially maintain the new art museum. Members of the museum staff entreated collectors to “determine to what extent these beautiful galleries can be filled, when the building opens, with important objects owned by the Museum.”¹ This ownership would permit the museum to work, from its inception, to “further the appreciation and understanding of beautiful things” among the citizenry of Cleveland.² They placed special emphasis upon “Oriental” art objects, since, at the time that the first Bulletin was published, “unique conditions … exist[ed] for purchases in China.”³


² Ibid.

³ Ibid. These “unique conditions” will be explored in greater detail in the fourth chapter of this dissertation, which will focus upon the museum’s 1916 “Oriental Expedition,” and the objects acquired at that time.
“Unique conditions” referred to the fact that in the early twentieth century, there was little oversight on the part of the new and struggling Republican government in China (1912-1949) regarding exports of antiquities and art objects. Charles Lang Freer, too, urged Whiting to move forward with his plan to aggressively lobby for the acquisition of Asian art objects and antiquities, stating that museum curators “should determine in advance the fields in which [they] will make purchases.” Freer indicated that “the present is an excellent time to begin the collection,” since “in the future financial values will largely exceed those of to-day (sic).” The low cost and relatively wide arc of availability could thus benefit the new museum, since, according to Freer, “China is an enormous field and its possessions of art treasures are, as yet, little known” … with no more than “two or three very famous” collections existent “outside of China.” Collecting art and antiquities from China could serve to distinguish the new museum in Cleveland and Freer counseled Whiting to purchase only “a half dozen really fine things;” such “genuine specimens of original aesthetic interest” would set the collection, and museum, apart from all others.

Whiting, then, was in a unique and favorable position: he was a newly hired director of a museum under construction. He and members of his curatorial staff were

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4 Ibid.


7 Ibid.

8 Ibid.
tasked, quite literally, with building a collection from the ground up. Because most regional American art museums tended to focus upon European or American works of art, Freer argued that Whiting ought to pay special attention to a field of artwork that could distinguish the new museum, and by default, the city at-large. Langdon Warner, who Whiting began corresponding with in 1913, tended to agree, stating that “with the proper sort of plan and forethought” a fine collection of “important things” from East Asia could be built; this type of action would undoubtedly “make the other museums sit up and take notice,” lending prestige to the city of Cleveland.⁹

It is clear, then, that from the beginning, the first director and curators working at what would become the Cleveland Museum of Art had an interest in acquiring, for permanent exhibition, very fine objects of art and antiquities from East Asia. This chapter charts the development of the museum’s “Oriental” collection, focusing upon the active lobbying efforts of Whiting, and, later, curator of “Oriental” art MacLean. Individual patrons, like Cleveland industrialist Worcester Reed Warner, were instrumental in providing the financial backing to ensure that Cleveland’s museum would possess a fine collection of “Oriental” art. It is my contention that these individuals sought to purchase art objects and antiquities from East Asia because, collectively, they believed that the objects possessed some intrinsic cultural cachet, which could be appropriated by the museum, and the city at-large, via the medium of ownership and display. This chapter, then, seeks to nuance existent analyses which posit that most

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Americans regarded an amorphous “Orient” as being nothing more than an exotic “Other;” or a less-civilized foil for the rapidly industrializing United States.

In this chapter, I provide a discussion of the motivations behind the acquisition of Asian art objects and antiquities at the Cleveland Museum of Art in its formative years. Frederic Whiting, assisted by Curator of Oriental Art J. Arthur MacLean, purposefully collected examples of East Asian artwork and material culture for display in Cleveland. Whiting and MacLean were motivated by ideals associated with sympathetic appropriation, whereby the attendant cultural cachet attached to objects and antiquities from China, Japan, and Korea would be transferred to the museum via the medium of display. Ultimately, these purposefully displayed objects would aid the museum in engaging in a home-grown “civilizing mission,” described more specifically in Chapter Six, which examines efforts by members of the museum’s staff to use Asian art objects as educational aids. The sympathetic appropriation of art objects and antiquities from China, Japan, and Korea was an important component in a broader institutional effort to bring culture, historical pedigree, and prestige to the city of Cleveland, via the medium of the new art museum.

From the beginning of his tenure as director of the Cleveland Museum of Art, Frederic Whiting placed emphasis upon the purchase and acquisition of antiquities and objects of art that originated in East Asia. Whiting specifically wanted to acquire fine specimens from China, Japan and Korea. Many of the museum’s early acquisitions in the field of Asian art were donated by either Ralph Thrall King, the president of Cleveland’s Realty Investment Company, or Worcester Reed Warner, co-founder of Cleveland-based
precision tool manufacturing company Warner and Swasey. Both men were active
donors to the museum, and both worked closely with the museum’s Board of Trustees to
produce a solid foundation for the museum’s “Oriental” art collections. King’s artistic
interests were broad; he only sporadically purchased antiquities and art objects from East
Asia while nurturing a healthy interest in contemporary European art. Still, King
purchased eighty five objects of “Oriental” art for the museum. His first piece, donated
to the museum in 1914, was a “Ch’ien Lung” vase.10 King also donated a high quality 5th
century Chinese carved bodhisattva head, believed to be “one of the most beautiful
elements of Oriental art in the gallery.”11 Other objects included a Tang dynasty glazed
ceramic horse, and numerous depictions of the female Buddhist figure “Kwanyin.”12 The
objects donated by King were primarily examples of sculpture, or fine ceramics. As
King’s tastes shifted to focus on acquiring pieces of “Western” art, the responsibility of
developing the museum’s “Oriental” collection was passed on to Cleveland industrialist
Worcester Reed Warner.

Warner, a mechanical engineer born in Massachusetts, became wealthy in the late
nineteenth century after partnering with fellow New England native Ambrose Swasey to

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10 Theodore Sizer, The Bulletin of the Cleveland Museum of Art 13, no. 5 (May 1926): 97. CMA accession number 1914.535. “Ch’ien Lung” would be today transcribed as Qianlong. During the Qianlong Emperor’s reign (1735-1796) trade with Europe exploded. Ceramics produced during this period are widely regarded as being some of the finest in existence. This discussion of King’s collection was part of a memorial essay printed in the museum’s Bulletin that celebrated King at the time of his death in 1926.

11 Ibid. CMA accession number 1915.77.

12 Ibid. King donated 870 items to the museum; about ten percent of those were objects of “Oriental” art. His most famous donation was Rodin’s Thinker, given to the museum in 1917. Although prints and objects of so-called “Western” art were his primary collecting focus, he is still regarded as the effective initiator of the CMA’s “Oriental” collection.
form the machine manufacturing business Warner and Swasey.\(^\text{13}\) Although Warner’s company mainly produced general machinery, it did dabble in telescope manufacture; this became a Warner’s claim to relative fame and helped to distinguish Warner and Swasey among Cleveland manufacturing firms.\(^\text{14}\) By the early twentieth century, Warner was in a position, financially, to contribute to philanthropic movements in Cleveland. He began his philanthropic efforts by donating funds to the new Cleveland Museum of Art. These donations were instrumental in securing Warner a seat on the new museum’s Board of Trustees in 1914.\(^\text{15}\) Within a year, the CMA’s leaders sought Warner’s financial support for an acquisition campaign in Asia; this would eventually develop into the museum’s “Oriental Expedition,” to be discussed in detail in the following chapter.

Warner’s love of Asian art resulted in an extended holiday in East Asia in the fall of 1915 with his wife Cornelia (discussed in further detail below); during his travels he and his wife visited China and Japan, and purchased several pieces for the museum.\(^\text{16}\) Warner, then, was wholly interested in providing the Cleveland Museum of Art with a fine collection of objects and antiquities from “the Orient.” He believed that Chinese and Japanese art objects and antiquities were a good investment, since they could be acquired


\(^{14}\) Ibid.


\(^{16}\) Worcester R. Warner to Frederic A. Whiting, letter, Kyoto, November 10, 1915, The Cleveland Museum of Art Archives, Records of the Director’s Office: Frederic Allen Whiting, box 14, folder 146. Ultimately many of Warner’s personally selected bequests were not deemed suitable for display in a museum setting.
at relatively inexpensive prices but were worth far more, both in terms of cultural pedigree and monetary value.¹⁷

Worcester Warner likewise subsidized the purchases of Langdon Warner, who acted on behalf of the museum in its formative years. Guided by Charles Lang Freer, who Langdon Warner affectionately called “Freer sensei,” Warner worked to both secure fine art objects and antiquities from East Asia for American collectors and museums, while simultaneously preserving them from what he believed to be certain destruction if left in China. The motivations for acquiring art objects and antiquities from China are examined more specifically in Chapter Five, where I profile the museum-subsidized, Langdon Warner-led “Oriental” Expedition.

Both Worcester Warner and Langdon Warner were interesting, and sometimes polarizing figures, capable of exploiting East Asians by relieving them of elements of cultural patrimony while simultaneously showing appreciation for the quality and historicity of the objects he acquired. When discussing China, Worcester Warner indicated that “China … seems to me to be the centre (sic) of the most important examples of oriental art” because “the country is old enough and big enough to supply material for many collections.”¹⁸ Unpacked, this quote is representative of the tension present in Warner’s character. While impressed by China’s long historical pedigree, he


at the same time viewed it as a region filled with limitless potential acquisitions for American collectors and museums.

In the Spring of 1916, Worcester Warner journeyed to China to sightsee and gauge the state of the art market. He traveled throughout Beijing, and was very impressed with the newly-opened Forbidden City.19 Warner also visited the Great Wall north of the city, and some of the surrounding Buddhist temples. At the same time, his protégé Langdon Warner traveled to Asia. Langdon Warner supported and echoed the views of his patron, indicating that the “virgin” field of “Oriental research” was full of potentiality, both for collectors and institutions that might benefit from their largesse.20 Langdon Warner believed that acquiring art objects and antiquities from East Asia was paramount, since the formation of such a collection would create, in Cleveland, a collection of “inter-national importance (sic).”21 Chinese bronzes were particularly desirable, since they were examples of “the finest specimens of bronze casting in the world.”22 He also recommended acquiring examples of Tang dynasty paintings, sculpture, and ceramics, which were representative of China’s “Golden Age,” and were

19 Worcester R. Warner to Frederic A. Whiting, letter, April 9, 1916, The Cleveland Museum of Art Archives, Records of the Director's Office: Frederic Allen Whiting, box 14, folder 146. At the time of Warner’s visit, the Forbidden City had only been open to the public for a year. Warner was in China during a period of political instability – the Qing dynasty, established in 1644, was dissolved in 1912, just four years before Warner’s visit. As a result of this imperial collapse, China, politically, was in a state of change as politicians attempted to move the nation into a new period of democratic rule, under the newly minted Republican government.


22 Ibid.
“comparable to the similar art of the West which we love and revere.”

According to Langdon Warner, it was essential that Americans become the first to “recognize the importance of the art and history of that other half of the world, which was so powerful in its day and is on the road to become so again.” Warner’s focus here upon the prior power of China is representative of his respect for the region; in the Ming and Qing dynasties, China was one of the wealthiest nations on Earth. Further, Warner’s contention that China, transitioning from an ancient imperial system of rule to one of democratic governance, sheds light on his belief that China was not mired in civilizational stasis. Warner’s beliefs about China help to complicate existing postcolonial arguments about ‘Western’ views of the so-called ‘East.’ This idea likewise serves to nuance Bernard Cohn’s belief that foreigners, through consumption of art objects and antiquities, were inherently imposing their own conceptions of how a given region became more civilisationally sophisticated (in effect, creating and providing a history for a given region). This sort of action was not necessary in the case of China, since it was a culturally dynamic, sophisticated, influential empire for centuries.

Describing China in a letter to Whiting, Warner waxed poetic on his good fortune, since he was in “this vastest of countries and oldest of nations” where “six thousand years of

23 Ibid., 2.


For Langdon Warner, China’s prior power was symbolically manifested in the fine art objects and antiques produced in earlier historical periods; these finely crafted, aesthetically pleasing objects were physical proxies for that civilizational sophistication. His further contention that China would again become powerful and internationally significant hints at a fascinating, largely unexplored facet of what motivated foreigners to engage in cultural appropriation of Asian material culture in the early twentieth century. Because China was once culturally sophisticated and powerful (evidenced by the record of masterfully produced art objects and antiques), it would likely, in the future, occupy that space again. Americans, living in a relatively new nation could, through acquisition, distinguish themselves by acquiring and displaying elements of formerly superior East Asian states. To Langdon Warner, Asian antiques, and in particular those from China, were plentiful and relatively inexpensive to purchase as a result of recent political shifts in the region; this combination was fortuitous for collectors like Warner and the Cleveland Museum of Art, since these items were available, reasonably priced, and, yet, imbued with incredible cultural significance. When acquired and placed on display in Cleveland, these objects would form the basis of a “glorious collection … in which any individual might take pride.”


27 Andre Gunder Frank deals with similar issues in ReOrient: Global Economy in the Asian Age (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), xxiv-xxv. Frank argues that “Eurocentric social theory” caused scholars to overlook the contributions of Asians in the early modern period.

While the acquisitive actions engaged in by Langdon Warner on behalf of the Cleveland Museum of Art were not entirely ‘respectable,’ and certainly reflected elements of “Western” privilege, the respect and admiration accorded these objects (and, by default, China and Chinese artisans) by members of the museum’s curatorial and administrative staff illustrates an interesting tension not dealt with elsewhere in literature on American museum connoisseurship of the early twentieth century. In this sense, it was simultaneously possible to dismiss China, in its current state of social upheaval, while possessing respect, admiration, and even envy of its prior position as a global hegemon. To possess the objects produced during these earlier periods in China’s history meant that, in a sense, the museum, and the city of Cleveland were both appropriating elements of and, simultaneously, participating in China’s prior achievements, artistically, culturally, and economically. These practices reflected similar ideals linked to the appropriation of art objects and antiquities (and their attendant cachet) produced in European states. This acquisition of “Oriental” art objects and antiquities, then, served the new museum in Cleveland by providing it with tangible pieces, representative of the prior civilizational achievements of China, that it would physically possess. Through the acquisition and public display of elements of the cultural patrimony of China in its most powerful periods, Cleveland could also claim to be a culturally prestigious city. Ownership of these ancient objects, then, would confer upon the museum, and Cleveland at-large, a kind of cultural and historical cachet that the city currently lacked.

Both Ralph King and Worcester Warner, in the museum’s early period (1914-1924), were instrumental in assisting Director Whiting with the construction of a diverse,
and important, collection of Asian art in Cleveland, through primarily financial and, to a lesser degree, material donations. An analysis of some of the objects purchased illustrates the centrality of art objects and antiquities from China, Japan and Korea in the realizing the goals of the new museum. In April of 1915, King donated an important stone Buddhist “votive” carving to the museum. The object was profiled in the April 1915 edition of the Bulletin of the Cleveland Museum of Art as a headlining piece and important new acquisition. According to the Bulletin, the carving, dated to “440 A.D.,” featured a reclining Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara surrounded by other Bodhisattva figures and symbolic Buddhist imagery. Of greater interest was the nature of the Bulletin’s description, in which the anonymous author (likely curator of “Oriental” art J. Arthur MacLean) waxed poetic on both the great age of the object at hand, along with its cultural significance. The author stated that the new “accession” was welcome “not wholly because it is unique in date, but because it reveals a true religious and artistic spirit … and … stands as an example of Buddhist art comparable in every respect to similar expressions of the early art of Western civilization.” Although an ancient, foreign object, its intrinsic meaning “may be intelligible” to the viewer, who, if “receptive,” could expect “to receive the message of this so-called pagan art so long delayed.” The “receptive,” cultured viewer, then, might expect to find a “rich reward” after spending

29 M. (likely J. Arthur MacLean), The Bulletin of the Cleveland Museum of Art 2, no. 1 (April 1915): 1. Avalokitesvara is a bodhisattva, or “enlightened being” that, upon realizing final Nirvana chooses continued rebirth, in an effort to assist in bringing all sentient beings to a point of enlightenment or spiritual realization. This choice is indicative of the great compassion of the bodhisattva for all beings trapped within the cycle of life, death and rebirth known as samsara.

30 Ibid.

31 Ibid.
time “contemplate[ing] this carving,” despite its great age and perceived cultural distance.\textsuperscript{32} MacLean indicated that Clevelanders could appreciate this foreign object as a beautiful piece of artwork, rather than as an ‘idol’ or element of a foreign form of religious worship.\textsuperscript{33} He likewise invited readers to be mindful of the great age of the object, and to consider how artistically and socially advanced a region must be to produce such a fine piece of sculpture that illuminated the “true religious and artistic spirit of the Great Wei period.”\textsuperscript{34} MacLean continued, stating that “the Eastern world that centered round this stone when it was made, was full of love and joy and hope … the inscription on the reverse tells us so – and it happened that a whole village by agreement respectfully erected this carving, first, for the sake of his Majesty the Emperor, past ancestors, living representatives, and coming generations; and second, for the sake of all living beings and things that have created life.”\textsuperscript{35} MacLean thus believed that viewers in early 20\textsuperscript{th} century Cleveland, Ohio could still have a meaningful experience of a foreign religious object, here a Chinese Buddhist sculpture, because it was produced in a region with a sophisticated existent social hierarchy, by individuals, not unlike themselves, who were similarly “full of love and joy and hope.”\textsuperscript{36} Readers can assume that members of the village that commissioned the piece were ‘civilized’ people who wished to commemorate past achievements while simultaneously attempting to ensure the success of future

\textsuperscript{32} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{33} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{34} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{35} M (likely J. Arthur MacLean), 2.

\textsuperscript{36} Ibid.
generations. The relative scarcity of the votive would lend prestige to the new museum in Cleveland.\textsuperscript{37} Additionally, the “delicacy” and style of the carving hinted at the growing importance of stylistic influences that were systematized in the succeeding Tang dynasty, considered a high point in medieval Chinese artistic production.\textsuperscript{38} Its presence in Cleveland would also contribute “materially to [the] long line of study” of such objects “which is yet to besiege us” in the United States.\textsuperscript{39} Here the author makes reference to the growing interest among both scholars and members of the public in the arts and antiquities of East Asian nations. To create a fine, well curated collection of these sorts of objects would make Cleveland a frontrunner among American art museums; further, the objects themselves, because of their antiquity and intrinsic historical pedigrees, would become a part of the city at-large.

Nineteen fifteen was a banner year for the still-under-construction Cleveland Museum of Art and its burgeoning “Oriental” collection. In June of that year, Worcester Warner committed $50,000 (about $1.2 million in current dollars) to the new museum, to be used to create a collection of “Oriental” art to be called the “Worcester R. Warner Collection.”\textsuperscript{40} In addition to the initial gift, Warner arranged to endow the collection with a $100,000 gift, which would be made “available for maintaining or increasing the

\textsuperscript{37} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{38} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{39} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{40} Worcester R. Warner to Frederic A. Whiting, letter, June 24, 1915, The Cleveland Museum of Art Archives, Records of the Director's Office: Frederic Allen Whiting, box 14, folder 146.
collection, at the discretion of the Trustees." The gift, while gratefully received by the CMA Board of Trustees, was also publicly profiled in the art museum Bulletin of July 1915. Although Warner was not specifically named in the Bulletin article (due to his desire to remain anonymous), his gift was given high praise, not only for the amount of money donated, “but because of the fact that the donor makes no effort to control the formation of the Oriental collections to be made with his $50,000, while the endowment of $100,000 liberally provides for the intelligent development of the Oriental department year after year, along definite lines and under the best expert advice available.” Warner, ever the straight shooter, declared to Director Whiting just before making his gift to the museum that the money donated should not “be spent for music or show, but the whole affair be for ART.” Worcester Warner was one of very few initial donors to the Cleveland Museum of Art to provide significant funds for the (effectively unrestricted) creation of a new collection of artwork and antiquities. His bequest would jump start the museum’s processes of acquisition of objects of art and antiquities from East Asia, and, perhaps more importantly, would serve to stimulate the interest of the public in the goings-on at Wade Oval. The Cleveland Plain Dealer celebrated the bequest, boldly announcing that the donation to provide for the creation of an “Oriental Collection”

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41 Ibid. A $100,000 endowment in 1915 is equivalent to roughly $2.3 million USD in contemporary currency, accessed December 30, 2013, http://www.dollartimes.com/calculators/inflation.htm.

42 Ibid.

permitted the museum to “rank with the foremost museums of the country.” The acquisition of “Oriental” art objects is interestingly linked to the potentiality and viability of the museum, and, tacitly, to the prestige of the city of Cleveland. While making Cleveland a ‘great’ city was important, of perhaps greater significance here is the fixation on gathering and displaying art objects and antiquities from East Asia on-site. This focus on acquiring art objects and antiquities from China, Japan, and Korea is incredibly significant and telling. A discussion of the mimetic process of acquiring, organizing, and displaying these objects and antiquities is key to gaining a clearer understanding of what these pieces, ultimately, meant or represented to Whiting, MacLean, and Langdon Warner. In Mimesis and Alterity, Michael Taussig examined the work of James George Frazer, who, as an anthropologist, examined the processes and perceived effects of practicing sympathetic magic. Frazer indicated that practitioners believed that “like produces like, or that an effect resembles its cause,” and that “things which have once been in contact with each other continue to act on each other at a distance after the physical contact has been severed.” Frazer called these practices the “Law of Similarity” and the “Law of Contact or Contagion,” respectively. Frazer’s notion of the “Law of Contact” can be applied in this situation to better understand events of acquisition, display, and belief about the effects of those practices at the Cleveland Museum of Art. Frazer’s ideas circulated widely after the publication of his The Golden

44 “Art Museum Gets Gift of $50,000,” Cleveland Plain Dealer, July 30, 1915.


46 Ibid.
Bough in 1911, influencing the work of scholars from disciplines as diverse as psychology and anthropology. As such, Frazer’s arguments on the role of mimesis in conveying power/cachet proved broadly influential in the early twentieth century. When applied to practices of acquisition initiated at the Cleveland Museum of Art in its formative period, objects and antiquities from East Asia, when collectively displayed in the museum’s “Oriental” galleries, ought to retain some element of their former use, and at the same time should retain some sense of “connection” with their sites of origin. Taussig describes the phenomenon as such, indicating that the “notion of the copy [here the galleries at CMA] … affect[ed] the original to such a degree that the representation shares in or acquires the properties of the represented.”47 The “Oriental” galleries at the Cleveland Museum of Art, as copies or representations, nonetheless participated in the historical pedigree of the objects displayed; this occurred to the degree that the museum effectively became a part of that pedigree and history of display and use. In this way, the museum could claim ownership of the pieces displayed (and their attendant cachet) while simultaneously becoming an intrinsic part of the evolving historical experience of the objects themselves. This is akin to traditional Chinese beliefs regarding connoisseurship, where individual owners might, in the case of scroll paintings, add their own chop or name to the painting, conveying a sense of ownership and participation in the ever evolving provenance of a given piece. Chinese scholar-collectors thus sought to “study, preserve, and transmit” both ideas and objects from the past, so that they might continue

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47 Taussig, 47-48.
to be engaged with and enjoyed by members of future generations.\textsuperscript{48} A similar phenomenon likewise occurred at the Cleveland Museum of Art, where, in its formative period, Asian art objects and antiquities were sympathetically appropriated for the enhancement of the region at-large.

In addition to providing monies for the implementation and continued development of a collection of “Oriental” art objects and antiquities at the Cleveland Museum of Art, Worcester Warner also hinted that he might be interested in helping to fund an expedition to China, with the ultimate goal being the acquisition of more objects to bolster the museum’s existent holdings. Worcester Warner was not alone in his desire to see the museum mount an “Oriental Expedition;” discussions between Director Whiting and Langdon Warner, scholar-cum-adventurer, about the possibility of initiating an expedition had been underway since 1913. Both Langdon Warner and Whiting believed that the Cleveland Museum of Art could only distinguish itself through the acquisition and display of the very finest things, and, given the unsettled nature of conditions in East Asia (and China in particular), the timing seemed fortuitous.\textsuperscript{49}

China, at the outset of the twentieth century, was still tenuously under the control of the leaders of the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911). However, following the losses in two Opium Wars,\textsuperscript{50} foreign nations imposed numerous unfair treaties upon China. These treaties, which forced the Qing to concede new ports and tracts of land for foreign

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\textsuperscript{48} Michael Beurdeley, \textit{The Chinese Collector Through the Centuries: From the Han to the 20th Century} (Rutland, VT: Charles E. Tuttle Company, 1966), 15.


\textsuperscript{50} The first Opium War lasted from 1839-1842; the second Opium War from 1856-1860.
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exploitation, resulted in growing unrest and popular resentment directed at the state. After the woman effectively in charge of China, the Dowager Empress Cixi, mishandled the Taiping (1850-64) and “Boxer” (1899-1901) rebellions, reform-minded Chinese like the scholars Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao sought to initiate grassroots change. Kang and Liang wanted to see China’s government shift away from rule by a single monarch; they argued that the establishment of a constitutional monarchy would better benefit China’s citizens and the state at large. Further, they argued that Westernization, in some capacity, might serve China, particularly in dealings with foreign entities. However, Cixi was unwilling to implement rapid social change, and many Chinese citizens, particularly from elite and intellectual circles, were unsure how to proceed with a “modernization” of China that would not simply copy and co-opt elements of “Westernized” societies. The time for change seemed right following the death of the Empress Dowager Cixi and incarcerated Guangxu Emperor in 1908. Scholars Liang and Kang, returned from exile, saw interest in their ideas develop as a result of the rise of new reform-minded political leaders like Sun Yat-sen. In 1911, a coup d’état was staged resulting in the birth of the new Republican state in China on January 1, 1912. Seemingly from its inception, the Republican state was fraught with corruption and infighting; as a result, the transition from imperial to popular governance was difficult. The turmoil and uncertainty at the center spilled over into China’s provinces, which quickly came under the control of

53 Mackerras, 27. China’s last emperor, the Xuantong Emperor (known popularly as Puyi) abdicated on February 12, 1912.
warlords and regional strongmen. China’s elites, many in possession of fine collections of art objects and antiquities, feared for their safety in the provinces. As a result, many sought to liquidate their collections in exchange for cash. Between 1912-1920, many collections were dismantled as Chinese fled to large coastal cities to escape provincial violence and corruption. These objects, often of good quality but liquidated cheaply because of necessity, found their way into the hands of art dealers, collectors, and ultimately the storehouses of American and European museums.

Cleveland was not alone in expressing a desire to look to Asia for objects to build a collection. The CMA faced competition from Boston’s Museum of Fine Arts, an institution that already possessed a fine collection of Asian art objects and antiquities as a result of bequests, the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, which in 1915 established an Oriental art department, and the Art Institute of Chicago; as well as smaller museums like those located in Philadelphia, Buffalo, and Toledo. Directors and curators at these museums were, like their counterparts in Cleveland, interested in augmenting their holdings of art objects and antiquities from the “Orient.” For these individuals, the objects, often very finely crafted and of great age, were simply a bargain. Dealers like C.T. Loo and the Japanese Yamanaka firm sold to the highest bidder; unfortunately for Cleveland local donors often could not compete with those living on the East Coast. Philadelphia’s Pennsylvania Museum acquired several objects from dealers

54 Bailey, 89.

in East Asian art in 1914-1915, including a fine Qianlong period carved lacquer vase.⁵⁶ There was little compunction about buying these objects; and, although export laws were in place in China, shippers could be bribed to mislabel containers and thus circumvent export prohibitions.

Langdon Warner, writing to Whiting in 1913, indicated that, because of the relative political uncertainty in China, “there is no reason why by judicious purchase you can not (sic) get a splendid and sound collection” for the museum, made up of objects “valuable from different standpoints of aesthetics [and] history.”⁵⁷ Langdon Warner spent much of 1914 abroad, where he continuously wrote to Whiting about the state of the art and antiquities market in Asia; effectively, he repeatedly focused upon the high quality of the objects and their attendant low prices.⁵⁸

Whiting was hooked; however, he still needed to convince the Board of Trustees of the value of collecting “Oriental” art in Cleveland, and, more importantly, he needed donors. To move the Board members, Whiting enlisted the help of Detroit industrialist and Asia enthusiast Charles Lang Freer, who wholeheartedly supported the purchase of “treasures” and “glorious things” from China, which he believed were valuable from both

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⁵⁸ Langdon Warner to Frederic A. Whiting, letter, October 17, 1914, The Cleveland Museum of Art Archives, Records of the Director’s Office: Frederic Allen Whiting, box 13, folder 135. Warner here discussed some inexpensive “late Ming/early Qing carved wood architectural fragments from a house that was torn down.” He believed they would make a splendid room display at the Cleveland Museum of Art, and insinuated that they would help to create a more authentic experience for museum visitors. Warner stated, “In my judgment it would give you an original setting of the very choicest sort which would be the envy of private collectors and museums…”
cultural/historical and “financial” angles. Freer, at Whiting’s behest, provided a list of so-called “experts” in the arts of China and Japan. Freer also put Whiting in touch with Laurence Binyon, curator of “Oriental” art at the British Museum and a noted contemporary authority on the arts and antiquities of East Asia. Binyon was ultimately persuaded to give a lecture on “The Art of Asia” at the Cleveland Museum of Art, in an effort to both educate the public on the value of this field of inquiry, as well as to stimulate interest in the field among potential donors.

Freer also made direct contact with members of the museum’s Board of Trustees; he promised his assistance and agreed to loan several fine pieces of Asian art to the museum’s Inaugural Exhibition. For his pains, he was granted a seat on the museum’s Advisory Council in 1915.

Freer’s notoriety did have the desired effect, so that by 1915, when Worcester Warner made his generous gift to the museum, the Trustees were willing to consider the museum’s underwriting of an expedition to East Asia. This so-called “Expedition to the Far East” was introduced in the museum’s *Bulletin*, where it was presented as an auxiliary activity, made possible by Worcester Warner’s donation. In the *Bulletin* announcement, museum officials named Langdon Warner as the likely expedition leader. The goals for the Expedition, discussed in greater detail in Chapter Five, were “liberal,”

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with the central hope being “to secure, in addition to valuable artistic material from original sources, much important scientific data” that would be useful to “students of Asiatic art and civilization.” Whiting and the Board members indicated that the expedition would be “one of the most important sent to the Orient;” it would ultimately bring many “advantages … to the Museum” in the form of objects and new “accessions,” and raw archaeological data. These objects, when gathered and immediately transferred by a museum representative like Langdon Warner from their “original sources” to the new museum in Cleveland, would arrive with their ‘authenticity’ intact – their historical pedigrees would be unchallenged and unmediated; they, and their attendant cachet, could thus be easily transposed into the new gallery display spaces in the museum and, in a larger sense, onto the city at-large.

In addition to receiving praise in the museum’s Bulletin, Worcester Warner was also named an official “Benefactor of the Museum.” The official museum memorandum indicated that the “Board tenders to Mr. Warner its profound thanks and most grateful appreciation of his splendid gift to the Museum of the Worcester R. Warner Collection of Oriental Art.” It continued that the Board members “recognize[d] the good judgment and vision of the donor in selecting the wide field of the Orient as the

63 Ibid.
64 Ibid.
65 Ibid. Note: The so-called “Oriental Expedition” will be discussed fully in Chapter Five.
67 Ibid.

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source” for the collection. Further, the Board lauded Warner for providing “coming generations [with] the possession of priceless works of art” from the “Orient;” he was both a “benefactor of the Cleveland Museum of Art [and] a wise, far-seeing benefactor of the world of art” at-large. While the language employed by Board members clearly focused upon thanking (and glorifying, to a degree) Worcester Warner for his “far-seeing” donation, it also speaks to the importance, and significance, of the Asian art objects and antiquities that would be purchased with Warner’s funds. These would provide “coming generations” of Clevelanders with extraordinary access to an unparalleled collection of “Oriental” art objects and antiquities; these current and future generations would, in the language employed by the museum’s Board members, “possess” these objects.

Such language indicates that museum officials, including Whiting and MacLean, were not alone in their belief that physical objects could serve as proxies for the periods/regions they originated in, and that, further, these objects and all that they represented could be co-opted by the purchaser(s). Asian art objects and antiquities, then, possessed a sort of intangible cachet; this, along with the objects themselves, would be transferred to and possessed by the Cleveland Museum of Art. Many museum officials, then, believed that processes of acquisition transferred not only objects, but also some form of cultural or historical distinction, from the point of acquisition to ultimate

68 Ibid.
69 Ibid.
70 Ibid.
71 Ibid.
ownership. This ownership was comprehensive; the museum, people of the city of Cleveland, and region at-large would each, in a way, be in “possession” of these objects, and all of their collective, attendant, and intangible cachet.\footnote{For more on the power of perceived or assigned cachet see Pierre Bourdieu, \textit{Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste}, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984), 57.} Clearly, to Whiting, MacLean, and a lesser degree Warner, art objects and antiquities from East Asia could serve as tangible proxies for the long historical pedigrees of their regions of origin. By acquiring and subsequently displaying these objects in Cleveland, these men engaged in what Taussig identified as a process of \textit{mimesis}, whereby antiquities and art objects from China and Japan were placed into an entirely new context of display at the Cleveland Museum of Art; this new context, although a facsimile, was expected to possess the same cultural power as the displayed objects’ original settings.\footnote{For more on mimesis see Taussig, xiii.} Although the gallery settings were “copies,” the objects themselves were still “authentic.” This intrinsic “authenticity” could serve to provide the “copy,” or “representation” (here the gallery setting in Cleveland) with “the power of the represented,” or the power of the “authentic” object itself.\footnote{Ibid.} By acquiring and displaying these antiquities and art objects from East Asia in Cleveland, Whiting and MacLean, and the Cleveland Museum of Art by default, could effectively claim to “own” or “possess” both the tangible, material objects, and the attendant, intangible “cultural capital” or power conferred upon those objects by virtue of their collective great age. In describing objects displayed in Beijing’s Forbidden City in 1916, four years after the collapse of the Qing dynasty, Langdon Warner could barely
restrain his delight. Warner indicated that he “revel[ed]” when in the presence of “bronze out of the hoariest past, in cloisonnés and porcelains and jades and ivories and all that goes to constitute the inimitable art of China! Fortunate for us Americans that our own collectors appreciated it in time to enrich our museums with some of [China’s] very finest examples” of artwork and antiquities. Warner’s use of the term *inimitable* in this context represents the unparalleled art produced in China. These pieces were without peer; they could never be copied; thus, they were intrinsically authentic and simultaneously tied to China, as their site of origin and production. When purchased by, in this case, American buyers, that *cachet* would, along with the object, be transferred to the new site of display and possession. While the museum’s processes of acquisition and appropriation were supported by the wealth and privilege of Cleveland’s industrial economy, Cleveland was nonetheless *culturally* bereft in the minds of many elite citizens. What is most interesting about the museum’s project of acquisition (focused here on China, Japan and Korea) is the evident tension existent between appropriation of both the cultural *cachet* and physical objects themselves, and the perceptions that stimulated these acquisitive actions. While acquisition is an act of power, the motivating factors for engaging in this acquisition were rooted in a similarly powerful, tangible sense of cultural inferiority, belying the complex set of ideals that served as stimuli for the museum’s project of acquisition and appropriation through display.

Walter Benjamin’s analysis of the actions of collectors offers support for this assessment. For Benjamin, the acquisition of an object can represent, in a sense, the

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“rebirth” or reincarnation of that object into a new mode of being, as imagined or constructed by the collector.\textsuperscript{76} Whiting and MacLean, as the arbiters of Cleveland’s initial collection of East Asian art objects and antiquities, effectively constructed a venue which focused upon and celebrated the age, quality, and historical pedigrees of the objects displayed. By virtue of their being displayed in Cleveland, the objects’ collective pedigrees could be transferred to this new venue, if temporarily. Benjamin’s discussions of the “transmissibility”\textsuperscript{77} and “translatability”\textsuperscript{78} of collections are also pertinent here. Ultimately, it is the representation which possesses power, although the “original” serves to confer that power. Rey Chow’s analysis of the processes of collecting posits a similar resolution: to possess a historically significant object implies that one is in possession of history itself.\textsuperscript{79} Possessing a historically significant object can serve to “enhance people’s sense of their own refinement.”\textsuperscript{80} Thus, even in their “afterlife,”\textsuperscript{81} the East Asian art objects and antiquities displayed at the Cleveland Museum of Art in the early twentieth century still wielded significant cultural power; this power could, through the medium of display, be co-opted by the Cleveland Museum of Art, and the city at-large, aiding in the initiation of a new era of artful refinement in what was perceived to be an


\textsuperscript{77} Benjamin, 66.


\textsuperscript{80} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{81} Benjamin, 71.
otherwise culturally bereft city. However, the objects themselves, and their collective *cachet*, and pedigrees, made this renaissance possible for the new museum and the city of Cleveland. While Whiting and MacLean exercised a certain amount of power over the objects (as a result of their ability to gather, purchase, and display them) they nonetheless relied upon the objects themselves, and their attendant histories, to make the museum more culturally significant (improving the city’s reputation by default). This reliance on the objects was not lost on curator MacLean, who mused that viewers could expect to experience “exquisite joy in seeing really fine things.” He continued, lamenting that he “regret[ted] that more do not grasp the artistic excellence of these things Oriental and come to know them better.” To do so would be to experience “intoxication,” a testament to the continued power of the objects to affect viewers, even in a mimetic situation like that of the museum’s “Oriental” galleries.

“Authenticity,” as it were, was important to Worcester Warner, who, in the summer of 1915, staged his own travel expedition to East Asia along with his wife, Cornelia. In addition to vacationing, Warner strove to meet with Chinese and Japanese dealers in Asian art. He also wished to visit as many private collections as possible, in order to better educate himself in the finer points of connoisseurship. While abroad, he

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83 Ibid.

84 Ibid.

85 Frederic A. Whiting to Mrs. Worcester Warner, letter, August 2, 1915, The Cleveland Museum of Art Archives, Records of the Director's Office: Frederic Allen Whiting, box 14, folder 146. In this letter, Whiting provides a list of Japanese dealers and collectors that the Warners might consider visiting while abroad. Some of these dealers, including Masuda and the Yamanaka firm, will be profiled and analyzed in
purchased several objects that he shipped to the museum; Whiting and MacLean deemed most unsuitable for museum display and they encouraged Worcester Warner to leave the heavy purchasing to themselves, or to Langdon Warner, who was at that time acting as a purchasing agent for the museum in an unofficial capacity. Worcester Warner was, for all intents and purposes, delighted with Japan, which he described as the “Flowery Kingdom.” Cornelia Warner was likewise impressed by the Japanese ability to preserve and restore ancient art objects for continued contemporary use. Reflecting on a trip to Nara, Cornelia discussed her impressions of the “huge Daibutsu” located in the city, which was also filled with “some of the greatest as well as the most ancient art treasures of the Empire.” She also commented on the age of the art objects and antiquities on display in Nara’s temples, stating that “glorious things remain to be seen, the handiwork of an enlightened Japan in the period when Charlemagne ruled a crude, untutored Europe.” The Warner’s views paralleled those of many foreigners, who tended, in the early twentieth century, to view Japan as being a more socially “modern” or “civilized” nation than its neighbors China and Korea. While Japanese notables

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89 Ibid.

perpetuated these ideals abroad, many Europeans and Americans tended to agree with them, given the rapid program of ‘modernization’ engaged in by Japan during the Meiji period (1868-1912). Charles Lang Freer, on his first tour of Asia, described Japan as a “‘delightful’” nation rife with “‘superb’” architecture. However, prices for antiquities and art objects were high in Japan, and Warner looked forward to arriving in China, where, due to the recent collapse of the Qing dynasty and the resulting societal unease, fine pieces were selling for a fraction of their actual value. Worcester Warner was particularly impressed with his private tour of the newly opened Forbidden City in Beijing; reflecting upon it in a later letter, he indicated that it was full of “things from Mukden and the other old Capitol … I wish you could go through and pick out a lot of nice things.” While there, he saw “bronzes that were made by Adam’s Grandfather and handed down through Noah.” Of interest here is the language Warner used to denote the great age of the objects on display in the Forbidden City. Warner clearly had admiration for the antiquity and collective cultural pedigree of these pieces, but was unable to articulate this admiration in the language of China’s imperial history. Instead, he used familiar Biblical terminology to represent the tangible antiquity of the pieces displayed in the Forbidden City. His employment of Biblical references implies a desire,


94 Ibid.
on Warner’s part, to place the Chinese art objects and antiquities before him into a more familiar Biblical historical narrative. This rendering permitted Warner to contextualize the objects before him as pieces analogous with similar examples produced in “Western” regions in contemporary periods, while still preserving a sense of cultural distinction. Warner had a clear appreciation for the great age and historical significance of the art objects he encountered in China; however, this admiration did not extend to the contemporary denizens of the nation, which he described with disgust as living by the thousands on boat docks and in crowded tenements. Warner expressed his displeasure, indicating that he “did not suppose human beings could exist under such circumstances… it is said that 500,000 of them live in the boats on the river…”

Warner’s denigration of the Chinese people he encountered, when juxtaposed with his clear appreciation of Chinese art and antiquities, might at first appear puzzling. However, his attitude was representative of those of many individuals who chose to personally visit East Asian nations in the early twentieth century. While travelers like Warner and his wife, Cornelia, were enamored with the artwork they encountered, and were impressed by the long civilizational pedigrees of the nations they visited, they were simultaneously dismayed by what they witnessed on the ground. For Warner, then, the disappointing state of contemporary China was not representative of the historical and cultural prestige of the region at-large; the ancient objects displayed in the Forbidden

95 Worcester Warner to Frederic A. Whiting, letter, December 27, 1915, The Cleveland Museum of Art Archives, Records of the Director's Office: Frederic Allen Whiting, box 14, folder 146. His use of “them” is representative of his relative disgust for the lifeways of many poor early twentieth century Chinese. He was grateful when his party passed into British-controlled Hong Kong, “which is so English that it is refreshing.”
City were a physical testament to the civilizational success of a country far older than the upstart United States. Warner was not unlike other foreign visitors to East Asia in the early twentieth century. Writing in 1900, D. Warres Smith was critical of the seeming disorder of Chinese urban streetscapes; he stated that “the streets of the Chinese metropolis are kept in a most disgraceful condition;” however, the city of “Peking” nonetheless possessed visual symbols of the “decadence,” wealth, and history of the Qing leadership.96 Henry Codman Potter, an Episcopalian bishop traveling through China in 1902, similarly was aghast at the living situation of individuals in the city of Canton (Guangzhou). He wrote that the “great throngs” packed the city’s “dark and narrow streets, and their darker and narrower habitations.”97 However, mere pages later, Potter discussed the great civility of the Chinese he encountered, even remarking that foreign travelers to the region should be mindful of the fact that “to the Chinese the oldest of the Western nations is very young, and in fact vulgarly modern.”98

Benefactors like Warner were certainly guilty of harboring Orientalist ideals which denigrated the contemporary citizens of countries like China, Korea, and to a lesser degree, Japan. However, at the same time, individuals like Warner were able to express admiration for the artwork and antiquities they encountered, which represented, to them, the prior civilizational successes of East Asian nations. I am not arguing, then, that Orientalist ideals were absent in the minds of benefactors to and employees of the

96 D. Warres Smith, European Settlements in the Far East (London: S. Low, Marston and Company, 1900), 73.
98 Potter, 13.
Cleveland Museum of Art; instead, I wish to show that these often coexisted with very favorable views of a (perhaps ideologically constructed but not wholly inaccurate) long, historical-civilizational pedigree, which resulted in the production of some of the world’s finest pieces of artwork. Warner sought to personally purchase, or at least endow funds for the acquisition of, fine examples of Chinese, Japanese and Korean antiquities and art objects, with the express goal being ultimate display in Cleveland’s new art museum. Warner’s interest in East Asian art objects was representative of a peculiar fascination with Asia, one engaged with by many elite Americans. This interest was certainly informed by Orientalist ideas that glorified the ‘marvels’ of the East, and was perpetuated through the collective participation of Americans with “a kind of free-floating mythology of the Orient.”99 Power was maintained by these individuals, who were able to form, and in-form, myths and ideologies about the nature of the “Orient,” and its history and people. However, despite this clear imbalance in the power to control the popular, non-Asian idea of the “Orient,” many foreigners simultaneously expressed an honest admiration for the region. Americans in particular regularly looked to Europe for goods that represented all that was tasteful and distinctive. However, China, long a center of global trade and wealth in the Early Modern world, could simultaneously furnish American homes and museums with similarly culturally (and monetarily) valuable art objects and antiquities. This is representative of the practice, engaged in by Whiting, MacLean, and Langdon Warner, of sympathetic appropriation at the Cleveland Museum of Art. Through the process of acquisition and display, the museum, city of Cleveland,

and its people would all come into possession of the very best physical representations of
the civilizational successes of these East Asian nations. Warner’s goals, then, were in
line with those of the Museum’s director and trustees, who sought to “make of The
Cleveland Museum of Art an educational center of art and artistic influence … to
stimulate, to encourage, to educate in an appreciation of the beautiful.”

“The beautiful,” here, is not bound by time or place of origin; in this way, art objects and
antiquities from East Asian nations could serve an equivalent educational purpose,
alongside relics from ancient and Medieval Europe.

Worcester Warner was, then, undaunted by his expedition to “the Orient;” he
continued purchasing objects for the museum while abroad, and endured the relative
reproach of Whiting and MacLean for buying objects without their consultation. He was
still very much interested in assisting the museum financially with funding an expedition
to Asia, with Langdon Warner at the helm, as he believed that many fine objects could
still be acquired in China. Writing in the spring of 1916, Worcester Warner assured
Whiting that he was happy to be “a sport, and not a kicker relative to the judgment of
you, and Mr. MacLean and Langdon Warner.” Warner continued, stating that his
“interest in the Cleveland Museum of Art is much broader than the little item of six
figures;” this should be taken by Whiting “as an encouraging feature.”

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101 Ibid.

Archives, Records of the Director's Office: Frederic Allen Whiting, box 14, folder 146.

103 Ibid.
Warner would ultimately be instrumental in providing the primary financial backing for the museum’s so-called “Oriental Expedition,” which would, under Langdon Warner’s guidance, commence in 1916. The “Oriental Expedition” and its ultimate significance will be discussed fully in Chapter Five.

The Inaugural Exhibition of 1916

On June 6, 1916, Judge William Brownell Sanders, first president of the Cleveland Museum of Art, gave a speech officially opening the new museum to both members and the public. Sanders indicated that the opening of the museum would generate a cultural renaissance in the city of Cleveland, making none-too-subtle references to fourteenth century Florentines who, like their counterparts in early twentieth century northeast Ohio, patiently awaited the opening of Giotto’s Tower, here equated with the new art museum.104 Sanders indicated that the new museum building represented the first step in moving toward fulfillment of the collective goal of the CMA’s founding benefactors, Jeptha Wade, John Huntington, Horace Kelley and Hinman Hurlbut, who together funded the museum “for the promotion and cultivation of art in” Cleveland.105 Sanders outlined the broad goals of the trustees of the new museum: to “display examples of the highest art as it has existed in all ages and in all countries;” to exhibit only “example[s] of the best” objects; and to recognize that one of the main “purposes of the Museum is as an educational agency,” whose goal was to “stimulate and


105 Ibid.
promote the intelligent appreciation of art” in the city of Cleveland.\textsuperscript{106} Sanders also tackled the problem of perceived American materialism, stating that the new museum, far from glorifying the material or object, had a loftier purpose: to help visitors come to a point of “communion” with displayed art objects and antiquities; this “communion” should not simply be with the physical object itself, but with the \textit{spirit} in which the object was created by an artist who, at-large, was contributing to “the real glories of the world.”\textsuperscript{107} Sanders’ employment of terms like “spirit” and “communion” used in conjunction with material objects points to an interest in developing a bridge between his contemporary industrialized world, and that of the pre-industrial period, romanticized as being a period of cultural ‘purity.’ Of specific interest here is Sanders’ use of the word “communion,” which implies that visitors will have potentially liminal experiences as they view the art objects on display. The notion of “communion” also references, to a degree, a kind of spirituality or spiritual awakening which could potentially take place when in the presence of great art. The implication, then, that objects can possess or trigger some notion of the intangible or spiritual is a compelling concept which will be explored later, in the context of objects/antiquities and their ability to retain elements of an ideologically historicized pedigree or body of cultural \textit{cachet}.

Sanders was followed by Charles L. Hutchinson, president of the Art Institute of Chicago, whose brief talk was entitled “The Democracy of Art.” Hutchinson’s speech, in many ways, echoed that of Sanders; his language was reverential, and he insinuated that
the new Cleveland Museum of Art would function as a “temple” that would “bring beauty and inspiration into [the] lives” of Clevelanders.\textsuperscript{108} Hutchinson, like Sanders, referenced the growing problem of American materialism, arguing that Art, broadly defined, possessed a “democratic nature” which could positively affect those brought into contact with specific objects.\textsuperscript{109} Hutchinson also spoke to the link between art and craft, arguing that craftsmen could be viewed as, effectively, junior artisans, and artists as “craftsm[en] of a superior sort.”\textsuperscript{110} Individuals like Worcester Warner, an industrialist and major benefactor to the museum, benefitted from this kind of assessment – through their philanthropic efforts, they could transition from being merchant “craftsmen” to effective “artists,” capable of laundering their manufacturing money at the museum where it would be transformed into objects of beauty, used to instruct local laborers in the finer elements of craftsmanship. Cleveland, a city with an abundance of craftsmen, could only stand to benefit from the education these individuals would receive when walking the halls of the new museum of art. Driving home his point, Hutchinson stated that “art is not destined for a small and privileged class. Art is democratic. It is of the people and for the people. The basis of all … Art is human nature.”\textsuperscript{111} Thus “Art takes the raw material of leisure, ambition, and desire, and creates with them forces for the refinement of living.”\textsuperscript{112} In this way, visitors to the new museum could commune with aesthetically

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Ibid.
\item Ibid., 5-6.
\item Ibid., 6.
\item Ibid., italics mine. Presumably members of all social classes could benefit from this refinement.
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\end{footnotesize}
pleasing art objects and antiquities, from different periods and regions; the experience would ultimately serve as one of edification and refinement. John R. Vanderlip, of the Minneapolis Institute of Arts, echoed these sentiments, stating that Cleveland’s new art museum would stimulate the “expansion and elevation of every class” of citizen who ventured into the galleries.\(^{113}\) He further indicated that Cleveland, by building an art museum, was “setting the standard of municipal beautification the United States,” and could serve as a positive example for other, similarly sized cities located in “the West.”\(^{114}\)

People could experience culture, refinement, and social uplift by merely visiting the new Cleveland Museum of Art. Objects, far from representing the further materialization of American culture, could serve as spiritualized proxies for the various periods and regions that they were products of. Their collective, intangible pedigrees would, through transference of ownership to the museum, serve to enhance the cultural *cachet* and level of distinction of the city of Cleveland, and all of those who resided within its borders. While the speakers at the museum’s Inaugural dedication discussed “art” in a global sense, Asian art, specifically, would figure prominently in the cultural ‘renaissance’ of the city. Directors, curators and representatives from other American museums shared similar ideas. Benjamin Ives Gilman, secretary of Boston’s Museum of Fine Arts, called for a “democratization of museums,” so that all individuals, regardless of wealth or background, could “share in the life of the imagination.”\(^{115}\) Gilman led a

\(^{113}\) Ibid., 14.

\(^{114}\) Ibid. Apparently any city located to the west of Philadelphia was considered part of the amorphous “West.”

crusade against “museum fatigue,” arguing instead for simple, well lit displays with adjacent informational plaques.\textsuperscript{116} Gilman also wrote “a jargon-free handbook of the collection,” which was made available for reference in the museum’s gallery spaces.\textsuperscript{117} After these changes were implemented at Boston’s museum, attendance rose; Gilman crowed that Sundays, which were admission free days, “represent[ed] the American public at its best.”\textsuperscript{118} At New York’s Metropolitan Museum of Art, Henry Watson Kent focused upon enhancing public accessibility by creating a new docent program; these docents were expected to be on hand in galleries to answer questions and aid in extending “art appreciation” skills to all visitors.\textsuperscript{119} These men shared the views of the director, curators, and trustees working to make Cleveland’s new art museum a vibrant and popular destination for leisure and education amongst members of the city’s public.

Art objects and antiquities from China, Japan and Korea figured prominently in the Cleveland Museum of Art’s Inaugural Exhibition of 1916. The provenance of the objects displayed varied; many were lent to the museum by Charles Lang Freer; others were on loan from dealers in Asian art, like Ching Tsai Loo (1880-1957), and members of the Yamanaka firm.\textsuperscript{120} Several pieces were, however, owned outright by the museum; these objects were gifted by Clevelanders like Ralph King, and Worcester Warner, who

\textsuperscript{116} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{117} McClellan, 170.
\textsuperscript{118} Benjamin Ives Gilman quoted in McClellan, 169.
\textsuperscript{119} McClellan, 169-170.
\textsuperscript{120} The role of Asian dealers in promoting “Oriental” art in the United States will be discussed shortly, along with the methods these individuals employed in their efforts to “sell” Asia, both ideologically and physically.
wished to promote awareness of the arts of Asia in the city of Cleveland. These men, together with Whiting, MacLean, and Langdon Warner, worked to make Cleveland’s museum into a cultural destination, using Asian art to stimulate local and national interest, and drive up museum attendance. Visitors to the museum could expect to encounter very high quality pieces of art from China, Japan and Korea; they could through viewing participate in and experience firsthand the cultural and historical prestige of the objects displayed. By engaging with these objects, they were participating in the enhancement of the cultural cachet and refinement of the city, via the medium of the city’s sympathetic appropriation of these pieces.

One object, owned by the museum and featured in the museum’s Bulletin, was a 3 foot tall, Chinese, carved statue of the Buddhist bodhisattva figure Kwanyin, dating from the Tang dynasty (618-907 CE). The author of the Bulletin brief on the piece, likely curator of “Oriental” art J. Arthur MacLean, argued that the fine lines of carving were indicative of the skill of Tang-dynasty craftsmen, who left nothing “wanting in the dignity of this figure, in the grandeur of conception, in the sculptural effect, in the proportion, or in the adornments which so closely resemble the real.” The author challenged the notion “that the Chinese have no sculpture;” the Kwanyin, with its “gracefully draped ropes of jewels” and full cheeks, was representative of something beautiful and “concrete, and not merely a strange expression of foreign religious

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122 Ibid.
thought.”

Because of the realism of the carving, viewers could “readily associate tenderness, compassion and mercy with this beautiful” statue.

The Kwanyin was just one of 102 objects from China, Japan and Korea that were listed as new accessions in November 1915. Charles Lang Freer gifted 28 Chinese paintings, while other donors gave Japanese sword guards and a “Chinese-Tibetan painting,” along with “Corean” paintings and jade articles. In a letter to Freer, curator MacLean wrote about the growth of the “Oriental” collection, indicating that the museum recently acquired “some exceedingly important pieces of [Tibetan] jewelry” that “only compare with the half dozen specimens in the Metropolitan Museum which are considered their best.” These objects joined an existent collection which included a “Chien-lung period” vase and carved Chinese marble head, and a “Buddhist Trinity,” which MacLean indicated might initially appear strange or “puzzling to those who have seen it for the first time; but so, perhaps, is Byzantine art strange at first sight…” The “Buddhist Trinity” was, for MacLean, undoubtedly a “masterpiece,” as it possessed the ability to “suddenly and strangely enlighten us simply because its language [is] a

123 Ibid.
124 Ibid.
125 Anonymous, The Bulletin of the Cleveland Museum of Art 2, no. 3 (November 1915): 10. This statue was likely deaccessioned at a later date.
127 Profiled in The Bulletin of the Cleveland Museum of Art 1, no. 2 (July 1914): 3-6. The vase was made during the reign of the Qianlong emperor, r. 1735-1796.
universal one.” For MacLean, the object represented the history, and civilizational pedigree of its country of origin; as such, it was only one of many objects from “the Far East … that may reveal to us enlightened moments.” Other accessions included the previously discussed Chinese votive carving, donated by Ralph King, and a “collection of Chinese antiquities, consisting of paintings, bronzes, pottery, [and] lacquer,” a Korai period Korean vase, “eighteen pieces of Chinese tomb pottery,” and “seven pieces of Chinese tomb jade.” Other objects acquired prior to the Inaugural opening of the museum included an 18th century Japanese lacquer statue, a collection of Japanese dolls, “17 pieces of Oriental arms, 16 pieces of Tibetan jewelry,” and “1 Chinese pottery pillow.” These were joined by a “Tibetan statuette,” 2 pieces of jade, 2 pieces of crystal and a snuff bottle, 4 Chinese bronze buckles and one silver buckle, a “Corean” bronze vase, 1 Chinese ivory figurine, and “36 pieces of Chinese pottery and jade.”

MacLean was happy with the museum’s progress in acquiring fine examples of Asian art objects and antiquities. He confided in Charles Lang Freer that his goal was ultimately to place Asian art objects alongside those from Europe, in an effort to illustrate

129 Ibid.

130 Ibid.


133 “Accessions,” in *The Bulletin of the Cleveland Museum of Art* 2, no. 2 (July 1915): 10. This piece was donated by D. J. R. Ushikubo (Daijiro Ushikubo), who managed the New York arm of the Asian art conglomerate Yamanaka and Company.


135 Ibid.
to the public the value and significance of the arts of Asia. MacLean believed that it was
“a deplorable thing that Oriental Art has so little prominence in the art of the world in the
minds of most people.”\footnote{J. Arthur MacLean to Charles Lang Freer, letter, January 4, 1916, The Cleveland Museum of Art Archives, Records of the Director's Office: Frederic Allen Whiting, box 9, folder 108.} He indicated that his goal was to “make a well balanced
Museum,” showing that “things of the East regardless of their classification are
comparable [to] and should be seen in conjunction with the things of the West…”\footnote{Ibid.} In a
letter to the editor of the Cleveland \textit{Plain Dealer}, MacLean argued that “the art of the
ancient kingdom of China is comparable to similar art in Europe, and far surpasses that of
our own country.”\footnote{J. Arthur MacLean, “The Art of China,” \textit{Cleveland Plain Dealer}, August 14, 1915, p. 6, copied February 29, 1916, as part of The Cleveland Museum of Art Archives, Records of the Director's Office: Frederic Allen Whiting, Box 13, Folder 135. MacLean is listed as the author of this article. It is unclear whether MacLean referred to the ancient art of the Americas produced by indigenous groups, or more recent American artistic endeavors.} He continued in a similar vein, “Is it not highly desirous that the
museum should strive for the fine art of China and all other oriental countries, in order to
quicken the mutual appreciation which should exist between ourselves and China?”\footnote{Ibid.}
MacLean was advocating for the creation of “sympathetic relations” between China and
the United States, and he believed that this could be accomplished through the display of
Asian art objects and antiquities, which would produce a kind of “sympathetic
understanding of Chinese art” by Americans.\footnote{Ibid.} These art objects and antiquities, which
“far surpass[ed]” the artwork produced by either American indigenous groups, or
craftsmen in the fledgling United States, would transfer and transpose some of their
intrinsic cultural-historical *cachet* to the museum, and city of Cleveland, via the medium of acquisition and, later, display. MacLean was aware of the fact that Cleveland’s new museum would not cater solely to the acquisition and display of art objects and antiquities from East Asia. However, what is important to note here, is the willingness of members of the museum’s Board of Trustees, and director Whiting, to place emphasis upon and direct significant funds to the acquisition of objects from Japan, China and Korea. MacLean, who personally believed that “China … was the most interesting of all nations,” lobbied hard for the continued acquisition of objects of art and antiquities from East Asia, because he believed that “superlative objects” could help individuals “realize the real importance of Oriental art.” This art, purchased by and displayed in Cleveland, would become a “part of the Museum,” and a part of the burgeoning heritage of the city at-large.

Ahead of the museum’s official opening on June 6, 1916, Cleveland *Plain Dealer* journalist Jessie C. Glasier, who served as the paper’s art and club editor, published an article outlining some of the “treasures” held by the new museum; prominently depicted, along with illustrations of two American oil portrait paintings and a rough drawing of the structure itself, was a fine eighteenth century Japanese Buddhist lacquered statue, listed

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143 Ibid.
as an item gifted outright from J. B. R. Ushikubo.\textsuperscript{144} Glasier indicated that the museum structure, representative of “the finest development of art museum ideals,” would hold objects originating from numerous foreign nations.\textsuperscript{145} So-called “Oriental” objects would be “a strong feature” of the new museum.\textsuperscript{146} Edward Hamilton Bell, assistant director of the Pennsylvania Museum of Art in Philadelphia, likewise extolled the virtues of both the physical structure of the museum and its contents. Writing in the museum’s \textit{Bulletin}, Bell described the layout of the new museum, which would be divided into three levels. The ground floor, where visitors would get their first glimpse of the new museum, housed “administrative and educational departments,” an amphitheater, library, employee offices, and a gift shop, while the main level of the structure was set aside wholly for the purposes of exhibiting objects.\textsuperscript{147} The top floor would house the Children’s Museum, the educational arm of the Cleveland Museum of Art, along with a small room set aside for the display of “architectural casts.”\textsuperscript{148}

The exhibition level was divided into fifteen linked galleries surrounding a rotunda, tapestry hall and garden court; it would serve as the primary venue for

\textsuperscript{144} Jessie C. Glasier, “Open Art Museum as City Treasure,” \textit{Cleveland Plain Dealer}, May 21, 1916. It was not uncommon for dealers in Asian art objects to donate pieces to museums; these practices served as tangible business cards, promoting the dealers’ own shops publicly.

\textsuperscript{145} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{146} Ibid.


\textsuperscript{148} Ibid., 15. Although many museums valued “architectural casts” as teaching tools that could be employed to educate the public on the nature of ancient artistic styles, Director Whiting and the curators at the CMA thought that ‘authentic’ objects could better teach visitors about their respective regions and periods of origin. In this way, such casts were housed, initially, at CMA, but were placed in an out of the way location frequented, mostly, by children.
displaying the museum’s holdings. Of these initial fifteen galleries, five were devoted to the display of “Oriental” art objects and antiquities.\textsuperscript{149} The first three galleries were comprised of Colonial American art, Gothic and Renaissance pieces; Gallery Four held Italian paintings.\textsuperscript{150} Galleries Five through Nine were made up exclusively of paintings, from the Netherlands, Spain, France, England, and the United States. Gallery Ten was devoted exclusively to Asian art objects and antiquities lent to the museum by Charles Lang Freer.\textsuperscript{151} Gallery Eleven was devoted to the display of a collection of Japanese block prints, while Gallery Twelve focused upon the arts of the “Nearer East.” Galleries Thirteen and Fourteen were set aside for the museum’s own holdings of Chinese and Japanese art objects, respectively.\textsuperscript{152} The final exhibition space, Gallery Fifteen, was devoted to the arts of ancient Egypt.

Clearly, Asian art objects and antiquities were an important centerpiece at the new Cleveland Museum of Art. Director Whiting devoted a shocking thirty percent of available gallery space to the display of these objects; this serves as a clear indication of the value that Whiting, and curator of “Oriental” art MacLean, placed upon these pieces. While art objects and antiquities from East Asia did not make up the majority of pieces placed on display at the Inaugural Exhibition, they were nonetheless important tangible points of distinction for the new museum. Certainly more capital was invested in

\textsuperscript{149} As discussed in Fred Lowrie, \textit{The Cleveland Museum of Art: Catalogue of the Inaugural Exhibition} (Cleveland: The Cleveland Museum of Art, 1916).

\textsuperscript{150} Ibid., Table of Contents.

\textsuperscript{151} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{152} Ibid.
acquiring art objects and antiquities that originated in Europe, and the museum, even in its formative years, built a striking collection of visual art objects. However, it is essential to review the central role that Asian art objects and antiquities played, in the museum’s formative period, in distinguishing Cleveland’s museum from the more venerable institutions located on the East Coast. Because it was a smaller institution, from a small, industrial city, the Director and curators had greater freedom to manipulate older models of collection and display. Asian art could function as a central, significant component of the museum’s collection. In this way, the director and curators at the Cleveland Museum of Art employed Asian art objects and antiquities to help create this sense of difference and distinction. Asian art was regularly featured in the museum’s Bulletin and other publications. Fred Lowrie, author of the museum’s Catalog of the Inaugural Exhibition, indicated that these “treasures of Eastern Art” were “accumulate[ed] for the benefit of the American people.”

Lowrie’s careful descriptions of the objects placed on display included dynastic titles and dates; he indicated that, on display in Cleveland, were “ancient” objects dating back to China’s Shang dynasty, initiated in “1766 B.C.” Lowrie emphasized both the age of the objects on display (by providing very specific dates of probable age), along with discussions of the provenance of the pieces. He focused heavily upon the “extreme rarity” of the objects, stating that in many cases the objects and antiquities on display at Cleveland’s Inaugural Exhibition were, at least, comparable to the very finest pieces on display in temples and collections

153 Ibid., 139. Italics mine.

154 Ibid.
in China and Japan, and, at best, superior specimens that the citizens of Cleveland should feel “privileged” to have access to.\textsuperscript{155}

Lowrie highlighted the contribution of Charles Lang Freer to the Inaugural Exhibition’s Gallery Ten, indicating that Freer’s years of meticulous accumulation of art and antiquities resulted in the construction of an unparalleled body of objects.\textsuperscript{156} Clevelanders, then, were treated to some of the finest pieces of Asian art in the world; as such they owed Freer a great “debt” for permitting these pieces to be displayed at CMA’s Inaugural Exhibition.\textsuperscript{157} Freer’s contributions included Tang dynasty ceramics and several \textit{bodhisattva} figures, rendered in lacquer and carved in stone. Such “Chinese examples” served as the “parent,” or influencing agent, that inspired processes of artistic production throughout East Asia.\textsuperscript{158} These original examples were of such “extreme rarity” that they were likely the only pieces to have “left the Far East.”\textsuperscript{159} In all, Freer contributed 18 pieces to the Inaugural Exhibition. The objects ranged in age from China’s earliest dynastic periods, the Shang (1600 BCE-1046 BCE) and Zhou (1045-256 BCE), to more recent pieces from Japan’s early shogunal period, the Ashikaga (1338-1573 CE).

Lowrie was, likewise, enamored with a collection of Japanese \textit{ukiyo-e} block prints, which were granted exhibition space in Gallery Eleven at the Inaugural Exhibition.

\textsuperscript{155} Ibid., 139-140.
\textsuperscript{156} Lowrie, 139.
\textsuperscript{157} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{158} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{159} Ibid.
The prints were part of a collection of *ukiyo-e* owned by W. S. Spaulding, who possessed pieces by Hokusai, and a series of a dozen prints produced by Hiroshige Utagawa.\(^{160}\) According to Lowrie, the Hiroshige grouping of prints was “the only complete series known to exist;” as such, the prints together were extraordinarily rare.\(^{161}\) The display of this collection at the museum’s Inaugural exhibition was an incredible coup – a testament to both the “industry and genius” of the printmakers, and the effect that this indomitable style would have upon viewers in early twentieth century Cleveland.

The most impressive galleries at the Inaugural Exhibition were, by far, those devoted exclusively to art objects and antiquities from China and Japan that were owned outright by the museum. Gallery Thirteen held 172 objects from China, meriting a lengthy discussion of the collective historical pedigree of these objects in the *Catalogue of the Inaugural Exhibition*. Lowrie noted that contemporary methods of dating Chinese art objects were somewhat “nebulous;” however, it could reasonably be assumed that many of the objects on display had origins dating to the 18th century BCE.\(^{162}\) In spite of these issues, Lowrie concluded that “even the earliest of these objects,” many made of cast bronze or ceramic, was representative of “workmanship so skilful (sic) as to testify to a long and still more remote past of experiment,” representative of the civilizational

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\(^{160}\) Both Hokusai and Hiroshige were important *ukiyo-e* printmakers in the mid- to late-Tokugawa period, roughly correlating to the 18th-mid-19th centuries. For more on their work, see Andreas Marks, *Japanese Woodblock Prints: Artists, Publishers, and Masterworks 1680-1900* (Vermont: Tuttle Publishing, 2012), and Frederick Harris, *Ukiyo-e: The Art of the Japanese Print* (Vermont: Tuttle Publishing, 2012).

\(^{161}\) Ibid., 143.

\(^{162}\) Ibid., 165.
“achievements” of ancient Chinese craftspeople. Lowrie also championed the “cosmopolitan” nature of Chinese art; this “cosmopolitan[ism]” was a by-product of China’s expansive territorial domain, and domination of much of the Eurasian overland trade in luxury goods. In this way, the objects held in the Cleveland Museum of Art’s Chinese Gallery were physical reminders of China’s political, social, and economic dominance in Central- and East-Asia. The “beauty and technical skill” represented by Chinese ceramics, deemed by Lowrie as the finest in the world, were metaphoric signs that pointed back to the sophistication and even superiority of ancient Chinese civilization. The objects and antiquities displayed at the Inaugural Exhibition, dating from China’s Neolithic period through the relatively recent Ming and Qing dynasties, collectively served as a tangible ‘timeline’ of the civilizational achievements of China. They were viewed positively, and in some cases enviously, by the museum’s director and curators. Members of the public, too, were pleased with the authenticity and value of the objects displayed.

Gallery Fifteen, devoted to the arts of Japan, housed 71 objects, primarily paintings, block prints, ceramics, and articles of clothing. Lowrie, in his description of the objects on display, indicated that Japan, prior to the “middle of the sixth century” CE, “had no art worthy of mention.” However, by Japan’s Nara period (ca. 8th c. CE), contacts with China increased, resulting in an explosion of artistic endeavor in Japan; this

163 Ibid.
164 Ibid., 167.
165 Ibid.
166 Ibid., 191.
signified, to Lowrie, the civilizational power of China, which very tangibly “left its mark” on Japanese civilization, through influencing contemporary Japanese tastes.\textsuperscript{167} Despite the eventual emergence of Japanese stylistic innovation, the arts of Japan remained intrinsically tied to China, which often, stylistically, “submerged the budding independence of Japanese artists.”\textsuperscript{168} Here, Lowrie once again referenced the transformative cultural power, or cachet, of Chinese art objects and antiquities. In Lowrie’s mind, these pieces were so invested with the various signs of China’s civilizational superiority that, for centuries, they quelled any meaningful attempts by Japanese artists to innovate. By displaying these pieces in Cleveland, a similar phenomenon could potentially occur. The museum, through the careful and systematic display of these objects, would draw upon China’s long historical pedigree by placing for public consumption examples of the very finest antiquities and art objects from the region, organized according to the best contemporary systems of periodization. These pieces were, collectively, representative of the artistic and technological achievements of ancient Chinese craftspeople; as Lowrie indicated, porcelain produced in China’s Song dynasty was still, in the early twentieth century, unmatched in quality and design.\textsuperscript{169}

This process of gathering, organizing, and displaying antiquities and art objects from China (and, to a lesser degree at the Inaugural Exhibition, Japan), was certainly one of appropriation. However, the method of appropriation employed at the Cleveland

\textsuperscript{167} Ibid. Interestingly enough, Chinese art appears to have been valued above the arts of Japan, at least in Cleveland in the early twentieth century. This trend would later reverse, due to the apparent plentiful nature of Chinese pieces vis a vis those produced in Japan.

\textsuperscript{168} Ibid., 191.

\textsuperscript{169} Lowrie, 167.
Museum of Art might be termed one of *sympathetic appropriation*, since the goal was not to consume Chinese culture in order to expel a caricature, in what might be termed classic Orientalist fashion. Rather, the director and curators at the museum, along with collectors, sought to gather and display fine examples of artwork from East Asian nations in an effort to positively influence members of the viewing public – be they elites, or local craft- and industrial-workers. The Asian art objects and antiquities placed on display at the Cleveland Museum of Art’s Inaugural Exhibition were the finest specific examples of their respective types: the very best pottery and ceramic pieces were displayed alongside ancient bronzes, religious figures, scroll paintings and block prints. These objects, though disassociated from their periods- and regions-of-origin nonetheless retained the intangible cultural *cachet* they were imbued with at their respective “births;” this *cachet* could, through display, be appropriated by the new art museum on behalf of the artistically starved denizens of the city of Cleveland.
CHAPTER V

THE CLEVELAND MUSEUM OF ART AND THE “ORIENTAL EXPEDITION”

Even before laying the foundation of the Cleveland Museum of Art, the museum’s new director Frederic A. Whiting was busy corresponding with trustees and potential donors about the need for bequests of “Oriental” art. Whiting believed that the new museum could distinguish itself from its peers by acquiring fine pieces of art and antiquities from China, Japan and Korea. As a result, beginning in 1913, Whiting started courting potential donors. By 1914, plans were in motion to underwrite and initiate an expedition to East Asia; the main objective was acquisition of as many fine pieces as possible, within the space of a few months. Three of Whiting’s primary correspondents were the Detroit industrialist and Asian art connoisseur Charles Lang Freer, Langdon Warner, a curator at Boston’s Museum of Fine Arts, and Worcester Reed Warner, a Cleveland-based industrialist. Freer was instrumental in convincing Whiting of the importance of funding an expedition to the “Orient,” particularly since conditions in East Asia were, in the early twentieth century, fortuitous for those who wished to acquire elements of material culture and cultural patrimony.1 Of primary interest in 1913-1914 was China, which had, after more than two thousand years of imperial governance,

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recently abolished the monarchy and established a new Republic (1912-1949). Japan as well, beginning in the mid-nineteenth century, embarked upon a period of unprecedented ‘modernization’ in the Meiji period (1868-1912). Korea likewise experienced a period of upheaval in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. First, in 1897, the Korean Empire (1897-1910) was established, breaking tributary ties with China’s Qing dynasty. An effective Japanese invasion, which lasted from 1910-1945, quickly followed.

Each of these situations created challenges for people living in these new nation-states; at the same time, they allowed for unprecedented opportunities for representatives of foreign museums to engage in the active acquisition and theft of cultural patrimony on a massive scale. Whiting, as a major proponent of an “Oriental” expedition to Asia, was certainly an agent of American cultural appropriation abroad. However, his views, when analyzed in concert with those of the Cleveland Museum of Art’s curator of “Oriental” art, J. Arthur MacLean, reveal tendencies to elevate, respect, and even in some cases revere the long historical pedigrees of China, Japan and Korea, as manifested in beautiful art objects and rare antiquities. Freer, Langdon Warner and Worcester Warner each expressed similar sentiments in their correspondence with Whiting and MacLean. By seeking to acquire fine East Asian art objects and antiquities, Whiting and MacLean, in particular, believed they were both preserving pieces that might otherwise be destroyed, while simultaneously using these objects and antiquities to enhance the prestige of the museum, and the city of Cleveland at-large. This kind of sympathetic appropriation differs from the wholesale appropriation of elements of foreign material culture by European colonial entities, since it implies a latent respect for the regions and cultures
that produced the objects at hand. An examination of the Cleveland Museum of Art’s “Oriental Expedition” of 1916 illustrates the important role that sympathetic appropriation played in both the physical construction of the museum’s Asian art galleries, and in the ideological construction of the ‘class,’ ‘distinction,’ and ‘culture’ of the city of Cleveland, achieved through the acquisition and display of art objects and antiquities from China, Japan and Korea in the city’s new art museum.

Political Unrest in China, 1911-1928

A review of Chinese history in the late Qing (1644-1912) and early Republican (1912-1949) eras illuminates the reasons why Whiting proposed that the museum underwrite an expedition to East Asia in 1916. China’s Qing (“pure”) dynasty was established in 1636 by Hong Taiji (also known as Abahai) (1592-1643), a Jurchen clan leader from Manchuria in northeast China. Hong Taiji’s father, Nurhaci, organized Manchu military ranks into “Banners,” which consolidated a previously heterogeneous military made up of Manchu, Mongol and Chinese foot soldiers and cavalrymen into an orderly military machine. After launching a successful invasion of north China in 1644, the Manchu claimed dominion over the country. Ruling from the seat of Chinese imperial authority, the Forbidden City in Beijing, the leaders of the Qing attempted to maintain difference while adopting elements of Chinese culture. Early Manchu leaders learned Chinese but maintained facility in the Manchu language. They also worked to

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2 Hong Taiji “founded” the dynasty in 1636; however, the Manchu did not successfully invade the Ming capital of Beijing until 1644. After this successful invasion, the Manchu claimed China’s Mandate of Heaven and initiated its final dynasty, the Qing.

separate Manchu bannermen living in Beijing from their ethnically Han Chinese neighbors. Mark C. Elliott, in his book *The Manchu Way*, identifies methods of differentiation applied by the Manchu in the early years of the occupation. Manchu males needed to embrace and uphold the primary elements of what Elliott terms the “Manchu Way”; this “Way” included mastery of the Manchu language, “archery, horse-riding, … and frugality.”⁴ In this way, the Manchu could claim cultural distinction from the Han Chinese they governed. Early leaders likewise isolated the Manchu language, making it available only to individuals of Manchu descent living in China.

Instability marked the Qing emperors’ rule, especially from the mid-nineteenth century, as a series of events weakened their rule and fueled their eventual collapse. A major issue was the ever more aggressive entreaties from representatives of European nations for trade concessions. In 1793, Lord George Macartney, an envoy of the British crown, traveled to China, ostensibly to mark the occasion of the Qianlong emperor’s eighty-second birthday. However, Macartney also bore instructions from his sovereign, King George III, to persuade the Qianlong emperor to relax trade restrictions with Britain. In the late eighteenth century, Qing China still dictated the terms of trade and exchange with foreign entities. Foreign trade only took place at the ports of Macao and Guangzhou in southern China. *Cohongs*, or state-selected merchant associations, formally controlled these trade interactions.⁵ The Qing state also imposed heavy “taxes

⁴ Elliott, 8.

and fees” on goods exported from these sites. As a result, Macartney worked to persuade the emperor to agree to relax what the British viewed as restrictive trade policies. Macartney arrived in 1793 bearing gifts and a letter for the Qianlong emperor from King George III. Contemporary observers cited Macartney’s apparent failure to kowtow in the presence of Qianlong as a primary reason for the failure of the embassy; however, James Hevia contends that this was less significant than the existence of dueling “incompatible views of the meaning of sovereignty and the ways in which relations of power were constructed” between the Qing and British authorities. Although the Qianlong emperor gracefully received Macartney and his party, he later dispatched scathing letters to King George III repudiating his gifts, and indicating that British trade could continue only through approved channels.

After Macartney’s botched encounter with the Qianlong emperor in 1793, Sino-British relations declined, culminating in the mid-nineteenth century in two Opium Wars (1839-1842, and 1856-1860). The Opium Wars occurred as a result of rising tensions between the Qing leadership and British merchants over the illicit sale of opium by foreign authorities in Chinese ports. The Qing Daoguang emperor (r. 1821-1850) called for the abolishment of the foreign-spurred opium trade in China, tasking the scholar-

6 Ibid.


8 “Two Edicts From the Qianlong Emperor…”.

9 For a more detailed account of the Macartney Mission, see the Introduction in Hevia’s Cherishing Men From Afar.
official Lin Zexu with orchestrating this end.\textsuperscript{10} Lin’s efforts to reason with British opium merchants, and, ultimately, Queen Victoria, were unsuccessful. In 1839, Lin halted foreign trade in Guangzhou, blockaded foreigners in their warehouses, and destroyed “3 million pounds of raw opium.”\textsuperscript{11} British merchants petitioned the crown for assistance with this issue. The crown responded by sending a fleet under the command of George Elliot to China. The fleet arrived in 1840, and Elliot promptly worked to blockade Chinese ports on the coast.\textsuperscript{12} Qishan, a Qing magistrate, and Elliot signed a tentative treaty in January 1841; neither side accepted the terms of their agreement, prolonging the conflict.\textsuperscript{13} The war continued into 1842, with the British blockading much of the coast, as well as occupying cities along the Yangzi river valley.\textsuperscript{14} When the British prepared to shell the ancient capital of Nanjing, the Qing capitulated, signing the Treaty of Nanjing with the British on August 29, 1842.\textsuperscript{15} This was the first of several “unequal” treaties signed between the Qing and European governments. The Chinese agreed to open numerous ports for foreign trade. They also abolished the \textit{cohong} trade monopoly,

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\textsuperscript{10} Jonathan D. Spence, \textit{The Search for Modern China} (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2013), 148-149.
\textsuperscript{11} Spence, 151.
\textsuperscript{12} Spence, 154-155.
\textsuperscript{13} Spence, 155-156.
\textsuperscript{14} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{15} Spence, 156.
\end{footnotesize}
agreed to pay a $21 million dollar indemnity to Britain, and ceded Hong Kong to British control.\textsuperscript{16}

The effective “loss” by the Qing of these wars had a negative impact on public perception of the dynasty. Further, between 1850-1866, China’s leaders were unable to quell the so-called Taiping rebels, who were active in south China.\textsuperscript{17} The Taiping Uprising, led by Hong Xiuquan, began in 1850 and lasted to 1864. Hong was a scholar who repeatedly failed the imperial examination to gain a degree.\textsuperscript{18} After a feverish dream, Hong concluded that he was a son of God and brother to Jesus Christ.\textsuperscript{19} By 1850, Hong counted over 20,000 followers, made up of individuals from all social classes and backgrounds. After defeating a Manchu expeditionary force in 1851, Hong christened his movement the \textit{Taiping Tianguo} or “Heavenly Kingdom of Great Peace.”\textsuperscript{20} The Taiping rapidly moved north from south China, occupying cities along the way. In 1853, the Taiping succeeded in occupying the city of Nanjing, which they held for eleven years.\textsuperscript{21} Although the Taiping were ultimately dismantled by the Qing, whose forces retook the city in 1864, their decade long rule of the city of Nanjing, in the Yangzi heartland of

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item \textsuperscript{17} Colin Mackerras, \textit{China in Transformation, 1900-1949} (London: Longman, 1998), 9.
\item \textsuperscript{18} Spence, 168.
\item \textsuperscript{19} Spence, 169.
\item \textsuperscript{20} Spence, 170.
\item \textsuperscript{21} Spence, 171.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
Qing China, is a testament to the instability roiling within China in the mid to late nineteenth century.

In addition to internal dissension, the Qing also dealt with foreign threats in the late nineteenth century. After squabbling with the Japanese over tacit control of the former Qing vassal state in Korea, Japan then dealt China a humiliating defeat in the 1894-1895 Sino-Japanese war. This was a cause for concern, since it upset the traditional relationship between the two nations and ultimately provided Japan with the opportunity to occupy portions of the Korean peninsula and Manchuria.

Further complicating matters for the Qing were a series of small-scale peasant revolts that culminated in 1900 in the “Boxer” rebellion, centered on the capital of Beijing. In 1898, the Guangxu Emperor (1871-1908) initiated the “Hundred Days’ Reforms,” influenced by two scholar-reformers, Kang Youwei (1858-1927) and Liang Qichao (1873-1929). The point of “Hundred Days’” was to slowly phase-in some “Western” style reforms; these would primarily affect the existent educational system, military, and infrastructure of the nation. 22 While many educated Chinese welcomed these reforms, the Empress Dowager Cixi (1835-1908) was “alarmed.” 23 Fearing that the reforms would fundamentally and negatively alter China’s culture and economy, in September 1898, she declared the Guangxu Emperor incompetent and staged a coup d’état. 24 Cixi placed the Guangxu Emperor under house arrest. 25

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22 Mackerras, 14.
23 Ibid., 15.
24 Ibid.
25 Spence, 221.
news, Kang and Liang both left the country.\textsuperscript{26} As the \textit{coup} dismantled the Guangxu emperor’s attempts at reform in the capital, a powerful secret society gained momentum in Shandong province. The group was a loosely organized martial arts society called “The Boxers United in Righteousness.”\textsuperscript{27} The Boxers largely attracted disaffected young males who held generally anti-Christian, and anti-Western views.\textsuperscript{28} The Boxers expanded through much of north China, reaching Beijing by 1900, where they attacked and killed Christians, foreigners, or “those who possessed foreign objects.”\textsuperscript{29} The Empress Dowager was loathe to stamp out the Boxers, since she tacitly approved of their rejection of foreign influences in China.\textsuperscript{30} She officially showed her support for the Boxers in the summer of 1900, writing that “the foreigners have been aggressive towards us, infringed upon our territorial integrity, trampled our people under their feet…. They oppress our people and blaspheme our gods. … Thus it is that the brave followers of the Boxers have been burning churches and killing Christians.”\textsuperscript{31} Since the Boxers had effective reign to carry out attacks on foreigners in China with the support of the Empress Dowager, they targeted foreign communities throughout north central China. Foreigners living in Beijing consolidated themselves into the foreign concession neighborhoods,

\begin{footnotesize}
\footnote{\textsuperscript{26} Ibid.}
\footnote{\textsuperscript{27} Spence, 222.}
\footnote{\textsuperscript{28} Ibid.}
\footnote{\textsuperscript{29} Spence, 223.}
\footnote{\textsuperscript{30} Ibid.}
\footnote{\textsuperscript{31} Empress Dowager Cixi quoted in Spence, 223-224.}
\end{footnotesize}
constructing “makeshift barricades of furniture, sandbags, timber, and mattresses.”\textsuperscript{32} Representatives of foreign governments believed that the Qing would offer little protection to foreign citizens in the capital. As such, a hybrid foreign expeditionary force made up of twenty thousand “soldiers from Japan, Russia, Britain, the United States, and France” marched on Beijing in August 1900.\textsuperscript{33} The Boxer siege of the capital ended on August 14, 1900; foreign troops likewise entered the Forbidden City in a demonstration of control over the Qing capital. The Empress Dowager, along with the Guangxu Emperor, hastily left Beijing and taking refuge in the western city of Xi’an.\textsuperscript{34} The Boxer Protocol, signed in September 1901, marked another costly treaty for the Qing – in addition to an exorbitant indemnity payment of over $333 million USD, the government was required to tolerate the presence of foreign troops in the capital (meant to protect foreign citizens living in Beijing).\textsuperscript{35}

By the first decade of the twentieth century, the Qing, led by the formidable Empress Dowager Cixi (1835-1908), were at a crossroads. As a result of European imperial pressures, China’s economy in the early twentieth century was in disarray. In the first ten years of the twentieth century, China owed over “900 million taels” of silver to foreign states; this money was used to pay foreign indemnities and other miscellaneous

\textsuperscript{32} Spence, 224.

\textsuperscript{33} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{34} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{35} Ibid.
debts. Further, because of the Opium Wars, the Qing spent millions of taels of silver on opium imports from foreign agents. Foreigners long enjoyed extraterritoriality rights; they often abused these in port cities or “concessions,” like those located in Shanghai. Christian missionaries from European nations and the United States were omnipresent in larger Chinese cities; their proselytizing activities in surrounding rural regions were a cause for unease among members of China’s educated literati and bureaucrat classes. Many educated, urban Chinese citizens called for meaningful political and social change. Divisions existed amongst groups over what specific changes they should make and implement.

By 1908, the wheels of political change were set in motion. On November 14, the effectively deposed Guangxu Emperor died; a day later the Empress Dowager herself passed away. While the Guangxu Emperor’s death was suspicious, there was no official investigation; instead rule of the empire passed to the Xuantong Emperor (1906-1917), also known as Aisin-Gioro Puyi. Officials loyal to the deceased Empress dowager stepped in to care for the toddler Puyi. However, these individuals were unable to prevent the growing swell of nationalist agitation, particularly in China’s urban areas. From 1908 to 1911, Chinese citizens engaged in protests and, at times, violent revolts.

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36 Peter Zarrow, *China in War and Revolution, 1895-1949* (London: Routledge, 2005), 7. The equivalent sum in contemporary USD is about $24 billion.

37 Ibid., 8.

38 Of passing interest are the results of a recent chemical analysis of the Guangxu Emperor’s remains, which showed unusually high levels of arsenic. The study concluded that the emperor died of “acute arsenic poisoning.” It is likely that the Empress Dowager Cixi, realizing that she was dying, had the emperor poisoned to prevent him from re-initiating the reforms he attempted to implement while still actively in control of the government. For more see http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=96993694.
against Qing ministers. One of these revolts, the Wuchang uprising, resulted in the seizure of a Qing-controlled “munition depot” in the city.\textsuperscript{39} The success of these revolutionaries spread throughout the country. Sensing an opportunity, Sun Yat-sen, a foreign-educated reformer who long argued for the abolishment of the Qing, threw his support behind the revolutionaries. Just over two months after the Wuchang incident, on January 1, 1912, the Qing dynasty collapsed. The Republic of China (1912-1949) under the control of the \textit{Zhongguo Guomindang} (Chinese National People’s Party) emerged, with Sun Yat-sen acting as its first “provisional president.”\textsuperscript{40}

The early years of the new Republic were not without problems, however; a former Qing general, Yuan Shikai, replaced Sun as president and effectively stonewalled the implementation of meaningful political reforms. His death in 1916 was a relief for many Chinese who hoped that the new republic could move forward by ‘modernizing’ the government and nation-at-large. The problem that Chinese reformers, including Sun who returned to lead the new Chinese nation, faced centered on how to unite the nation practically and ideologically. China was divided along many different fault lines; rural citizens resented what they perceived to be materialism, Westernization, and “bourgeois” excess in urban areas.\textsuperscript{41} Citizens of China’s large coastal cities viewed their rural brethren with disdain, indicating that farmers, with their overly ‘traditional’ and “feudal” belief systems, perpetuated China’s so-called ‘backwardness.’\textsuperscript{42} This was also a very

\textsuperscript{39} Mackerras, 26.

\textsuperscript{40} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{41} Zarrow, 36.

\textsuperscript{42} Ibid.
difficult time for those Chinese who previously had close ties with the Qing. Provincial
government ministers and representatives lost their salaries along with many of the social
perks they previously enjoyed.

By 1919, public agitation for ideological change resulted in the May Fourth (or
New Culture) movement. The movement largely attracted young, urban, college
educated Chinese. Also notable was the general air of acceptance granted by May
Fourth/New Culture protesters to women. The movement, initiated by reformer Chen
Duxiu, called for the abolishment of “traditional morality … and advocated wholesale
cultural and intellectual change,” to be inspired by “western democracy and science.”

The writer Lu Xun likewise called for the abolishment of Confucian systems of morality
and deference, which he believed contributed to the corrosion and stagnation of Chinese
society from within. Lu likened those who followed Confucian ideals to cannibals in
his seminal short story Diary of a Madman (Kuangren riji), in which the protagonist was
deemed “mad” for questioning the wholesale public acceptance of Confucian teachings,
which he believed served only to brainwash those who accepted them into blind
submission to social and state authority. Chen and Lu popularized their arguments in
contemporary journals and pamphlets; one of the most famous was Xin Qingnian or New
Youth magazine. Those who subscribed to the May Fourth/New Culture rhetoric
collectively believed that China could not achieve international respect and recognition

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44 Bailey, 80.
45 For more see Lu Xun, “Diary of a Madman,” in The Real Story of Ah-Q and Other Tales of China: The
without “modernizing;” however, the protesters were divided over proper methods to implement new “modern” ideals. Should Chinese be prepared to “westernize,” or was “westernization” unnecessary in the face of modernizing Chinese society along indigenous lines? Could a state in the early twentieth century even become “modern” without “westernizing”?\(^{46}\)

In addition to debates over ideology, other factors further compounded governance in China’s Republican period. The period from 1916-1928 is referred to in Chinese historiography as the Warlord Period. By 1916, many of China’s provinces were under the control of warlords (junfa).\(^{47}\) The emergence of warlords in early twentieth century China is an excellent gauge for measuring the efficacy of Sun’s Guomindang government. As Arthur Waldron indicates, the warlord or junfa of the early twentieth century was a relatively new actor; in prior historical periods, generals or military leaders considered themselves to be subordinates to the ruler.\(^{48}\) However, by 1916, warlords cropped up throughout the nation, calling themselves ‘lords’ in their own right, rather than simply proxy representatives of the state.\(^{49}\) In general, warlords were men who hailed from the ranks of local military units; others were regional thugs, bandits, or gangsters. Some thirty percent were educated. They often gained power and influence

\(^{46}\) For more on the debate surrounding “modernization” vs. “westernization” in early twentieth century China see Prasenjit Duara, “The Regime of Authenticity: Timelessness, Gender, and National History in Modern China,” *History and Theory* 37, no. 3 (1998): 287-308.


\(^{48}\) Waldron, 1075.

\(^{49}\) Ibid.
through brutality and other public acts of violence.\textsuperscript{50} Regardless of background, regional warlords generally worked to first pacify local provinces before moving on to gain control of neighboring regions.\textsuperscript{51} These military encounters were bloody and endemic, with “hundreds of armed conflicts, short and long, on local, regional and national scales” occurring between 1916 and 1928.\textsuperscript{52} Warlords were, together, one of the greatest problems facing Sun as leader of the new Chinese republic. Warlords controlled local economies, militias, and, by the 1920s, entire urban areas. Many collected taxes, effectively filling regional power vacuums left after the collapse of the Qing.\textsuperscript{53} Warlords cornered the market on regionally-produced products, creating salt and opium monopolies.\textsuperscript{54} They engaged in illicit activities, and became wealthy and powerful from their work trading in narcotics, prostitution, weapons, and antiquities. They also made and broke “alliances” with one another, in open defiance of their supposed subordination to the dictates of the \textit{Guomindang} central government.\textsuperscript{55} The number of provincial soldiers under the control of warlords grew from 500,000 in 1916 to 2,000,000 in 1928; this rapid increase clearly illustrates the sway that these figures held in their respective regions.\textsuperscript{56} Warlords, quite simply, provided jobs and local protection while propping up

\textsuperscript{50} Mackerras, 33-34.

\textsuperscript{51} Mackerras, 33.

\textsuperscript{52} James E. Sheridan, quoted in Colin Mackerras, \textit{China in Transformation}, 31.

\textsuperscript{53} Zarrow, 86.

\textsuperscript{54} Ibid.


\textsuperscript{56} Ibid.
or sustaining largely rural economies often disregarded by the Guomindang, which focused more money and energy upon new construction projects and the expansion of infrastructure in China’s cities. Although effectively flouting Sun’s claim of being the architect of the new ‘unified’ China, most warlords did still consider themselves to be nationalists; they essentially sought to shore up control of a province to the point of near-independence, without completely breaking away from the state to form a new country.57

Warlords perpetuated and exacerbated political disarray in early Republican-era China. At the time of the Cleveland Museum of Art’s interest in initiating an “Oriental Expedition” to East Asia, China was a central focus for potential object collection. It was relatively easy to acquire fine pieces, since many former bureaucrats were parting with collections to gain income. Export rules, while existent, were rarely stringently enforced. Warlords and new government officials were happy to accept cash bribes to allow art objects and antiquities to leave a historical site or dig.

The events in China, ranging from revolution to emergent warlordism, also figured prominently in foreign newspapers. While the New York Times carried daily coverage of the collapse of the Qing and emergence of the new Republican state in China, Cleveland’s own Plain Dealer, though a regional press, nonetheless regularly published pieces dealing with the political and social shifts occurring in China. Foreign press coverage of the region started to grow in 1908, after the deaths of the Guangxu emperor and Empress Dowager Cixi. It peaked in 1911-1912, as the revolution in China began and the world watched to see what sort of new government would take shape.

57 Mackerras, 33.
Between 1911 and 1918, foreign periodicals regularly decried the “horrors” and chaos that were endemic in early twentieth century China.\(^\text{58}\) A brief analysis of foreign press coverage of the China situation illustrates the myriad reasons why Whiting, along with the Cleveland Museum of Art’s curatorial staff and board of trustees, decided to send an agent to the region to acquire fine examples of art objects and antiquities.

In 1908, the *New York Times* published a detailed article by Thomas Millard on China’s collective “struggle” for reform, with lush illustrations placed side-by-side with photographs of emerging Chinese notables.\(^\text{59}\) He discussed the actions of the aging Empress Dowager, along with the rapidly degenerating role of the imperial center in the face of vocal reformers, who called for the creation of a new “China for the Chinese.”\(^\text{60}\) Even in 1908, revolution seemed a distinct possibility; Millard indicated that the flagging Qing government was stockpiling “arms and ammunition in preparation for a great rebellion.”\(^\text{61}\) By 1911, American newspapers ran daily articles about China’s burgeoning revolution. Early in the year, the *Plain Dealer* treated readers to a piece describing the calamitous breakdown in the social order in the southeast Chinese port at Canton (now Guangzhou). According to the article, because of revolutionary agitation, “tens of thousands” of Chinese fled the city, making the residents of the “foreign district” of the

\(^{58}\) “Horrors Impend in China,” *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, May 16, 1911.


\(^{60}\) Ibid.

\(^{61}\) Ibid.
city extremely uneasy. With successes, revolutionary sentiment spread, first up the eastern coast and then into the interior of the country. By October 1911, following the rebel success at the city of Wuchang, tensions were high in the capital at Peking (modern Beijing), where Qing government ministers scrambled to divert money from Chinese banks to foreign-held ones in an attempt to halt the spate of bank runs underway over the last month. Another report filed by the *Times* indicated that public sentiment in the Yangzi river valley tended to favor the rebellion. In spite of their support, Chinese citizens living in cities along the Yangzi fled in large numbers to the port of Shanghai, a foreign-concession city, in an attempt to escape the violence in their home villages upriver. Interestingly, Qing bureaucrats appeared to join local citizens in this flight, abandoning the cities of Wuhu and Nanjing to rebel control. Robert E. Lewis, a Clevelander who spent a decade in China and was familiar with the contemporary situation, indicated that the rebel successes would be difficult for the Qing to quell, particularly since the rebels held, in late 1911, seven of China’s eighteen provinces. Lewis’ prediction was accurate; by October 30, residents of China’s capital fled the city en-mass; those who could not leave tried to protect their art treasures by “storing” them in “foreign business houses,” which they believed would be immune from harassment or

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destruction by rebel forces.\textsuperscript{67} Within months, a majority of China’s provinces leaned in support of the rebellion. On January 1, 1912, Chinese celebrated what they believed would be the beginning of a new democratic era. Even Chinese-Americans celebrated the establishment of the Guomindang-run republic, with New York City’s Chinese Merchant Association raising over $23,000 to aid Sun Yat-sen in establishing the new government in China.\textsuperscript{68}

Over the next several years, however, American newspaper articles painted a gloomy portrait of the ‘new’ China. Undoubtedly, Whiting, curator of “Oriental” art J. Arthur MacLean, Freer, and Langdon Warner were aware of the growing social and political disarray in China. Archival sources, as well, support the idea that China’s citizens did not flourish in the early years of the Republic; instead, many lost fortunes, collections, homes, and in extraordinary cases, their lives. Early in 1912, the \textit{Plain Dealer} ran a front-page article on the suffering of China’s citizens in the wake of the revolution. Because the Republic was young, and much of the existent infrastructure destroyed in the rebellion, communication between the leadership and provinces was often fraught with difficulties. Compounding the problems experienced by those who lost homes or loved ones in the rebellion was widespread famine, a result of “crop failure” and flooding.\textsuperscript{69} The government was effectively “bankrupt,” with no clear method in place to systematically levy and collect taxes from the provinces.\textsuperscript{70}


\textsuperscript{69} “Bankruptcy and Famine in China,” \textit{The Cleveland Plain Dealer}, January 23, 1912.

\textsuperscript{70} Ibid.
famine, centered on the Yangzi river valley, lasted through much of 1912, with more than 3 million Chinese affected.  Eyewitnesses described the horrors they experienced, indicating that the flooding wiped out many villages that local elites had already abandoned. With no wealthy citizens to assist them with loans for reconstruction, or the purchase of animals or seed, China’s peasants starved.

After one year, the new Guomindang government had failed to implement much positive change in China. In an interview in the New York Times, John Otway Percy Bland, a British citizen and former employee of the Chinese Maritime Customs Service discussed the success of China’s new government. He blamed the slow rate of meaningful political change in the country on foreign interference, indicating that representatives of foreign (and largely European) nations had a stranglehold on the economies of former concession-cities like Shanghai. Foreigners also controlled most of China’s railways and rail interests, and foreign nations continued to administer and levy hefty interest payments on loans made to the new government. Bland indicated that in his view, “China … is not mistress of her own house; that house is mortgaged, and there is a bill of sale upon the furniture.” He also dismissed the leadership of the Republic’s second president, Yuan Shikai, arguing that Yuan was happy to stall the pace

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72 Ibid.


74 Ibid.

75 Ibid.
of change in order to maintain “autocratic” control over the state. Citing a favorite Chinese proverb, Bland indicated that in spite of the revolution, little in China had changed for the better; he stated that “The Yellow River may change its bed but the waters will remain as muddy as before.” Count Okuma, a Japanese minister, observed that although the revolution was over, China’s government and territorial integrity were far from secure. Okuma indicated that China post-revolution was “very much like a volcano on the eve of eruption.”

Supporting Bland’s and Okuma’s assessments was the explosion of warlord-controlled regions and provinces throughout China. Warlordism, previously discussed, was so rampant in China by 1914 that it even began to appear in American periodicals. The Times profiled the activities of a warlord, known as the “White Wolf,” in “Hu-peh” (modern Hubei) and “Ho-nan” (modern Henan) provinces in east-central China. The city of “Siang-yang-fu” (modern Xiangyang) burned to the ground after residents refused the warlord and his entourage entrance to the city market. Three hundred citizens were also massacred, with no official response from the central government forthcoming. The local general, a former warlord himself, also did nothing to stop the carnage.

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76 Ibid.
77 Ibid. A nice bit of Orientalism here, but still an effective measure of foreign views of the “new” China. Effectively, there was very little positive change in the lives of average citizens.
80 Ibid.
81 Ibid.
82 Ibid.
With violence, hunger, and insecurity becoming a collective daily reality for many Chinese citizens, it is perhaps not surprising that the preservation of cultural patrimony and elements of material culture were not foremost in the minds of the majority of the population. A British peer, James Bryce, 1st Viscount Bryce, discussed his observations after traveling through Republican China in 1914. Bryce indicated that in China, “he found not the slightest desire to preserve the memorials of a noble civilization, almost as old as that of Egypt.” Bryce postulated that members of China’s majority Han ethnic group lost interest in the material culture produced by their predecessors as a result of living under four hundred years of Manchu rule. He was shocked at the “total disregard by the people for their ancient monuments;” more shocking, perhaps, is Bryce’s failure to entertain the myriad reasons why average Chinese citizens might focus more upon survival than the preservation of cultural heritage.

Materials from archival sources likewise corroborate the sometimes dire nature of the events presented in American periodicals. Immediately following the collapse of the Qing dynasty in 1911-1912, individuals who previously served the Qing/Manchu government in bureaucratic positions began to panic. Many placed pieces from their large and often valuable collections of art objects and antiquities in storage, as previously discussed; others sought to sell off single items or entire collections fearing that if these goods were not liquidated they would be seized and possibly destroyed under the new


84 Ibid.
regime. A case study featuring a bureaucrat named Lien Hui Ch’ing illuminates the myriad motivations behind the actions of many formerly-wealthy, influential Chinese who chose to sell their fine collections of art objects and antiquities in the face of revolution and social dissolution. In 1911, Lien, a former Qing bureaucrat who served as a “secretary in the Board of Finance,” with a “button of the second rank,” was the owner of a fine collection of Chinese art objects called the “Little Myriad Willow Hall” collection. An ancestor of Lien’s named “Prince Heng Yang,” who worked as a bureaucrat during China’s Yuan dynasty (1271-1368) built the collection. The prince named the collection for his “Myriad Willow Hall” villa near Beijing. Lien’s great-grandfather, a wealthy merchant later expanded the collection. . Lien engaged an American acquaintance named Luella Miner to help him find a foreign buyer for the collection. Miner, a Christian missionary and principal of the North China Women’s College in Beijing, assisted Lien by contacting foreigners who had reputations as

85 I have chosen here to transliterate Lien’s full name as it is written in documents dating chiefly from 1911. At that time, the prevailing method of transliterating Chinese characters into English was the Wade-Giles method. Today, characters are rendered using Pinyin, which produces a more ‘authentic’ transliteration. Lien’s name could be written in Pinyin as Lien Huqing. For my purposes here, however, I will retain the original transliteration.

86 Luella Miner to C.L. Freer, letter, September 1, 1911, The Charles Lang Freer Papers, Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery Archives, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. Note: The Qing employed a system of ranking officials derived from the earlier Manchu banner system. Members of both the military and civil arms of government were hierarchically organized according to rank. Lien’s rank was evidently quite high; even if we grant that Miner may have been mistaken by labeling him a “mandarin” of the second rank, we can assume that Lien was a wealthy and influential man. For more on Qing rank, rank badges and clothing, see Valery Garrett’s Chinese Dress From the Qing Dynasty to the Present (Vermont: Tuttle Publishing, 2007) pp. 64-84.

87 Ibid.

88 Ibid.

collectors and connoisseurs of Asian art objects and antiquities. Miner immediately thought of Charles Lang Freer, and approached an expatriate friend of his, Beatrice de Menoncal, on Lien’s behalf. Although Miner had no prior personal contact with Freer, she was aware of his reputation as a famous and wealthy American connoisseur of Chinese art. After receiving word of the availability of the collection from de Menoncal, Freer engaged an artist friend living in China, L. J. Hatch, to view the collection on his behalf. Hatch corroborated Miner’s assessment of Lien, indicating that the bulk of the collection was amassed over the last “three or four hundred years,” roughly corresponding to an origination period sometime during the late Ming or early Qing dynastic periods.

By 1911, the collection consisted of over 1,000 painted fans, a sizable collection of paintings and scrolls (numbering around 275 total, of varying quality and representing dynasties from pre-Tang to Qing), 6 ancient bronzes from the Three Kingdoms period (ca. 220-280 CE), 13 Zhou-era jade pieces (ca. 1045-256 BCE), 22 Song dynasty porcelain pieces (ca. 960-1279 CE), 14 pieces of Ming-era celadon ware (ca. 1368-1644), 23 snuff bottles (probably dating to the early Qing), and a coin collection representing most previous dynasties. After viewing the collection himself, Hatch stated that it was “well known by other collectors in China,” and that it was

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90 Luella Miner, a graduate of Oberlin College in Oberlin, OH, spent nearly fifty years in China. For a brief contemporary biography see Mary H. Porter, “Luella Miner: A Sketch,” in *The Missionary Herald* 126 (1930): 393-394.


“probably one of the finest and most authentic collection[s] of Chinese pictures and art objects in the world.”

Lien began searching for a potential buyer for the collection early in 1911. This roughly corresponds with the revolts that occurred earlier in the year. As a second-rank member of the bureaucracy, Lien was more privileged than most Chinese. However, Hatch indicated that Lien was “one of those whose fortunes and official life died with the downfall of the former young “reform” Emperor;” Miner stated that Lien, an “ardent patriot and reformer,” sought to sell the collection to save it from destruction in China. Regardless of his political leanings, Lien was clearly distressed about the uncertain political situation in China. His collection, the material culmination of generations of related collectors, deemed one of “the finest and most authentic … in the world” needed to be preserved, and preservation in the hands of a foreign buyer or museum was preferable, in Lien’s mind, to dissolution or destruction in China. Lien was also in dire need of money, as his investments floundered, his wife was unwell, and he had four small

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93 L. J. Hatch to W. H. Holmes, letter, August 1911, the Charles Lang Freer Papers, Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery Archives, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.

94 Ibid. Note: Hatch refers here to the ill-fated Guangxu Emperor, whose attempts at reform (called the “Hundred Days’ Reform”) were quashed by the formidable Empress Dowager Cixi.

95 Luella Miner to Charles Lang Freer, letter, September 1, 1911, The Charles Lang Freer Papers, Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery Archives, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. Note: What is particularly interesting here are the different ways that Lien is described: first, presumably as a loyal Qing scholar-official who supported the limited reforms of the Guangxu emperor; later, as an “ardent patriot and reformer.” It is clear that Lien was trying to find a new space for himself in a changing China; this may have also intensified the distress he felt with regard to his collection. Lien would have been wary of focusing on his previous links to the Qing, and even Miner states, using coded niceties, that Lien found “politics … distasteful,” choosing instead to “devote his time to literary work.”

children to care for.\textsuperscript{97} Lien’s interest in preserving the “Little Myriad Willow Hall” collection certainly challenges Viscount Bryce’s claim that most Chinese stopped caring about antiquities in the wake of social change. More important, however, was Lien’s contention that his collection, as the material culmination of the work of generations of ancestors, was both\textit{monetarily} and\textit{culturally} valuable.

While Lien was willing to sell the grouping to, effectively, the highest bidder, he also maintained that the intrinsic worth of the collection lay not in each individual piece, but rather in the collection in-situ, as a product of the work of generations of collectors. Lien conservatively valued his collection at 1,231,900 taels of silver, which Miner indicated was equivalent to about $800,000 gold dollars in 1911.\textsuperscript{98} However, the collection was built by literati scholar-officials, quite literally “men of culture” who, as both scholars and artists themselves, could appreciate a piece of artwork both for what it directly portrayed, and for its pedigree, on paintings and scrolls marked in the countless seals of previous owners.\textsuperscript{99} Nearly every painting and scroll in Lien’s collection was “signed by the painter and also sealed by the different hands through which it … passed.”\textsuperscript{100} Although Lien could assign an arbitrary monetary value to the collection, ultimately it was truly priceless, as a physical representation of the work and patterns of

\textsuperscript{97} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{98} Luella Miner to Charles Lang Freer, letter, September 1, 1911, The Charles Lang Freer Papers, Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery Archives, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.


\textsuperscript{100} L.J. Hatch to W.H. Holmes, letter, August 1911, The Charles Lang Freer Papers, Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery Archives, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.
collection of generations of men in his family. In a sense, the collection and its attendant
cachet could effectively pass from Lien to the potential purchaser (in this case, Freer). It
seems unlikely that Lien would have agreed to part with his collection if the political
situation in China was not, in his view, dire. Lien’s decision to sell his collection to a
foreign buyer provides insight into the stark reality of the unstable social and political
field in early Republican China. Lien’s situation was far from unique; other former
bureaucrats and degree-holders scrambled to sell off art objects and antiquities in order to
make ends meet after the effective collapse of the Qing dynasty. Lien’s particular case
also illustrates the ways that Chinese collectors understood the historical, cultural, and
financial value of the antiquities and art objects in their possession. These pieces were
dually valuable, retaining capital of both the financial and cultural varieties.

It is clear, after reviewing the social and political changes that took place after the
collapse of the Qing dynasty, and during the transition period (from 1912-1928) from
imperial to Republican governmental control, that China in the early twentieth century
was ripe for effective cultural exploitation by foreigners. Between 1912 and 1928, many
foreign collectors, hailing from European nations, the United States, and Japan flocked to
China in bald attempts to purchase – as cheaply as possible – fine art objects and
antiquities from individuals who could no longer afford to keep them. Freer, certainly
aware of this great potential for acquisition, encouraged Whiting to build up an
unparalleled collection of art objects and antiquities from East Asian nations, since he
believed relative ease and little expense. Whiting, along with his curator of Asian art J.
Arthur MacLean, were already appreciative of the long cultural pedigrees of China, Japan
and Korea, and readily agreed to work to fund an “Oriental Expedition” on behalf of the new Cleveland Museum of Art. All that was missing was an agent on the ground.

Initiating and Funding the “Oriental Expedition”

Beginning in 1913, the Cleveland Museum of Art’s director, Frederic A. Whiting, started writing to Charles Lang Freer; in his letters, he floated the idea of hiring an agent to purchase and acquire, on behalf of the museum, fine specimens of East Asian art objects and antiquities from dealers and collectors in China, Japan and Korea. From the start, Whiting had Langdon Warner in mind; however, in 1913 Freer already contracted Warner to purchase objects in China on his behalf.\(^\text{101}\) Prohibited by the terms of his contract from serving as a buyer for any other entities, Warner could not, at this time, purchase antiquities for Cleveland’s museum.\(^\text{102}\) Despite prohibiting Warner from becoming a buyer for the Cleveland Museum of Art, Freer did nonetheless encourage Whiting to begin building a collection of pieces from East Asia, as prices in 1914 were still low and the available pieces were of high quality. Whiting was anxious to send an individual to Asia; he indicated that he believed that a unique “opportunity” existed in China, as a result of the collapse of the Qing dynasty.\(^\text{103}\) From 1914 to 1915, Whiting worked tirelessly to arrange for a special museum funded “expedition” to East Asia, with the express purpose of purchasing or otherwise acquiring pieces for the new museum. Whiting wanted to acquire these types of objects before “the establishment of laws in


\(^\text{102}\) Ibid.

China” that might prohibit their export.\textsuperscript{104} Certainly, Whiting already nurtured an interest in and respect for the long collective historical pedigrees of China, Japan, and Korea. Yet, like others involved in building museum collections, he also wanted to take advantage of the relative social and political disarray in China. Whiting believed that with the acquisition of several “important” pieces from the region, the museum could begin to distinguish itself from its peers on both the East coast of the United States and in the Midwest. Further, the new museum would begin to contribute to the creation of a new, more cosmopolitan and ‘cultured’ city of Cleveland.\textsuperscript{105}

Langdon Warner might initially seem to be an odd choice to serve as a purchasing agent for a major American museum. Warner was born in Cambridge, Massachusetts in 1881. His father, a lawyer, ensured that Warner was educated at private schools in both Cambridge and Boston.\textsuperscript{106} In 1903, Warner accepted a position as a “lay archaeologist” on a Carnegie Institution-funded expedition to Turkestan.\textsuperscript{107} Warner, who had no formal training in archaeology, anthropology, or art history, fell into the position because a friend, Raphael Wells Pumpelly, led the expedition.\textsuperscript{108} On the expedition, Warner apparently found his calling; over the next fifty years he made eighteen different trips to East Asia where he served in various capacities, as a buyer, pseudo-archaeologist, 

\begin{footnotes}
\item[104] Ibid.
\item[105] Ibid.
\item[107] Bowie, 5.
\item[108] Ibid.
\end{footnotes}
teacher, scholar, and official. During this period, he also styled himself as an expert in the art and ancient material culture of China, Japan and Korea. Warner was able to translate this ‘education’ into several lucrative positions, beginning in 1906 with the Department of Asiatic Art at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. It was in this capacity that Warner met John Lodge, who later became the first director of the Freer Gallery in Washington, D.C., Charles Lang Freer, and Okakura Kakuzo, the Japanese-born curator of Asiatic Art at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. In 1906, Warner made his first trip to Japan. While abroad, he studied the language, and took tours of temples, museums and private collections. In 1911 Warner traveled through Korea, and by 1912 he was poised to serve as director of the American School of Archaeology, to be located in Beijing. This appointment was the result of his growing friendship with Freer, who recommended him to the position. In the summer of 1913, then, Warner and his wife spent time in China serving a contract with Freer. Warner worked with local leaders to establish and construct an American School of Archaeology, and to acquire fine art objects and antiquities as he encountered them. One result of this appointment that would be beneficial to Whiting and the Cleveland Museum of Art, was Warner’s

109 Bowie, 15.

110 Bowie, 16.

111 Okakura wrote an important book called The Ideals of the East, in which he introduced readers, in English, to what he believed were important concepts that could help them better understand the aesthetic sensibilities of East Asia. His work also influenced the views of many Americans who were interested in the Arts and Crafts movement.

112 Bowie, 20.

113 Bowie, 39.
familiarity with China-in-general, and more specifically, his already established relationships with Chinese bureaucrats and other local officials.

While Warner was abroad he engaged in regular correspondence with Whiting. In the summer of 1913, Whiting broached the subject of a museum sponsored “Oriental Expedition” with Warner to judge his interest in leading or, at the very least, participating in such an endeavor. At this early time, Whiting anticipated having access to around $20,000 for the acquisition of art objects and antiquities from Asia.\textsuperscript{114} Warner was interested, but his arrangement with Freer prevented him from immediately accepting a position with the Cleveland Museum of Art. The expedition would have to wait; however, this did permit Whiting to engage in more pointed correspondence with the Cleveland industrialist and Asia enthusiast Worcester Warner (no relation to Langdon Warner). In a bald attempt to gain favor with Worcester Warner, Whiting, in the summer of 1914, lobbied to appoint him a trustee of the new museum. Warner was delighted, and happily accepted his new appointment.

Over the succeeding months, Whiting continued to press Worcester Warner for a concrete financial commitment to the museum; writing in November 1914, he suggested Warner make a bequest to the museum of at least $50,000, which he believed would be “more than sufficient” to aid in building up the museum’s holdings.\textsuperscript{115} Whiting may have felt it necessary to pressure Worcester Warner, since the letters he regularly received

\textsuperscript{114} Frederic A. Whiting to Langdon Warner, letter, August 12, 1913, The Cleveland Museum of Art Archives, Records of the Director's Office: Frederic Allen Whiting, box 13, folder 135. Note: $20,000 in 1913, calculated for inflation, is equivalent to about $475,000 USD today.

\textsuperscript{115} Frederic A. Whiting to Worcester Warner, letter, November 28, 1914, The Cleveland Museum of Art Archives, Records of the Director's Office: Frederic Allen Whiting, box 14, folder 146. Note: $50,000 in 1914, adjusted for inflation, is equivalent to about $1.1 million USD today.
from Langdon Warner spoke tantalizingly of unreported “inscriptions and sculpture” just waiting to be spirited out of China.116 Langdon Warner teased that Whiting “had better send some one over at once to take advantage of the … loot!”117 In another letter, Whiting laid out several options for Worcester Warner to consider if he wished to endow a collection at the new museum. Whiting suggested that Warner could stipulate that his $50,000 be employed in one of three capacities: as funding for an expedition to Asia, as funding for the purchase of a collection of “Corean” pottery, or, as funding for the creation of a named collection of “Oriental” art objects and antiquities from throughout Asia.118 Whiting indicated that if Warner provided financial support for an expedition, he should expect excellent results. Whiting stated that he was “convinced that such an expedition would result in securing [from] … Mongolia and … remote districts of China, material which would be of great value, and which would at once establish the reputation and importance of our Museum as a factor in the development of the Orient.”119 If funding an expedition did not appeal to Warner, Whiting suggested that his monies be spent instead on “Corean” porcelain, which would be housed in its own gallery; this collection, in Whiting’s mind, would be “second only to that in the Seoul Museum in Corea.”120 Whiting explained his interest in “Corean” porcelain, indicating that he


117 Ibid.


119 Ibid.

120 Ibid.
believed “people are just beginning to appreciate the great contribution that Corea has made to the art of the world … The gathering together of such a collection as we propose would do a great service in helping students and connoisseurs to appreciate the beauty and importance of Corean art…”121 In a private memo directed at Whiting, Langdon Warner discussed the reasons he believed a collecting expedition to East Asia was necessarily linked to the ultimate success of the museum. Warner cited the social and political upheaval occurring in China, stating that in the “next year great opportunities are going to be presented to the man on the spot.”122 Citing also the impact of World War I on European acquisition trips, which “practically stopped” as a result of the growing conflict, Warner stated that an “American agent, with cash” would “find many things to buy.”123

Langdon Warner likewise suggested an ambitious acquisition plan that Whiting and MacLean energetically supported. Their collective goal was to create, in Cleveland, a collection of antiquities and art objects representative of all of China’s dynastic periods, along with solid representation of the finest pieces of Korean porcelain and Japanese metalwork and scrolls.124 This would help to distinguish the Cleveland Museum of Art from Midwestern peer museums, and simultaneously make it a competitor or foil to the prestigious collection maintained by the Museum of Fine Art in Boston. Warner

121 Ibid.


123 Ibid.

124 Ibid.
suggested seeking out fine examples of bronzes from the Three Dynasties period (ca. 3rd c. CE) both because of their rarity and the fact that they were “the finest specimens of bronze casting in the world.”\textsuperscript{125} Six Dynasties (ca. 3rd-6th c. CE) era paintings would, in Warner’s opinion, raise the \textit{cachet} of the museum because “no [other] museum or private individual in Europe or America” possessed pieces from this period.\textsuperscript{126} Frescoes from the “Great North Wei Period” (ca. 3rd c. CE) would also distinguish the museum and city of Cleveland, since no examples existed in the US in 1915.\textsuperscript{127} Tang dynasty (618-907 CE) ceramics, representative of art in China’s “Golden Age,” were relatively easy to acquire in Warner’s opinion; despite this, they were still fine examples of “beautiful, delicate and graceful sculpture comparable to the similar art of the West which we love and revere.”\textsuperscript{128} Warner also recommended the acquisition of Song dynasty (960-1279 CE) paintings, since few paintings could “equal the refinement and excellence of the best examples [from] this time.”\textsuperscript{129} Warner also suggested funding an archaeological excavation in western China, where untouched burial mounds possessed “burial paraphernalia of due importance.”\textsuperscript{130} Because of the relative ease of access, Warner would only need some official “permission to search and take away the finds.”\textsuperscript{131} He

\begin{enumerate}
\item Ibid.\textsuperscript{125}
\item Ibid.\textsuperscript{126}
\item Ibid.\textsuperscript{127}
\item Ibid.\textsuperscript{128}
\item Ibid.\textsuperscript{129}
\item Ibid.\textsuperscript{130}
\item Ibid.\textsuperscript{131}
\end{enumerate}

\textsuperscript{131} Ibid. Warner’s timing here is impeccable — he takes advantage of both the turmoil of China’s Republican period and European distraction as a result of World War I.
continued by suggesting that Whiting approve the acquisition of some Ming (1368-1644) and Qing (1644-1911) pieces as well, even though he had less regard for their collective quality. The goal, then, was to create a representative facsimile of China’s long history and success in artistic and material production in Cleveland; the collective cultural cachet of these objects would distinguish Cleveland, and its museum, via the medium of display. By covering “the whole field of Chinese art,” the museum could effect a shift in the “national consciousness.” Further, through this process of acquisition, display, and sympathetic appropriation, the Cleveland Museum of Art would succeed in uplifting the community through the action of “the educational side” of the museum. Such a “glorious collection” would bring nothing but notoriety and praise to the museum, its director and curators, and ultimately to the city of Cleveland at-large.

In another memo to Whiting, Langdon Warner stated that if the museum could raise $50,000 for the purpose of an expedition and buying trip to Asia, then “Cleveland can hold its head high among the many scholars of the world” since it would provide them with “a gift” in the form of a meticulously curated set of ‘Oriental’ art galleries. By taking an interest in this “virgin field,” the museum would be one of the first to recognize the importance of the art and history of that other half of the world, which was so powerful in its day and is on the road to become so again, with personal and material

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132 Ibid.

133 Ibid.

134 Ibid.

interest.”\textsuperscript{136} By focusing upon collecting and displaying fine art objects and antiquities from China, Japan, and Korea, the museum would participate in the gathering of “knowledge” and the “making of history.”\textsuperscript{137} This would likewise bring “international prominence” to Cleveland.\textsuperscript{138} It is very clear that Warner and Whiting believed that art objects and antiquities from Asia were a physical means to constructing an ideological sense of distinction. By referencing the historical importance of Asian nations, Warner cedes that China, Japan and Korea were once prominent and powerful entities, and specific pieces of artwork from these regions could serve as physical testimony to the sophistication of the cultures of production and origin. Cleveland could do nothing but gain and benefit from the display of these superior objects.

Langdon Warner simultaneously corresponded with Worcester Warner, who he viewed as a potential benefactor. Langdon Warner encouraged Worcester Warner to assist in funding either an archaeological expedition in Asia, or a collecting trip; he indicated to Worcester Warner that “the hard times in Japan and China [are] compelling the families to bring out the fine things that have for generations been handed down and [are] considered sacred.”\textsuperscript{139} Twelve days later, Worcester Warner composed a letter addressed to the Trustees of the Cleveland Museum of Art. Warner offered to place $50,000 “at the disposal of the Cleveland Museum of Art … to be expended by authority

\textsuperscript{136} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{137} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{138} Ibid.

of the Trustees as may be decided upon in consultation with the Director.”¹⁴⁰ The objects purchased should originate in East Asian nations, and would collectively be “labeled and known as ‘the Worcester R. Warner Collection.’”¹⁴¹ Worcester Warner further agreed to “endow the collection in the sum of One Hundred Thousand Dollars, the income whereof shall be available for maintaining or increasing the collection, at the discretion of the Trustees.”¹⁴² Along with his letter, Worcester Warner sent a check for $25,000, “the balance to be paid as called for by purchases.”¹⁴³ Whiting was ecstatic, firing off a letter to Jeptha Homer Wade, another supporter (financially and theoretically) of a museum-sponsored “Oriental Expedition,” in which he expressed his “very keen appreciation” of Wade’s and Worcester Warner’s support.¹⁴⁴ Whiting wired Langdon Warner to let him know that he was officially “under engagement to [the museum] for the expedition.”¹⁴⁵ The museum’s Bulletin also feted the donation under the heading of “An Important Gift.” Whiting also published Warner’s letter to the Trustees, along with an explanation, which stated that the gift was effectively unprecedented and extraordinarily important to the continued development of the museum. The brief stated that the:

“gift is notable not only from its amount, but because of the fact that the donor makes no effort to control the formation


¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ Ibid.


¹⁴⁵ Ibid.
of the Oriental collections … [and] the endowment of $100,000 liberally provides for the intelligent development of the Oriental Department year after year, along definite lines. … the Trustees and the staff alike appreciate most fully the unusual opportunity which the broad terms of this gift offer for the creation of an important department of the art of the Far East. The … evident wish of the donor to place the responsibility for selecting the objects purchased in the hands of the [museum] authorities … makes this gift an object lesson which is the more valuable, coming as it does so early in the history of our collections…”146

Museum members learned of the now-funded “Oriental Expedition” in the July 1915 Bulletin; the article also, for the first time, publicly named Langdon Warner as the expedition leader.147 With word of the expedition released, some members of the public wrote to the Plain Dealer, claiming that a museum-sponsored expedition was in bad taste.148 Writing in defense of the museum’s proposed expedition, curator J. Arthur MacLean stated that there was no plan in place to “destroy the regard” that Asians had for Americans.149 Instead, by acquiring fine examples of art objects and antiquities from China, Japan, and Korea, the art museum could function as a space where “the east and the west can meet on mutual ground.”150 MacLean continued, “the joining of the east and the west, China and America, if you like, can be planned in reality [at the museum], because the art of the art of the ancient kingdom of China is comparable to similar art in


148 “Plain Dealer Post Box; The Art of China; Editor Plain Dealer,” Cleveland Plain Dealer August 12, 1915. Clipping located in The Cleveland Museum of Art Archives, Records of the Director’s Office: Frederic Allen Whiting, box 13, folder 135.

149 Ibid.

150 Ibid.
Europe, and *far surpasses that of our own country.*”¹⁵¹ MacLean believed that “sympathetic relations between China and ourselves mean much to American tradesmen, but a sympathetic understanding of Chinese art by American artists means … the inevitable stimulation and advance of art – art which in time to come will know no east nor west but will have for its slogan, ‘To what extent has the sense of beauty been expressed.’”¹⁵² This article appeared to pacify naysayers in the community, prompting Warner to travel to Europe in the summer of 1915 to begin purchasing pieces for the “Oriental” galleries. He would then travel to Asia to begin organizing the groundwork for the expedition.

In 1915, Langdon Warner’s buying trip to Europe on behalf of the Worcester R. Warner fund resulted in the purchase of “two large pieces of Chinese stone sculpture of the first importance,” along with “an interesting series of T’ang Chinese buckles.”¹⁵³ Warner also had a hand in the museum’s ultimate acquisition of a “collection of splendid Tibetan jewelry.”¹⁵⁴ Upon his arrival in Asia, Warner set out to “secure valuable artistic material from original sources.”¹⁵⁵ The focus here on acquiring pieces from “original sources” is telling, as it indicates that Whiting, and the curator of “Oriental” art, J. Arthur MacLean, believed that cultural *cachet* could be retained if objects were removed

¹⁵¹ Ibid. Emphasis mine.

¹⁵² Ibid.


¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.
directly from their place of origin to Cleveland’s art museum. This echoes Michael Taussig’s contention that physical objects could retain some essence of “authenticity,” even when transplanted into a new physical paradigm which effectively served as a “copy” of the original setting.156 These pieces also were desirable, as Warren Cohen indicates, because Americans began to accept art objects and antiquities from Asia as \textit{art}, rather than just examples of regional crafts.157 This broad acceptance served to “grant dignity” to the cultures of origin that produced a given art object.158 These ideas did serve to effectively humanize people from China, Japan and Korea, since Americans typically denigrated and excluded individuals from these regions from participation in mainstream American society.159 By granting that the artwork produced in Asian states was legitimate, American viewers could begin to rethink the stereotypes of ‘backwardness’ imposed on Asian immigrants. Orientalist tropes were certainly still an issue; as Cohen indicates; Americans tended to view Japan, as a rapidly modernizing Asian state, much more positively than China, which Americans granted was a once powerful civilization now in decline.160 However, many American collectors still desired art objects and antiquities from China, since they believed that these pieces represented the technological ability and unique artistic vision of China’s earlier


158 Ibid.

159 Ibid.

160 Ibid.
dynasties. Many of these physical objects were collected as part of some program of Orientalist appropriation; however, as J. J. Clarke indicates, one “peculiar” aspect “in the case of orientalism is the degree to which the colonised ideas have been elevated above those of the colonizer, and have been used to challenge and disrupt the master narratives of the colonising powers.” Clarke’s concept of Orientalist appropriation as “a subversive entelechy … not a unified or consciously organised one” can be applied here, as the careful, appreciative collection and appropriation of art objects and antiquities from Asia could be viewed, in a “subversive” sense, as a means of recognizing and ascribing value to the cultural cachet implicitly linked to art objects and antiquities from Asia. Thus the museum’s expedition could provide the city, and citizens of Cleveland with access to culturally valuable objects, along with data, that would “be of great service to students of Asiatic art and civilization” working abroad. Langdon Warner, presiding over multiple teams and sites, prepared to spend a year abroad in service of the museum’s expedition.

It is useful to note that this expedition served as both an extension and expansion of an already-existent focus on the arts of Asia initiated by Whiting upon beginning his tenure as the Cleveland Museum of Art’s first director in 1913. In the second issue of the Bulletin, published in July 1914, Whiting made his focus on and interest in acquiring art objects and antiquities from East Asia abundantly apparent. The issue contained three


162 Ibid.

163 Taussig, xiii.
full-page black and white photographic images of a Chinese vase, a carved Buddhist votive statue, and carved marble head from China.\textsuperscript{164} In 1915, the Bulletin ran regular features on Asian art and antiquities to correspond with the expedition. Likewise, members of the museum’s library staff worked to enhance the museum’s already-significant holdings of books on Asian art and history. In 1915, the museum claimed to have access to one of “the largest existing librar[ies] of books in English on China and the Chinese.”\textsuperscript{165} It seemed only natural that the museum should have an “important Oriental library,” particularly since the “Oriental section” was expanding, and the expedition was fully supported by benefactors.\textsuperscript{166} The strong focus placed upon elements of Asian art in the Bulletin is representative of the important role museum officials expected these objects to play in helping to distinguish the new museum and the city at-large.

The regular publication of photographs and articles featuring Asian art as a subject is even more remarkable when considered within the context of the museum’s physical growth and development. Whiting not only worked to establish an Asian art department, but also oversaw the construction of the new museum building in Wade Park. Whiting published regular vignettes on recent acquisitions from Asia, the expedition, and expansion of the “Oriental” library alongside selections that chronicled the construction of the new museum. When the museum opened to the public on the

\textsuperscript{164} “Recent Accessions,” Bulletin of the Cleveland Museum of Art 1 no. 2 (July 1914): 3.


\textsuperscript{166} Ibid.
morning of June 7, 1916, plans were already in motion to send Langdon Warner to China. He expected to gain the proper permissions from the Chinese government to excavate in China, as well as in “Chinese Turkestan” in the western part of the country. If these plans fell through, Warner planned to spend time “purchasing [objects] with the money available from Mr. W. R. Warner.” By the summer of 1916, the expedition funding stood at $35,000, with additional funding provided by Worcester Warner for the construction and expansion of an “Oriental” art department at the museum. In the meantime, Langdon Warner made his way to Europe, then China, settling first in the capital at “Peking.”

The “Oriental Expedition” of 1916

In the spring of 1916, Langdon Warner corresponded with Whiting regarding his impressions of China. It was three years since Warner’s last trip to the country, and he noticed many changes. He indicated that “this vastest of countries and oldest of nations” was a paradox of the ancient and the modern, with a new foreign legation quarter constructed mere steps away from the Forbidden City. However, Warner saw great potential for the acquisition of fine art objects and antiquities, since the political shifts

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168 Note from a Meeting of the Subscribers to the Oriental Expedition held at the Union Club on August 10, 1916. The Cleveland Museum of Art Archives, Records of the Director's Office: Frederic Allen Whiting, box 9, folder 110.

169 Statement of the Oriental Expedition Fund, July 31, 1916. This amount, adjusted for inflation, would be valued at around $750,000 USD today.

that occurred in 1912 meant that a new “chapter in [China’s] six thousand years of history is in the making,” and such was, for the Cleveland Museum of Art, an event of “singular good fortune.”

Warner’s task was to lay the groundwork and gain the necessary permissions to engage in an excavation in western China, called by Warner “Chinese Turkestan.” He planned to return to the United States by late Spring, then travel back to Asia for the official expedition in the Fall of 1916. In the meantime, he was free to travel, study, and acquire art objects and antiquities that he deemed of the highest quality for the art museum’s Asian art galleries. As he settled in to his hotel in Beijing’s Legation Quarter in the early Spring of 1916, Warner indicated that the best places to find antiquities were in the “native shops” of the Chinese city, located in a different section of the capital.

Warner made use of his free time, taking a trip to visit the Great Wall, which he waxed poetic about in his letter to Whiting: “Does everyone remember that it was built more than two hundred years before Christ, … and that it encircles China for 1,500 miles?” He wrote of his “astonishment” at the organization necessary to complete such a monumental task. He was also treated to a tour of the city’s Qing-era ritual sites; these included the Temple of Heaven, the Temple of Confucius, the Lama Temple, the Summer Palace and of course the Forbidden City. Warner marveled at the technological advancement of the telescopes and other “old astronomical instruments” on display at

171 Ibid.
172 Ibid.
173 Ibid.
174 Ibid.
the Peking Observatory, stating that it was “the oldest in the world and still in active
service.”\footnote{Ibid.} After his tour of the Forbidden City, Warner exclaimed that the “inimitable
art of China” would do much to “enrich” American museums, and educate
museumgoers in the appreciation of the arts of East Asia.\footnote{Ibid.}

Although delighted with the art and architecture of Beijing, Warner had
difficulty managing the organization and planning of the proposed expedition to
“Chinese Turkestan,” since he repeatedly failed to get the necessary paperwork and
permissions to travel west and excavate. Warner was still optimistic that these
bureaucratic wrinkles could be ironed out, and continued to follow his original itinerary,
travelling to Korea and Japan before returning home to the United States. By July of
1916, Whiting wrote to Warner asking whether or not it was prudent to continue to push
for western China, given the “unsettled conditions” in the country at-large.\footnote{Frederic A. Whiting to Langdon Warner, letter, July 7, 1916, The Cleveland Museum of Art Archives, Records of the Director's Office: Frederic Allen Whiting, box 13, folder 135.} Warner, exasperated, was anxious to get back to Asia, even without the necessary permits,
insisting that the “personal danger … hardly exist[ed]” and that he was “prepared with
[his] whole heart to go” back to China.\footnote{Langdon Warner to Frederic A. Whiting, letter, July 9, 1916, The Cleveland Museum of Art Archives, Records of the Director's Office: Frederic Allen Whiting, box 13, folder 135.} Warner argued that if Whiting still wished to
“make a strong Oriental department (probably the only side on which you can hope to
equal and outclass the older Museums) the next years will bring your best, if not your
only, chance.”††† Warner linked Whiting’s decision to the museum’s success, both in establishing good relations with members of the community and as an “index of [the museum’s] progress.”‡‡‡ Warner laid out his plan – to travel first to Beijing, arrange to do an excavation in “Chinese Turkestan,” then travel to the upper Yangtze River valley. He indicated that the trip would be inexpensive, coming in at only around $5,000; he tantalizing asked Whiting “is it worth $5,000 … [for] important opportunities to purchase, plus a possibility of the expedition to Central Asia?”§§§ Whiting conceded, and in September 1916 Warner returned to China, settling first in Shanghai. Warner indicated that there was little of good quality to purchase in Shanghai, and updated Whiting on his stalled attempts to gain permission and passage to western China. He planned to travel first to Beijing and was hopeful that the expedition could piggyback on a trip to the west with in-country representatives from Standard Oil, or the British American Tobacco Company. After a month’s delay, Warner wrote Whiting, stating that “Turkestan is off for good.” Western China was in upheaval, and recently, local agents arrested a British citizen, imprisoning him simply for being in

††† Ibid.
‡‡‡ Ibid.
§§§ Ibid.

the region without proper permits. Warner scrambled to arrange for a substitute excavation site, selecting “Sianfu in Shensi Province” (likely Xi’an, in modern Shaanxi province). Warner planned to excavate burial mounds in the region; protests by local peasants who did not wish to see the graves disturbed thwarted his plans. Warner, undeterred, settled himself in Beijing where he commenced purchasing objects for the Worcester R. Warner collection. He acquired an “early T’ang head of the best quality,” purchased for forty silver dollars. He also purchased the head of a “Lohan,” or Buddhist figure, that he believed would “draw a great deal of attention to the Museum and is … a thing of such obvious beauty and dignity that the public will admire it.” He also acquired a “stele dating from the first part of the Six Dynasties” period. Writing in late November 1916, Warner provided Whiting with a list of objects acquired along with the prices he paid for these goods. These included a “pair of T’ang or late Sung paintings of rare beauty,” a piece of “Sung white” porcelain, a

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185 Ibid.

186 Ibid.


188 CMA object 17.294.


189 Ibid. This is CMA object 17.293. Purchased for $275 Mexican silver dollars.

190 Ibid. This is CMA object 17.320. Purchased for $350 Mexican silver dollars.

191 Ibid. This is CMA object 17.320. Purchased for $350 Mexican silver dollars.

192 Langdon Warner to Frederic A. Whiting, letter, November 19, 1916, The Cleveland Museum of Art Archives, Records of the Director's Office: Frederic Allen Whiting, box 13, folder 135. These are CMA objects 17.95 and 17.96. Purchased for a negligible price as they were in poor condition and required remounting in Japan.

193 Ibid. This is CMA object 17.299. Purchased for $12 Mexican silver dollars.
rare piece of black decorated Hsu Chou ware, a Ming dynasty-era iron helmet inlaid with gold, a Tang-era horse head “of great spirit,” a yellow and brown striped pottery vessel from the “Sung” dynasty, a “Sung”-era glazed pillow, a “yellow glazed fragment of [a] Lohan pedestal collected by Warner at “His Ling,” along with a stone ceiling fragment from “Yung Kang,” also collected by Warner, several Ming ceramic saucers, numerous pottery pieces from the Yuan through Qing dynasties, and a “Sung or earlier” Buddhist figural head made of iron. The total cost for the goods purchased by Warner in China in 1916, on behalf of the “Oriental” expedition, was $801.50 Mexican silver dollars.

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194 Ibid. This is CMA object 17.301. Purchased for $15 Mexican silver dollars.

195 Ibid. This is CMA object 17.305. Purchased for $9 Mexican silver dollars.

196 Ibid. This is CMA object 17.310. Purchased for $8 Mexican silver dollars.

197 Ibid. This is CMA object 17.295. Purchased for $3 Mexican silver dollars.

198 Ibid. This is CMA object 17.298. Purchased for $2 Mexican silver dollars.

199 Ibid. This is CMA object 17.297. “Collected” by Langdon Warner, no cost.

200 Ibid. This is CMA object 17.321. “Collected” by Langdon Warner, no cost.

201 Ibid. These are CMA objects 17.306/17.307/17.308. Purchased for $6 Mexican silver dollars.

202 Ibid. These are CMA objects 17.299, 17.296, 17.300, 17.302, 17.309, 17.312, 17.313, 17.314, 17.315, 17.316, 17.317, and 17.318.

203 Ibid. This is CMA object 17.319. Purchased for $10 Mexican silver dollars.

Since the archaeological expedition was officially a no-go, Warner traveled to Korea where he proceeded to purchase a “splendid” suit of “court armor,” “two heavily embroidered marriage robes,” and an incredibly fine and rare “bronze triptych of unusual form and great beauty.” Warner “dickered” with the owner of the Buddhist triptych for days, bargaining him down from $1,000 dollars to a final price of $400. Warner crowed that the piece now belonged to the Cleveland Museum of Art, and was “perhaps the best Korean bronze outside of Japan and Korea.” Warner was pleased with the purchase, and told Whiting that with these objects, Cleveland would outpace Boston’s Museum of Fine Arts and New York’s Metropolitan Museum of Art. He stated that “unless Boston and New York buck up they will be out of the running in five years. The middle West will be the Mecca for students of art” from Asia. Late in December 1916, Warner traveled to Japan. He purchased several examples of pottery, “three extremely gorgeous robes,” a suit of “court armor” and a silk suit. Warner predicted that these goods, together, would “make [Cleveland’s] Oriental rooms sing.” Looking over the purchases he made on the (botched) “Oriental Expedition,” Warner was pleased. He indicated that Whiting and the new museum at Cleveland had

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206 Ibid.

207 Ibid.

208 Ibid.


210 Ibid.
“a better start than N.Y. or in fact any museum except Boston.”  Further, Cleveland’s “Korean things are more numerous than those at Boston.” Although Warner was unable to engage in any meaningful archaeological excavation in Asia, he did succeed in accumulating a fine, if rather small, collection of artwork, ceramics, metalwork, jewelry, and religious artifacts from China, Japan and Korea while on the “Oriental Expedition.” Writing in 1917, after his return from Asia, Warner indicated that the expedition permitted the unprecedented opportunity to acquire fine art objects and antiquities on-the-ground, and on behalf of the Worcester R. Warner collection. Warner justified his actions on behalf of the museum because of the “increasingly brisk trade” in art objects and antiquities from China, Japan and Korea in international collecting circles; in this way, the expedition could still be deemed a success. Warner continuously juxtaposed his acquisitions with existent collections at Boston’s Museum of Fine Arts, and New York’s Metropolitan Museum of Art, the only two contemporary American museums to have Asian art collections of similar size and quality to that of the Cleveland Museum of Art. For his part, the benefactor Worcester Warner was pleased with the acquisitions, even in the absence of an archaeological expedition in Asia. By 1917, the Worcester R. Warner collection was a staple at the Cleveland Museum of Art, containing objects from

211 Ibid.

212 Ibid.


214 Ibid.
both China and Korea, since Warner indicated that he was “most interested in” the art and antiquities from those countries.215

The museum, as well, touted the success of the “Oriental Expedition” in its January 1917 Bulletin. The Bulletin featured a piece by Langdon Warner entitled “A Letter from China;” in it, Warner presented in lively detail the lengths he went to acquire these treasures for the museum. Warner wrote that, “at this moment I am sitting in a half-ruined temple with the thermometer well below freezing, clad in a sheepskin. A tin plate serves as a reflector to the candle by which I write.”216 Putting the relative ‘romance’ of Warner’s travel narrative aside, he was clearly impressed by the Buddhist artwork surrounding him, and he indicated that if these pieces were placed in American museums, nobody could walk past “without any responsive quickening” of their pulses, and would likely “be on their knees” before these Buddhist deities.217 He continued, stating that even if “these things were ripped from their setting (sic) and cleansed of the soot from ages of incense and put behind glass, even then they would rank with the splendor of Gothic sculpture.”218

Warner lobbied to promote greater appreciation of Buddhist art in the United States. He said as much in his letter, stating that museum

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217 Ibid.

218 Ibid.
officials needed to do their best to get the public “in such a receptive condition that mere strangeness will not repel them.”

Langdon Warner’s reputation for collecting art objects and antiquities from Asia is interesting to examine since he was such a divisive figure amongst museum officials, collectors, and Asian art dealers working in the early twentieth century. Warner’s distaste for working with individuals from Asia was no secret; as Warren Cohen indicated, Warner “was contemptuous of the Chinese people.” He found north China dirty and dusty, and regularly complained of conditions on the ground, where people lived “in contact with constant filth.” While in Japan, Warner traveled with an introduction from Kakuzo Okakura; this granted him access to private collections and meetings with Japanese art and antiquities dealers. In China, however, Warner was largely on his own – while he had some friends working in various foreign legations, he had to construct his own party and pay for guides into central China, where he believed the best untouched archaeological sites were located. As Cohen indicates, Warner had little compunction about removing (looting) objects from historical and archaeological sites, as he believed that China, as a young nation state, was in no position to care for these art objects and antiquities. However, it is remiss to

219 Ibid.
220 Cohen, 88.
222 Cohen, 89.
223 Cohen, 90-91.
224 Cohen, 99.
oversimplify Warner as a wholly unrepentant Orientalist; as an individual, his motivations and actions belie a more complex persona. While Warner certainly engaged in ethically questionable activities, and while he absolutely did loot objects from historical sites throughout Asia, he likewise expressed a peculiar appreciation for the artistic ability of those who crafted these objects. He had little love for the contemporary citizens of China, but possessed great admiration for the civilizational and artistic achievements of those working in China’s earlier dynasties. Warner also indicated that China, once “so powerful in its day … is on the road to become so again.”

Though he was obviously dissatisfied with China’s current state of governance, in some sense, he believed that China had the potential to reclaim its prior place of international prominence.

While reading and making rubbings of stele outside of the ancient capital of Xi’an, Warner wrote about encountering a stele with both text, “the characters … splendidly cut in deep-graved ideographs,” along with a border comprised of “delicate tracery of flower and beast and demigod with which I had been familiar, through rubbings, for a score of years.” Warner continued, discussing how these rubbings previously hung in his study, his “constant companions, and I had often wondered as I looked at them if I should ever see the originals. As I traced the sensitive outlines of the originals with a reverent finger they seemed more significant of a great past than did

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226 Warner, Long Old Road, 27.
even the solemn and antique characters on the front.” Upon his arrival in Dunhuang, Warner visited the “Caves of the Thousand Buddhas.” Warner waxed poetic when discussing the Buddhas, indicating that he was moved by the “silence so profound and full of meaning that for the first time I understood why I had crossed an ocean and two continents, plodding beside my cart these weary months, to assure myself of their presence.” Warner’s reverie quickly ended after he discovered that Russian soldiers garrisoned at the site left “foul scratches of Slavic obscenity” and other graffiti on the walls amongst the carvings. He lamented the damage, stating that he “was moved to blind anger” at the soldiers’ acts of vandalism, where they “scrawled their insignificant names and regimental numbers across the irreplaceable treasures of ancient China – the only ones that are left to us after the wrack of centuries…”

While Warner at times advocated for the removal of objects from China, it is important to note that he did attempt, in 1913, to persuade the then-president of the Republic of China, Yuan Shikai, of the importance of protecting the country’s cultural patrimony. Warner met with Yuan and worked to convince him to support the creation of an “American School of Archaeology” in China. In addition, Warner recommend that the Chinese establish “a suitable public building” to ensure that art objects would be

227 Ibid.
228 Warner, Long Old Road, 139.
229 Ibid., 140.
230 Ibid.
“safeguarded [and] properly catalogued and exhibited.” Warner also offered his expertise “without [a desire for] remuneration.” Warner left the meeting with a positive sense of regard for Yuan Shikai. However, his concerns about looting, raised in 1913, did not result in any meaningful action on the part of the Chinese government. Perhaps Warner turned toward engaging in looting, in later years, because he believed his advice fell on deaf ears.

While Warren Cohen’s assessment of Langdon Warner as an Orientalist and tool of imperial appropriation is in some sense accurate, this assessment does not examine other facets of Warner’s personality. He denigrated contemporary Chinese people in favor of embracing an idealized past, and later condoned and participated in the looting of objects from Chinese archaeological sites. What is undeniable was Warner’s interest in and regard for art objects and antiquities produced in ancient China. He believed that these pieces were representative of the artistic and cultural achievements of their regions and periods of origin, and that they continued to possess elements of the cultural cachet of these prior periods. Warner viewed these objects on par with equivalent pieces produced in Europe. His affinity and appreciation for ancient Asian cultures and methods of production echoes Maya Jasanoff’s discussions of the “Lucknow Orientalists,” who, as imperial agents, acquired objects for personal enhancement.

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232 Ibid., 44.
233 Ibid.
234 Bowie, 45.
Langdon Warner had little professional training, and limited facility with East Asian languages. However, he styled himself an expert in East Asian art and history, and did so via the medium of successfully acquiring art objects and antiquities for major American collectors and museums. He marveled at the age of the objects he sought, and appreciated the methods of production employed by ancient artisans. He could be boorish, racist, and dismissive of contemporary Asian cultures. Moments later, he might extol the virtues of the flaking paint on an ancient stone Buddha. His story, like the broader tale of American acquisition of art objects and antiquities from Asia, is one of complexity that begs closer examination.

East Asian art objects and antiquities, to Frederic Whiting, Langdon Warner, J. Arthur MacLean and Worcester Warner, represented more than simply the exoticism of the “Orient,” or the strangeness of the ‘other.’ They were of comparable, if not of better, quality, particularly when juxtaposed with pieces of similar age produced in Europe. When displayed in Cleveland’s new Museum of Art, they had the collective power to convey elements of cultural distinction to their new setting. Through display in these new settings, the cultural and civilizational cachet attached to these objects would transfer to the museum. Asian art objects and antiquities were thus valuable commodities; certainly, their collective cultural cachet was equivalent, in the minds of the director and curators, to that of objects produced in Europe.

These objects helped to set apart Cleveland and its new art museum from peer museums located in larger cities like Boston and New York. The focus on acquiring and displaying so many art objects and antiquities from Asia was so pronounced in the early
years of the Cleveland Museum of Art that several trustees were worried; they indicated that they believed that Whiting and MacLean were “rather over-emphasizing” Asian art over pieces from Europe and the Middle East.\textsuperscript{236} Such fears did not deter Whiting, who sanctioned the regular profiling of objects from the Worcester R. Warner in successive issues of the museum’s \textit{Bulletin}. Curator MacLean presented recent acquisitions in the March 1917 issue of the \textit{Bulletin}. The article began with the following statement: “In modern times ancient things are scarce. One often hears the statement nowadays that ancient fine art is next to impossible to acquire, and soon will be entirely unavailable. It may be so, yet in spite of it there comes to us daily this or that fine thing, and our Museum is steadily being enriched to a notable degree.”\textsuperscript{237} These “ancient things” made up the museum’s new Gallery XI, which was, in the space of seven months, “filled to overflowing” with innumerable fine Asian art objects and antiquities.\textsuperscript{238} Readers were cautioned not to view this process of acquisition as one of “undue haste;” instead, these pieces represented the various “phases of art” of China, Japan and Korea, and would delight “the fastidious collector, … interested laymen or the casual visitor.”\textsuperscript{239} By viewing these pieces, one could better experience “contemplation,” which was the key to “Zenism” in Asia.\textsuperscript{240} These pieces, though at times appearing severe in nature, provide


\textsuperscript{238} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{239} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{240} Ibid.
access to a “breadth of … ideas” that could provide insight into an essence of collective humanity.241 Viewing these objects “evokes in us a sympathetic appreciation” which crosses continents, cultures, and the boundaries of time.242 MacLean also extolled the quality of the textiles that Warner purchased in Asia; in speaking about them he indicated that they “make a direct appeal to our minds in the way that the one who wore them directed his unspoken thought ‘to that unhearing and unheard intelligence that broods within the heart of him who listens.’”243 In short, to Frederic Whiting, Langdon Warner, J. Arthur MacLean, and Worcester Warner, viewers in Cleveland could experience the effective ‘essence’ or cultural cachet of these art objects and antiquities from China, Japan, and Korea, regardless of their schooling or familiarity with the histories of the objects’ regions of origin. Further, the historical and civilizational pedigrees of these pieces remained intact, and collectively contributed to the distinction of the museum and the city of Cleveland at-large. These art objects and antiquities were just as valuable, culturally and monetarily, as their counterparts from Europe. Together, through the dual mediums of sympathetic appropriation and public display, they contributed to the social and cultural ‘uplift’ of the city of Cleveland.

241 Ibid.
242 Ibid.
243 Ibid., 50.
CHAPTER VI
PUBLIC EDUCATION AND THE CLEVELAND MUSEUM OF ART: 1914-1930

From the beginning of his association with Cleveland’s Museum of Art, Frederic Allen Whiting, in his capacity as director, implemented new programs and protocols to ensure that the museum would both serve and educate citizens living in the Cleveland metropolitan area. Art objects and antiquities from East Asia were central to this program of public education and service, figuring prominently in programming for local schoolchildren, outreach displays at local libraries, and as the subjects of public lectures. In addition, Whiting pioneered the creation of both a Children’s Bulletin and a Children’s Museum on-site that provided young visitors with an introduction to the objects displayed in the galleries, along with art instruction classes. Two women, Emily G. Gibson and Katharine Gibson, were instrumental in making Whiting’s educational goals a reality. Instructing local (often immigrant) children at the Cleveland Museum of Art was one way to ensure that they would grow up to be what museum historian Evan Turner characterized as “workmen with taste.”\(^1\) Whiting himself argued that the new “Museum should ally itself positively with the industries of Cleveland. By enlarging the outlook of artisans and giving them a needed opportunity to spend their leisure hours pleasantly and

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well, we can positively increase their efficiency.”² Although Whiting publicly characterized the role of the museum as one that would assist in expanding the artistic appreciation and “efficiency” of the city’s working classes, privately he believed that exposure to art could affect even more profound changes on individuals. Whiting privately mused that museums functioned as “community schools for the soul,” and argued that exposure to beautifully crafted art objects and antiquities would help to “develop the aesthetic consciousness” of local “workmen.”³ The new Cleveland Museum of Art, then, should function as a space where citizens from all social and ethnic backgrounds could view finely crafted and aesthetically pleasing art objects and antiquities from around the world.⁴ By focusing upon the creation of a “museum of objects,” Whiting ensured that the new museum space would reflect artistic diversity, represented by beautifully rendered and aesthetically pleasing pieces from varied historical periods and regions.⁵ To establish a habit of museum patronage, Whiting first targeted the city’s youth.

This chapter chronicles the establishment of the educational arm of the Cleveland Museum of Art from 1914-1930, by focusing upon efforts to first attract local children, and then their families. Most of these individuals originated in the city’s working class neighborhoods, clustered around the developing Wade park cultural enclave. Whiting

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² Frederic Allen Whiting, quoted in Turner, 9.


⁴ Ibid., 47.

⁵ Robertson, 42.
used the museum as a tool to educate members of Cleveland’s working classes in civic matters. These efforts were less attempts to ‘Americanize’ members of Cleveland’s immigrant workforce, although the language of Americanization was often employed within the context of discussions of the public role of the museum. Rather, the educational programs offered at Cleveland’s art museum were a facet of a broader progressive endeavor to promote cultural refinement, the enhancement of civic awareness, and education in aesthetic values and appeal amongst members of the working classes. Whiting’s efforts to attract and educate members of the city’s working classes at the museum reflects, in a sense, Andrew Carnegie’s efforts to expose laborers to “elevating influences.”6 Exposure was the first step toward the construction of the well-rounded industrial laborer. The museum, as a public institution, played a primary role in realizing these goals. While objects with global origins were central to producing a new class of “workmen with taste,” art objects and antiquities from East Asia did play an important role in promoting Cleveland-centered cosmopolitanism.7 The role of art objects and antiquities from China, Japan and Korea is thus highlighted here, illustrating the ways their display helped Whiting and curator of “Oriental” art J. Arthur MacLean distinguish the museum, and city at-large through the sympathetic appropriation of the collective pedigrees and cachet of these pieces. Whiting and MacLean believed that “Oriental” art objects could exert a ‘civilizing’ influence upon individuals; through contact with these pieces, Clevelanders of all ages would experience social ‘uplift’ and

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7 Robertson in Turner, 35.
participate in the refinement of the region at-large. Whiting, MacLean, and other leaders believed that engaging local youths and their parents in educational immersion experiences in the museum would ultimately lead to the production of better citizens. These individuals, with broad exposure to the finest examples of globally produced artwork and craft objects, would become more astute laborers, artisans, and American citizens. An analysis of the museum’s program of educational outreach illustrates the efforts of Whiting and MacLean to promote greater public awareness of Asian art objects and antiquities displayed at the museum.

The relative success of these endeavors is presented in a revealing case study featuring a local student, Alfred Chang, who was effectively “re-Orientalized” via the medium of his contact with the museum’s Asian art objects. Chang, the son of Chinese immigrants, spent his free time sketching in the museum’s galleries. After coming to the attention of Katharine Gibson, who worked in the museum’s Education Department, Chang was encouraged to sketch in the Oriental galleries. Gibson’s account of Chang’s “re-Orientalization” as a result of this contact is profiled later in the chapter. The case study provides support for my prior assertion that Asian art, when acquired by curators, and placed on display in the galleries of the Cleveland Museum of Art, saw its collective cachet transferred to the museum via the medium of sympathetic appropriation. This process also had a mimetic facet, so that once placed on display in Cleveland, these pieces, and their attendant collective pedigrees, enhanced the cachet of the museum, and city by default. In this way, art objects and antiquities from Asia were important

8 Katharine Gibson, “Re-Orientalizing Alfred Chang,” Cleveland Plain Dealer, August 28, 1926.
components in the museum’s program of educational outreach. Processes of sympathetic appropriation of the cultural *cachet* linked to these pieces likewise ensured that the museum continued to function as a site of regional cosmopolitanism in the broader Midwest.

**Cleveland: Immigration, Population, and “Americanization”**

In 1920, the population of the city of Cleveland reached a new high, with nearly 800,000 residents calling the city home.⁹ The vast majority of these individuals were foreign born; in 1910, sixty percent of the city’s workforce were born outside of the United States, primarily in Southern and Eastern Europe.¹⁰ Although heavy industry flourished in the city center in the late nineteenth century, most industrial plants abandoned the immediate downtown area by the 1920s, moving to nearby neighborhoods to the south of the city along the Cuyahoga River. The majority of immigrant workers lived within walking distance of their jobs; as such, tenement neighborhoods grew around factory clusters, where the new arrivals and the poorest laborers typically lived.¹¹ As a result, by the early twentieth century, Cleveland’s population dispersed in “amphitheater” fashion, with the least expensive housing at the center, and more expensive, newly constructed housing developments emerging on the city’s fringes for more affluent

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¹¹ Ibid., 45.
workers, and members of management and members of the upper middle class.\textsuperscript{12} Cleveland’s wealthy elites constructed housing along the Euclid Avenue corridor, not far from Wade Park and the site of the Cleveland Museum of Art. Streetcars permitted suburban workers to commute to their jobs downtown; these also granted immigrant laborers access to the city’s cultural enclave at Wade Park.\textsuperscript{13}

Most of the city’s industry focused on manufacturing, with heavy industry employing “nearly one quarter of all Cleveland’s industrial workers.”\textsuperscript{14} These individuals, employed in Cleveland’s steel mills and metal foundries, joined others who worked for J. D. Rockefeller’s Standard Oil Company,\textsuperscript{15} and Charles Brush’s incandescent lamp manufacturing company.\textsuperscript{16} Cleveland likewise had a thriving garment-production industry primarily staffed by laborers from Eastern European countries.\textsuperscript{17} Laborers from Southern and Eastern Europe joined existent communities of British and German immigrants, who arrived in the early to mid-nineteenth century, and Irish immigrants, who migrated in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.\textsuperscript{18} Large numbers of Eastern European Jews also arrived in Cleveland beginning in the

\textsuperscript{12} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{13} Weiner and Bill, 35.
\textsuperscript{14} Weiner and Bill, 41.
\textsuperscript{15} Weiner and Bill, 30.
\textsuperscript{16} Weiner and Bill, 42. Brush was involved with the museum from its inception.
\textsuperscript{17} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{18} Weiner and Bill, 47.
1880s. Following the First World War, African Americans migrated from the rural American south to the city to accept industrial employment. By the 1920s, members of the British, German, and Irish migrant communities were “relatively well integrated” into American society; British and Irish expats likewise had the advantage of language familiarity to aid their social transition. Members of other immigrant communities tended to live in ethnic enclave neighborhoods surrounding the city center. By 1923, there were fifteen recognized ethnic communities dispersed throughout the Cleveland metropolitan area. The ethnic neighborhoods in close proximity to the Cleveland Museum of Art were primarily Italian, African American, and Eastern European communities.

As a result of these large scale migrations, community organizations developed with the goal of helping newly arrived immigrant workers acclimate to life in Cleveland. There were labor and union organizations, as well as 226 fraternal clubs in the city in 1924. The Cleveland Public Library, established in 1869, had, by 1919, several branches established to serve immigrants, and circulated nearly 3.5 million books, more


21 Ibid.


24 Rose, 782.
“per capita than the library of any other large city” at the time.\(^{25}\) Under the leadership of Linda Eastman (1867-1938), the library coordinated with the Cleveland Museum of Art to host objects from its Extensions Department.\(^{26}\) These traveling exhibits, filled with authentic objects of low quality, helped to stimulate interest in the museum amongst library patrons and visitors.

Immigrant children were encouraged to attend local public schools, in an effort to familiarize them with the English language, and, effectively, “Americanize” them. Efforts to promote Americanization of immigrants gained momentum in the 1920s, after the Senate passed Senator William S. Kenyon’s “Americanization and illiteracy bill (S. 3315).”\(^{27}\) The bill called for “immigrants and other non-English speaking aliens” to take mandatory classes to familiarize them with English as a language, and other topics deemed appropriate by the US Secretary of the Interior. The Senate’s passage of Kenyon’s bill illustrates the preoccupation amongst many American politicians with the nation’s looming ‘immigrant problem.’

As a result, community organizations strove to provide English language instruction to new immigrants so that they might slough off stigmas attached to them because of their linguistic foreignness.\(^{28}\) However, most immigrants saw little need to

\(^{25}\) Rose, 783.


\(^{27}\) Harlean James, “Of, by, and for the People,” in The American Review of Reviews LXIII no. 2 (February 1921): 194.

learn English, since they typically lived, worked, and spent their free time with people of
a similar ethnic origin.\(^{29}\) In spite of this resistance, a group in favor of foisting a
curriculum of Americanization on members of immigrant communities met for a
conference in Cleveland in February 1920. In their manifesto, entitled the “Indorse (sic)
Americanization Measure,” they called for a bottom-up program of Americanization that
would target individuals in a one-on-one context.\(^{30}\) Representatives from Cleveland
argued that efforts to “Americanize” members of the population resulted in a transition in
the city, from a “trading post” to a “community.”\(^{31}\) Whereas the idea of a trading post
conveys a sense of impermanence or the transitory, community implies permanence,
interaction, and vested coexistence. One Cleveland representative, Helen Horvak,
“herself a foreign-born American,” indicated that Americanization programs sought to
make the individual immigrant “feel at home.”\(^{32}\) Americanized immigrants, who viewed
the United States as “home,” would, according to Horvak, be more willing to “do
anything for his home – he will work for it, he will fight for it, he will die for it.”\(^{33}\)
Americanization, to Horvak and the other Cleveland representatives, was a necessary step
in forging new citizens from foreign-born immigrants.

Educational liaisons working at the Cleveland Museum of Art in the 1920s
implemented a looser definition of “Americanization;” theirs focused less on linguistic

\(^{29}\) Ibid.

\(^{30}\) “Indorse Americanization Measure,” in *School Life* IV no. 5 (March 1920): 3.

\(^{31}\) Ibid.

\(^{32}\) Helen Horvak quoted in “Indorse Americanization Measure,” 9.

\(^{33}\) Ibid.
training, with greater emphasis placed upon exposing immigrants to fine art objects and antiquities so that they might become better “citizens.” The museum sought to “develop… the child as an active, intelligent citizen of his community, and of the world.”

The founders, director, and curators at the Cleveland Museum of Art granted citizenship greater significance than programs aimed at Americanizing immigrants. Cleveland, as a “city of comparatively recent origin and rapid increase in population,” of “heterogeneous” constitution and “an unusually high percentage of immigrants from many foreign nations” required high quality educational outlets. Citizenship encompassed more than language learning and rote memorization of a particular historical narrative-mythology. It was a transcendent concept that encompassed ideals like artistic appreciation, taste, and cosmopolitanism – all markers of the contemporary American citizen, in the minds of those who worked at the art museum. Art objects and antiquities from around the world served as tools in the museum’s many educational offerings. In this way, educational efforts extended to both natural-born citizens and immigrants at the Cleveland Museum of Art tended to place greater emphasis upon the concept of the American-as-citizen-of-the-world – a mind oriented toward cosmopolitanism was the true embodiment of the American civic spirit.


36 Ibid.

appropriation of the *cachet* linked to art objects and antiquities from Asia were central to the realization of the museum’s cosmopolitan goals, discussed in greater detail below.

Museum Outreach: Children

In the April 1915 *Bulletin* of the Cleveland Museum of Art, an anonymous author (likely Whiting) presented the goals for the “future of the museum;” this included practical issues like the construction of the buildings, and care of the objects donated, as well as loftier ideals.38 The author indicated that the primary “ambition” of the trustees and Director was “to make of The Cleveland Museum of Art an educational center of art and artistic influence in the broadest sense – to stimulate, to encourage, to educate in an appreciation of the beautiful.”39 This declaration appealed directly to those who would eventually patronize the museum; specifically, the citizens of the city of Cleveland. For ten years, elite and middle-class Clevelanders lobbied for the construction of an art museum near the city’s emergent intellectual hub located near “Case School” and “Adelbert College” on the near east side of the city.40 They believed that “centralizing … the art and educational interests” in one area would help to promote growth and “opportunity” in the city at-large.41 By 1915, with the impending opening of the new Museum of Art at hand, it appeared that those goals were nearly realized. Whiting worked hard to take advantage of this publicity and momentum by engaging in


39 Ibid.

40 Anonymous, “The Educational and Artistic Center of Cleveland,” *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, June 25, 1905.

41 Ibid.
unprecedented outreach efforts to raise interest in the museum among members of the city’s lower- and immigrant classes. In November 1915, Whiting devoted the first page of the *Bulletin* to an open letter, “From the Director” to the “Girls and Boys” of the city.\(^{42}\) Whiting first asked if these children were aware of the purpose of the “beautiful large white building … on the hill above the little pond in Wade Park.”\(^{43}\) After stating that it was the new Cleveland Museum of Art, Whiting continued, “How many of you, I wonder, have visited Art Museums in other cities – perhaps in Toledo, or Detroit, or Chicago, or Cincinnati, or Buffalo, or New York, or Boston – or possibly in some far-away city in Europe where you lived when you were smaller than you are now?”\(^{44}\) 

Whiting’s use of space in the *Bulletin*, while primarily distributed to members of the fledgling museum, was nonetheless an important indicator of the personal value he placed on efforts to utilize the museum as a space to educate the region’s children.

Whiting’s focus on smaller regional art museums is indicative of his belief that the Cleveland Museum of Art was, similarly, a regional entity that would have the greatest impact on local attendees. However, by including Chicago, New York and Boston, he likewise indicated that the new Cleveland museum would rival, in quality, the collections of those wealthier institutions. Of equal interest, however, is his direct reference to, and recognition of, the large immigrant population of the city of Cleveland. By affirming without ridicule the immigrant pedigree of many potential attendees,


\(^{43}\) Ibid.

\(^{44}\) Ibid.
Whiting negated the perception that the museum would stigmatize these individuals; he made it clear that all were welcome in the new museum. Whiting’s introduction of himself and the museum to the children of Cleveland continued, with a focus on the role of the museum, which was “a very wonderful thing for a city to have.” He continued, indicating that the museum was “going to be run for all the girls and boys of Cleveland” and would feature “a special Children’s Room, and a Library and a big Lecture Hall where talks about beautiful things and interesting places will be given.” Whiting invited the children of the city to visit the museum after it opened, stating that Mrs. Gibson, the educational liaison, had “many ways to help make your history, geography, art, and other school studies more interesting.”

Whiting’s appeal to the children of Cleveland was unique for several reasons: he first addressed this group, collectively, as relative equals; he indicated that the museum was a space for both learning and fun; and finally, he implicitly welcomed children of all socio-economic and ethnic backgrounds to the museum through his cleverly worded introduction, which recognized that many children might have previously visited museums in their countries of origin. While other contemporary museums, like Boston’s Museum of Fine Arts, New York’s Metropolitan Museum of Art, and Chicago’s Art Institute, also retained educational facilities, none offered a direct invitation to the children living in their respective regions from the director of the museum. Further, the

45 Ibid.
46 Ibid.
47 Ibid.
museum’s educational department was not hindered by outside oversight, as at other institutions where museum education was governed by an affiliated university department.\textsuperscript{48} The publication of this open letter likewise set the standard for contact and outreach between the new museum and the population of the city at-large; it functioned as the first of many attempts by Whiting, MacLean, and Emily Gibson, educational liaison, to attract and then educate members of Cleveland’s working classes at the new art museum. Whiting indicated that it was important to “encourage foreign-born residents of Cleveland” to believe in “their own vital and valuable contribution to the civilization of this country.”\textsuperscript{49} Whiting worked to accomplish this by disseminating positively worded invitations to visit the museum, and through staging regular displays of high quality, aesthetically pleasing objects from around the world at the museum.

Ahead of the official opening of the Cleveland Museum of Art on June 6, 1916, the museum’s educational liaison Emily G. Gibson was already hard at work forging new relationships between the museum and local public school officials. Gibson was one of the first museum officials that Whiting hired. He chose her because of her educational work in Indianapolis, Indiana, where she previously was in charge of a school.\textsuperscript{50} Whiting tasked Gibson with forming meaningful relationships between the art museum’s educational arm, and local schools and libraries.\textsuperscript{51} Under Gibson’s oversight, only

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{48} Thomas Munro and Jane Grimes, \textit{Educational Work at the Cleveland Museum of Art} (Cleveland, Cleveland Museum of Art, 1952), 15.

\textsuperscript{49} Frederic Allen Whiting, quoted in Robertson, 49.

\textsuperscript{50} Robertson, 39.

\textsuperscript{51} Robertson, 40.
\end{footnotesize}
“professional docents” were employed as guides for visiting students.\textsuperscript{52} This differed from many other institutions that either did not offer guides or utilized the services of volunteers.\textsuperscript{53} Gibson’s efforts were largely successful; in 1915 the “Cleveland Board of Education assigned a teacher to the museum whose duties included working with the art directors in the public schools.”\textsuperscript{54} Gibson also succeeded in convincing the Cleveland Public Schools superintendent to allow students to visit the museum “during class time.”\textsuperscript{55} Whiting also sought to establish a museum presence in local libraries; after gaining support from Linda Eastman, vice-librarian of the Cleveland Public Library system, he encouraged Gibson to visit local branch libraries to build relationships in the city’s discrete ethnic neighborhoods.\textsuperscript{56} Gibson visited numerous Cleveland Public Library “branch libraries;” her goal was to encourage library clubs to either host speakers from the museum or house traveling displays of objects.\textsuperscript{57} Gibson planned to bring art objects and antiquities to the libraries, along with a “lantern-slide” show to help provide background on the history of regions where these objects originated.\textsuperscript{58} One of the earliest traveling exhibitions, initiated in 1915, included the display of a small group of

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{52} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{53} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{54} Wittke, 61.
\item \textsuperscript{55} Robertson, 40.
\item \textsuperscript{56} Robertson, 43.
\item \textsuperscript{57} Anonymous, \textit{The Bulletin of the Cleveland Museum of Art} 2 no. 3 (November 1915): 6.
\item \textsuperscript{58} Ibid.
\end{itemize}
Babylonian and Assyrian cuneiform tablets “dating from 2800 B.C. to 525 B.C.”

Gibson profiled the mini-exhibition in the museum’s Bulletin. Gibson indicated that the collection of tablets was placed on display in the Woodland Branch Library, part of the Cleveland Public Library system; the objects would later travel to other CPL branches.

Museum officials hoped that these “rare and unusual” objects, placed in a high-traffic, public location, would trigger public interest in the museum at-large.

It is important to highlight the choice of the Woodland branch library as the site for the museum’s first traveling exhibition. In the early twentieth century, the Woodland branch library, as a satellite of the larger Cleveland Public Library system, was situated in an old Methodist chapel at what is now 5806 Woodland Avenue in the city of Cleveland. The branch was also located just over two miles from Cleveland’s so-called “Industrial Valley,” where John D. Rockefeller’s Standard Oil Refinery no. 1 was located along the Cuyahoga River. According to existent data, the neighborhood was also ethnically diverse. It was home to African Americans, as well as Italian and Jewish immigrants. The purposeful selection of the Woodland branch library illustrates the goals of both Whiting and Gibson; to stimulate interest in the new museum among members of underserved (and largely immigrant) communities living adjacent to the

60 Ibid., 10-11.
61 Ibid., 11.
63 “City of Cleveland Ethnic Settlements, Circa 1923.”
city’s industrial heart. When visiting their local branch library, these individuals could view examples of artifacts owned by the new museum. Museum officials also introduced local children to programs available at the museum: free films, drawing classes (for youths and adults), lectures, and a dedicated children’s museum. Gibson also regularly visited local schools, eventually making agreements with instructors to allow students to visit the museum during school hours.64 This endeavor was presumably a success; after the museum officially opened in the summer of 1916 immigrant children from the Murray Hill neighborhood of “Little Italy,” located less than a mile from the new museum, arrived in droves. More impressive to Gibson was that these children were accompanied to the museum by their mothers, “who had left their washing and other household duties for a glimpse of [the museum’s] objects.”65

Director Whiting ensured that a room on the ground floor of the museum was dedicated to housing authentic objects (of low quality) that young visitors to the museum were encouraged to view and sometimes handle. Whiting hoped to eventually parlay the on-site Children’s Museum into an off-site, stand-alone entity; unfortunately, this goal was never realized.66 However, the museum did maintain the internal Children’s Museum as a site for lectures and school visits. It was located behind the museum’s ground-floor auditorium, and was a substantial 85’ x 33’.67 Gibson’s office was adjacent

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64 Robertson, 40.

65 Emily Gibson, quoted in Robertson, 40.

66 Robertson, 42.

to this space. Here, in addition to encountering art objects and antiquities, children were invited to watch short movies, and were encouraged to take part in on-site drawing classes. One of the first major gifts to the Children’s Museum was made by Daijiro Ushikubo, manager of the Japanese art and antiquities firm Yamanaka and Company’s New York office. Ushikubo was a close friend of Charles Lang Freer, and was thus acquainted with Whiting. In an effort to strengthen the relationship between the Yamanaka firm and the museum, in 1916 Ushikubo made a substantial gift of 32 antique Japanese dolls and other toys to the Children’s Museum. Whiting was delighted, and announced this generous gift in the February 1916 edition of the museum’s Bulletin. The Ushikubo dolls were a useful collective tool to introduce children to the art and craft of Japan, before admitting them to the galleries at-large.

Between 1916 and 1930, extraordinary contact was made with local schoolchildren as a result of the outreach efforts of the staff of the museum’s Educational Department. Although the architect of the museum’s educational plan, Emily G. Gibson, died in January of 1917, she was replaced first by her daughter, Katharine Gibson (Wicks), who was succeeded in 1921 by Rossiter Howard, titled “curator of education.” Katharine Gibson worked to familiarize the community with available resources and programs at the Cleveland Museum of Art. Gibson outlined the success of these

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69 Wittke, 62.


71 Wittke, 62.
programs, directed at children and adults, in a report submitted on June 7, 1917. Gibson indicated that, in the museum’s first year, “266 classes” of students from regional schools visited the museum as part of an informal class trip. The school groups were most interested in visiting the ancient Egyptian galleries, and gallery of European armor; the “Oriental” galleries were largely ignored by visiting teachers, to Gibson’s chagrin.

Students from “city schools [as well as] the private, parochial, and suburban schools” regularly visited the museum in its early years. Student visitors to the museum experienced docent lectures, as well as drawing lessons. In addition, student visitors to local branch libraries received both an introduction to objects and experienced informative lectures about those objects on-site. Between January 1915 and June 1917, the museum staged fifteen exhibits in libraries and schools; over 351 classes of students worked in the Museum from September 1916-June 1917. In its first year of operation, 8,434 students visited the museum on school trips, while 7,580 attended special “Saturday Programmes for Children” on-site. While many of those children were likely repeat visitors, the high numbers nonetheless illustrate the relative success of the museum’s early efforts to attract local schoolchildren. In 1919, the museum started

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73 Ibid.


76 Ibid.

77 Ibid., 105.

78 Ibid.
offering drawing classes for “specially gifted children;” officials expanded this program in 1921 in the form of a scholarship for particularly gifted students. Members of the museum staff also held essay contests for visiting students; one entry, published in 1920, was the work of student Thomas O’Neil, who chose to write about the decorative and cultural elements present in a statue of a “Chinese Fu” animal. In 1923, Gibson oversaw an “experiment” testing “how museum material [could] be used to the greatest [educational] advantage.” Gibson’s goal was to determine the best methods for educating children of varying academic capability at the museum. The resulting publication, written by Marguerite Bloomberg, illustrates the centrality of youth education within the broader educational mission of the museum. Later, in 1926, a young man named Alfred Chang, the son of Chinese immigrants, took advantage of the drawing classes offered at the museum; his experience, as a case study, is examined below. It serves as a telling example of the power of sympathetic appropriation at the museum, whereby, through processes of *mimesis*, the cultural-historical pedigrees and attendant *cachet* of art objects and antiquities from East Asia were absorbed. Chang, a Chinese-American student, experienced what Katherine Gibson described as “re-Orientalization” after coming into contact with objects displayed in the museum’s Oriental galleries.

His experience took place in 1926, ten years after the museum opened to the public.

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79 Wittke, 62.


82 Katharine Gibson, “A Museum’s Search,” *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, March 26, 1926.
Asian art objects and antiquities figured prominently in the museum’s permanent collection, and Chang’s encounter with them, and subsequent “re-Orientalization,” illustrates the ideological power ascribed to them by museum officials. Chang’s experience likewise recognizes the museum staff’s achievements in the field of educational outreach directed at local youth. Staff members, available on-site throughout the school year and over summer recess, encouraged local children to visit the galleries, attend programs, and even take art instruction classes. Gibson hoped that visiting youths would become “Museum child[ren],” in possession of stronger observational skills as a result of their regular contact with objects in the museum’s collections.

Efforts to stimulate interest in the museum among the city’s school-aged population continued through the 1920s. Staff members also staged traveling exhibitions, called “Extension Exhibits” at local public library branches. Gibson also made objects available for display in local public schools, as long as the district possessed appropriate cases. The displays featured either authentic but low quality art objects and antiquities, or plaster casts. Asian art played an important role in Extension displays; vintage Japanese ceremonial dolls and “Chinese miniature models” were popular objects. In 1926, the museum staged an educational display of Japanese block prints by Utamaro,

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83 Ibid.
84 Ibid.
86 Ibid.
87 Ibid.
88 Ibid.
along with block printing tools. In her profile of the artist and exhibit, Katharine Gibson indicated that the prints possessed “a perfection of handicraftsmanship almost incomprehensible to the European.” Gibson believed that the display of unparalleled prints alongside printmaking tools was of supreme significance, since it illuminated the nature of the printmaking process for local visitors. The Cleveland Museum of Art’s own extension exhibitions were so successful at garnering public interest that officials at other local museums took note. Karl Bolander, director of the Columbus (Ohio) Gallery of Fine Arts, wrote to Rossiter Howard in 1926 asking to borrow a set of Japanese block printing tools for a proposed series of school visits. In addition, he wanted some “color proofs” or finished prints to illustrate how the blocks worked. Howard complied, and Bolander used the blocks in a lecture entitled “An Avenue to Art Appreciation through Block Printing,” delivered to over “thirty-five thousand people;” twenty thousand of those individuals were public school students in Columbus. The lecture (and tools) were so successful that Bolander wanted to borrow them for several more months. Rossiter Howard was reluctant but acquiesced, permitting Bolander to keep the items until January of 1928. Howard’s impatience to get the items back was apparent in his

89 Katharine Gibson, “Prints by Utamaro,” Cleveland Plain Dealer, July 13, 1926.

90 Ibid.

91 Ibid.


93 Ibid.

reply; he stated that members of the Cleveland museum’s educational staff would “really like to use it here too, so we hope you will send it back in early January.”

Additionally, the Cambridge Museum for Children, located in Cambridge, Massachusetts, loaned a set of Japanese dolls to the Cleveland Museum of Art. The museum displayed the dolls in Cleveland in April 1927 as part of a broader initiative to develop interest in Japan and Japanese culture among local citizens. They were likely vintage pieces, dating from the 19th century, and were well-received in Cleveland.

Although local schoolchildren initially displayed lukewarm interest in Asian art, their views changed by the early to mid-1920s. Interest in Asian art did steadily increase following the First World War, probably as a result of expanded media coverage of China and Japan. Dr. Sun Yat-sen, president of the new Republic of China, was lauded in Cleveland’s Plain Dealer as the “George Washington of China” with regard to his efforts to build a modern unified nation state in the region. Americans likewise viewed Japan positively, primarily because of its rapid military modernization and subsequent expansion into northeast Asia under the Taisho and Showa leaders. Along with greater media attention to Asia came increased local interest in learning more about the cultures of China and Japan. In this way, the museum’s on-site and extension exhibits catered to

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96 Jessie Sherwood to Ida Lee Rogers (Secretary of CMA’s Education Department), letter, May 16, 1927, The Cleveland Museum of Art Archives, Records of the Director's Office: Frederic Allen Whiting, box 59, folder 1011.

97 “The War in China,” Cleveland Plain Dealer, April 24, 1922.

public demand, while simultaneously educating local people on the rich civilizations of Asia. It is clear that museum administrators were aware of the popularity of Asian art objects among members of the museum-going public. In the case of Cleveland, Whiting, and new curator of “Oriental” art Theodore Sizer\textsuperscript{99} continued to promote art appreciation via the medium of art objects and antiquities from East Asian nations.

**Museum Outreach: Adults**

The museum’s educational mission did not stop with local children; museum staff likewise heavily courted adults. In addition to making the public aware of the museum’s many educational and recreational activities directed at children, the museum staff worked to first stimulate interest among local adults in the museum; later, these visitors were targeted as potential new members. The *Bulletin* chronicled these museum initiatives, which included providing public access to a large and growing art library, staging free public lectures on weekend evenings, promoting the annual *May Show* (discussed previously), hosting concerts in the museum, forming a Print Club for members, offering the museum’s conference room to clubs and individuals, and holding special exhibitions (often with related items for sale to the public). The museum library was a special focus of the July 1915 *Bulletin*, where the growing collection was described; in particular, the new library focused on acquiring more books on “Oriental”

\textsuperscript{99} Theodore Sizer replaced J. Arthur MacLean in 1922, after MacLean departed the museum for a new job as the Assistant Director and Curator of Oriental Art at the Art Institute of Chicago. For more information see the *The Bulletin of the Cleveland Museum of Art* 9 no. 2 (February 1922): 30-31.
art. The museum staff goal was to create an “important Oriental library” at the museum; these books would ultimately “serve” both the staff and “general public.”

Whiting initiated the new museum’s lecture series with a very distinguished guest speaker: Laurence Binyon, a poet and specialist in “Oriental” art from the British Museum. Binyon delivered his lecture, entitled The Art of Asia, in Cleveland on November 20, 1914, as arranged by Charles Lang Freer. Whiting anticipated a large audience for the lecture, and initiated ticket distribution “by invitation.” The lecture attracted three hundred Clevelanders, prompting MacLean to state that he believed Binyon “succeeded … in interesting [locals] in ‘The Art of Asia.’” The lecture further stimulated public interest in the new museum and its artistic, cultural, and recreational offerings. Binyon gave his lecture before the museum opened to the public; however, after 1916, the museum regularly staged public lectures featuring both local speakers and those of national and international renown.

By 1917, the Cleveland Art School regularly offered sketching classes in the museum’s galleries; these were open to children and adults. Educated professional

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101 Ibid.
103 Ibid.
105 Wittke, 67.
106 Wittke, 62.
docents delivered gallery talks. These offerings undoubtedly helped the museum to achieve impressive attendance numbers in its first year of existence. The museum’s Inaugural Exhibition, staged from June 7-September 20, 1916, was crowed about in the Plain Dealer and resulted in impressive attendance numbers. Staff writers at the Plain Dealer proclaimed the museum’s opening to a “big crowd;” first-day attendees were “dazzle[d]” by the speakers, events, and items on display.\textsuperscript{107} It was, in sum, “a brilliant scene.”\textsuperscript{108} Attendance at the Inaugural Exhibition, which ran for just over three months, was tallied at 191,547, with 9,000 people attending the last day of the exhibit.\textsuperscript{109} The museum, from mid-1916 to mid-1917, averaged over 1,200 visitors per day; on “free” days, the museum averaged over 2,000 visitors, and on Sundays more than 4,000 people stopped by the new museum of art.\textsuperscript{110} The attendance for the first year “exceeded 376,000,” an impressive number given that the population of the city in 1916 was roughly 600,000 people.\textsuperscript{111} These numbers provided “convincing evidence of the fact that … the Museum ha[d] opened the door to a new field of enjoyment and benefit” to the citizens of Cleveland.\textsuperscript{112} The numbers also indicated that the museum both “made a place for itself

\textsuperscript{107}Anonymous, \textit{Cleveland Plain Dealer}, June 7, 1916.

\textsuperscript{108}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{109}Wittke, 45.


\textsuperscript{111}Wittke, 45. Population information for Cleveland can be found at: http://physics.bu.edu/~redner/projects/population/cities/cleveland.html.

\textsuperscript{112}Ibid.
in th[e]community” and “taken enviable rank among the great museums of the
country.”  

Because of the popularity of the new museum, in 1922, Director Whiting called
for a Membership Drive. The drive’s success rested heavily upon promotion of the
educational benefits of the museum. In the 1920s, the museum was typically open daily
from 9 am to 5 pm; Wednesdays the hours were 9 am to 10 pm, and Sundays the museum
was open from 1 pm to 10 pm.  

Free days were Wednesday, Saturday, Sunday, and public holidays; other days admission was 25 cents for all except members and
children. The 25 cent admission fee was relatively dear in 1922; it is equivalent to
about $3.50 in contemporary currency. Because of this cost, regular visitors were
encouraged to become members. Museum staff writers contextualized the drive as a “call
for help” in the Bulletin, where the impact of the museum on the city (and citizens) was
situated in the context of educational asset. In its first six years of existence, the
museum helped Clevelanders “to develop their sense of aesthetic values,” along with
educating them in the “necessity of beauty as an important element in daily life.” The
museum also highlighted its impact on the city’s youth; children who visited the museum

115 Ibid.
117 Anonymous, The Bulletin of the Cleveland Museum of Art 9 no. 7 (July 1922): 120.
118 Ibid.
were “prepared” to be “better citizens with a keener sense of real values in life.” The emphasis on citizenship forms a central component of the museum’s broader efforts to provide meaningful education to Cleveland’s public. While some leaders sought to “Americanize” foreigners, the director and staff members at the Cleveland Museum of Art offered a nuanced alternative. Instead of focusing upon building or constructing new Americans (as a subjective identity based upon familiarity with patriotic factoids and facility with the English language), museum staff sought to implement progressive elements of citizenship. Citizens were modern and cosmopolitan. Educational exposure to cultural elements produced by people from other global regions was a key resource in promoting this sort of “cosmopolitan citizenry” derived from exposure to “transnational” elements. By placing ancient, aesthetically pleasing Asian art objects and antiquities on display in the museum, Whiting strove to promote “sympathetic understanding” and educated cosmopolitanism in Cleveland. Whiting thus called for the initiation of an “Art Museum Week” to be held in October 1922. During “Art Museum Week,” the museum’s hours were extended from 9 am to 10 pm every day; Sunday hours remained unchanged. The museum likely had extended hours several nights a week to welcome those who worked in local industries to visit the museum in their off-hours.

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119 Ibid.

120 Glenn, 200.

121 Katharine Gibson, “Art Through the Ages,” Cleveland Plain Dealer, January 15, 1926.

To encourage visitors to patronize the museum during “Art Museum Week,” the staff produced documents that illustrated the importance of the museum to both the city at-large, and citizenry; they placed specific focus upon the educational benefits of the museum. One document trumpeted the museum’s substantial attendance record, indicating that between 1916 and 1922 “nearly 24,000 school children came [to the museum] for special instruction. Over 30,000 persons attended lectures. Over 15,000 children attended entertainments… This and much more was done without a dollar of support from taxation.”

Visitors were next encouraged to “GET ACQUAINTED WITH YOUR MUSEUM BECOME A MEMBER.” In addition to asking people to visit the museum and join as members, Whiting called for the creation of an “Art Museum Week Contest for the Boys and Girls.” Children were encouraged to write letters of no more than 200 words addressing the prompt “What I enjoy most at the Art Museum.” Winners would receive an annual membership to the museum; second place letter-writers would receive a one-year subscription to the Bulletin.

Drawing in more annual members was the main objective of “Art Museum Week.” There were a number of available membership levels, ranging from $10 a year to $25,000. In 1922, the museum counted 4,332 members; 3,607 of those were annual

123 Ibid.
124 Ibid. Capitalization theirs.
126 Ibid.
127 Ibid.
members (paying $10 annually). Annual members at the $10-$25 levels could expect to receive a subscription to the museum’s *Bulletin*, as well as enjoy free entry to the museum on “paid” days, along with invitations to member-only lectures and other activities. Whiting also created a new class of membership, labeled “Industrial Membership.” Companies could purchase an “Industrial Membership” for their employees for $25 annually; they would receive two bulletin subscriptions, two museum calendars, two weekly postcards, five membership tickets, and fifty guest tokens. The membership campaign relied heavily upon the museum’s successful record of public outreach (to both local children and adults) and the successes of its educational mission. The campaign was ultimately a success, incurring $1,063.87 in expenses for the museum; with profits (from 1,074 new memberships) exceeding $13,000. In this sense, Whiting and other museum staff members relied upon the museum’s impact on local citizens to justify both the museum’s existence in industrial Cleveland, and to call for more public support of the institution.

Throughout the 1920s, the museum staff worked to promote the availability of adult-centered educational resources. These included public lectures, docent-led tours, on-site drawing classes, concerts, displays of dance, and regularly changing, dynamic


artistic installations.\textsuperscript{132} Asian art played an important role in the museum’s adult-centered outreach efforts throughout the 1920s. Lecture series were important methods of instruction at the museum. In 1920, museum staff initiated a “course” on “Oriental Art,” that featured lectures by experts like Langdon Warner, who discussed the “Oriental Expedition,”\textsuperscript{133} and Stewart Culin, an ethnographer, who presented a talk on “The Art of Tibet and Corea.”\textsuperscript{134} In her “Art Museum Glimpses” column in the \textit{Cleveland Plain Dealer}, Gibson regularly profiled the objects from the museum’s rich Asian art collections. Her features presented Japanese bronze mirrors and ceremonial robes, as well as swords. Gibson also profiled Buddhist objects from China and Japan, paying special attention to a lacquered figure of “Yakushi, the Buddhist god of healing,” an object produced with “consummate skill” that any visitor could not “fail to be impressed by.”\textsuperscript{135} Another object, described as a “Kwannon” by Gibson (likely Kannon/Guanyin, goddess of mercy), invited visitors to explore “a new world” of artwork.\textsuperscript{136} Gibson posited that although American viewers might find “the old art of Japan or the still older art of China as strange and incomprehensible,” education and encounters could nullify and even reverse these reactions.\textsuperscript{137} Asian art objects and antiquities offered adult

\textsuperscript{132} Munro and Grimes, pp. 54-58.

\textsuperscript{133} “Calendar,” \textit{The Bulletin of the Cleveland Museum of Art} 7 no. 10 (December 1920): 163.

\textsuperscript{134} “Calendar,” \textit{The Bulletin of the Cleveland Museum of Art} 8 no. 2 (February 1921): 38.

\textsuperscript{135} Katharine Gibson, “Yakushi, God of Healing,” \textit{Cleveland Plain Dealer}, December 4, 1925.

\textsuperscript{136} Katharine Gibson, “Kwannon,” \textit{Cleveland Plain Dealer}, January 23, 1925.

\textsuperscript{137} Ibid.
visitors an “invitation” to experience “the orient – here in Cleveland.” Some of the museum’s Asian art objects likewise inspired the creation of original music, played in concerts on site. Gibson described several “Kara-shishi” or “Foo Dogs” that served as the inspiration for a musical piece written by the museum’s former Curator of Music, Dougas Moore.

In the 1920s, the museum also started to publish monographs under the auspices of its own homegrown press, in an effort to both promote the collections and provide valuable educational material on the objects held on site. One of the first books published by the museum press was Langdon Warner’s *Japanese Sculpture of the Suiko Period*. The hardcover volume was prepared in Cleveland, and was published by Yale University Press as a courtesy. The book measured a large 16” by 13”, and included 145 full-page photographic plates of Japanese art objects and antiquities. The museums old the book at a cost of $30, equivalent to over $400 in contemporary USD, adjusted for inflation, making the book prohibitively expensive for most people. The volume was, however, available for public viewing in the library. The decision to publish such an expensive volume does illustrate the tremendous focus placed upon Asian art objects and antiquities by the director and staff of the Cleveland Museum of Art. It likewise shows that Whiting and other staff members viewed Cleveland’s art museum as an important

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138 Ibid.

139 Katharine Gibson, “Foo Dogs,” *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, August 6, 1926.


arbiter in the appropriation of Asian art objects and antiquities, and in the subsequent production of knowledge about those objects.

Museum attendance continued to climb between 1920-1930, peaking at 315,416 in 1929 (of interest given the economic instability of the period).¹⁴² In the previous year, the museum published a second edition of its popular Handbook, lushly illustrated with black-and-white photographs of objects from the permanent collection, as well as museum maps. The book, sold on-site for 50 cents, provided museum visitors with a self-guided tour of the museum. At this time, three of the museum’s galleries, XII, XIII, and XIV, out of fifteen total galleries, were devoted to the display of “Oriental Art” objects.¹⁴³ Visitors were thus strongly encouraged to patronize these galleries. Descriptions of photographed objects from the collection referenced the objects’ great age, or pedigree; a Khmer head featured a description that touched upon the “remarkable civilization” of the region that lasted “for more than eight centuries.”¹⁴⁴ Another piece, a gilt lacquer figure of a Buddha, featured a caption that indicated that “the annals of Chinese art go back … three thousand years.”¹⁴⁵ Museum authors stated that value was measured in both the content of the materials used to produce these objects, along with the civilizational pedigree and cachet they both represented and, in some sense, still


¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 59.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 66.
possessed. Taken together, these elements could serve as transformative educational models in the city of Cleveland.

An Educational Case Study: “Re-Orientalizing Alfred Chang”

In 1926, ten years after the Cleveland Museum of Art officially opened to the public, *The Plain Dealer* chronicled the story of a young Chinese-American student named Alfred Chang. The author of the piece was Katharine Gibson, educational liaison at the museum who worked under the direction of Frederic A. Whiting. Presented as part of Gibson’s weekly *Plain Dealer* series *Art Museum Glimpses*, Chang’s story, like others penned by Gibson, was intended to demonstrate to members of the public the myriad ways that the museum effected positive social and cultural change on the North Coast. In her piece entitled “Re-Orientalizing Alfred Chang,” Gibson argued that Chang, a Chinese-American, and aspiring young artist with some talent, was, through his visits to the museum, and encounters with the Asian art objects and antiquities displayed there, effectively “re-Orientalized.”¹⁴⁶ This alleged “re-Orientalization” occurred as a result of Chang’s repeated visits to the Cleveland Museum of Art; during his visits, Chang spent time sketching and painting objects housed in the museum’s “Oriental” galleries. The so-called “re-Orientalization,” as chronicled by Gibson, serves as compelling evidence of the success of the Cleveland Museum of Art’s purposeful program of acquisition, display, and, ultimately, appropriation, of the historical pedigrees of *objets d’art* and antiquities originating in East Asia (what I call sympathetic appropriation). For curator Whiting and Gibson, the power of the historical pedigrees and attendant *cachet* of these physical

examples of East Asian “high culture” was essentially transferred to the museum via the medium of display; in this way, Chang, a Chinese-American, could be effectively “re-Orientalized” through contact, and, by default, the cultural cachet present in these objects could be transferred to the museum, and the city of Cleveland, enhancing the refinement of the region at-large.147

Chang’s experience serves as a useful lens for examining the methods employed by the museum’s first director, Whiting, and curator of Asian art J. Arthur MacLean, to secure fine examples of art objects and antiquities from China and Japan to be used as educational and ‘civilizing’ tools in the museum to benefit the Cleveland at-large. Whiting and MacLean sought, through acquisition and display, to channel and co-opt, via processes of mimesis,148 the intrinsic cultural-historical pedigrees of these objects and antiquities from East Asia. These objects were invested with and representative of the civilizational superiority of China and Japan; as such, the display of such objects in Cleveland would ultimately enhance the cultural cachet of the city at-large. Alfred Chang’s experience, as presented by Gibson, serves as an effective lens to view and better understand the politics of acquisition, display, and appropriation enacted at the Cleveland Museum of Art in the early twentieth century.

Alfred Chang’s experience at the Cleveland Museum of Art highlights the preoccupation of the director, curators and officials with the role that Asian art objects


and antiquities played in both the new museum space and in the Cleveland metropolitan area at-large. From the time of his appointment as director of the museum in 1913, Whiting sought to develop and enhance the cultural and civilizational realities of the city of Cleveland.\textsuperscript{149} Members of the public were ecstatic when groundbreaking commenced for the new Cleveland Museum of Art in 1913. They believed that Cleveland would achieve a state of refinement through balancing the existent infrastructure of manufacturing and subsequent economic power with the practical application of a broad program of public education in the value of art. Together, this “complete and harmonious blending of the intellectual and practical” would succeed in creating a newly “refined” city, with a population to match.\textsuperscript{150}

Alfred Chang first visited the Cleveland Museum of Art in the Spring of 1926. He arrived with a small portfolio of pen and ink drawings; although the execution was fine, the subject matter, according to Gibson, was lacking, being largely comprised of facsimiles of advertisements, showing clearly “the effect of films, posters, and magazine covers on receptive small minds.”\textsuperscript{151} After reviewing Chang’s work, the head of the Children’s Museum asked him if he had ever worked with Chinese brushes and ink. Chang had not – and was promptly given a lesson using these “traditional” artistic tools. He was then escorted to the museum’s “Oriental” galleries, where he was encouraged to emulate the artistic styles of the objects on display. Following this first lesson, Alfred

\begin{quote}
\textsuperscript{149} “Authority on Art to Head Museum” \emph{Cleveland Plain Dealer}, February 18, 1913.
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
\textsuperscript{150} Ibid.
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\textsuperscript{151} Gibson, “Re-Orientalizing Alfred Chang.”
\end{quote}
returned weekly to work on enhancing his portfolio, generally sketching, drawing and painting in the Chinese and Japanese galleries. Gibson indicated that “the character of his work changed rapidly… No more did one see beaming countenances from some soap or tobacco advertisement, but rather careful studies of objects in the oriental galleries.”152 A museum official, commenting on Alfred’s progress, stated that he was, as a result of his visits, and exposure to these art objects and antiquities from East Asia, “getting to be Chinese again.”153 This indicates that museum officials believed that the Chinese and Japanese antiquities and art objects placed on display in Cleveland managed to retain elements of the historical pedigrees of their regions of origin. Further, it shows that these officials believed that some of the inherent cultural cachet linked to these objects could be appropriated, and even transferred, to visitors to the galleries. Chang’s experience likewise highlights the perceived success, among members of the museum staff, of educational outreach efforts to stimulate interest in the museum among local schoolchildren.

According to Katharine Gibson, Alfred Chang regularly visited the Cleveland Museum of Art for the better part of 1926. During that time, Chang “had made decided progress” in his pursuit of artistic excellence, producing sketches and brush paintings of his pet cat and her kittens, along with other little domestic visual vignettes.154 Gibson waxed poetic on the presumed squalor of Chang’s home life, which she assumed was

152 Ibid.
153 Ibid.
154 Gibson, “Re-Orientalizing Alfred Chang.”
spent “alone in one of the sweltering slum districts of the city surrounded by ugliness on all sides…”155 Chang, Gibson stated, was undeterred by the poverty that surrounded him; he “apparently felt no sense of distress or privation,” staying “in his tiny scrap of yard day after day,” doing nothing but drawing with his “Chinese brushes and ink.”156

Clearly, to Gibson, Chang’s visits to the museum were representative of a kind of retreat from the boredom and economic hardship that characterized (her impression of) his everyday life. By visiting the galleries at the Cleveland Museum of Art, Chang “was persistently made conscious of his own peculiar heritage … through the Chinese art put before him” as he sketched and painted, whiling away afternoons that might otherwise be spent alone in a slum.157 Gibson’s depiction of Alfred Chang and his imaginary home life is troubling; it speaks to the persistence of familiar tropes that serve to place the immigrant into the status of “other.” It is also, however, indicative of a distinction that museum officials, and members of the public, made between individuals and objects from East Asian nations.158

Objects were apparently immune from the kind of social discrimination levied upon individuals from China and Japan. While Americans mistrusted individuals, they celebrated objects, since the represented the kind of civilizational achievement and historical pedigree sought by urban Americans in the early twentieth century. Gibson’s

155 Ibid.

156 Ibid.

157 Ibid.

description of Chang thus serves her argument well, since it indicates that Chang, through his visits to the museum, was being doubly educated: “he was in the unique position of being both Americanized and reorientalized.”\textsuperscript{159} By interacting with individuals at school and the museum, Chang “learned the necessary American standards and customs;” however, he was simultaneously being “acquainted with his native country through its art.”\textsuperscript{160} Chang’s experience of “American standards” and Asian art also reflects his exposure to broader notions of civic cosmopolitanism. As such, his experiences at the museum helped, in an ironic sense, to make him more ‘American,’ as his cosmopolitan education within the museum made him more aware of the unique position of the United States within the global community. Gibson’s contention that Alfred Chang could be “reorientalized” simply by viewing and drawing Chinese and Japanese objects of art and antiquities is further indicative of a persistent, widespread acceptance of the implicit power of the museum’s program of systematic acquisition, display, and appropriation of the cultural prestige and historic pedigrees of the East Asian art objects and antiquities displayed in the “Oriental” galleries. By 1926, ten years after the opening of the Cleveland Museum of Art, and ten years after the “Oriental Expedition” was funded and undertaken, the process of mimesis was completed. The power of the acquired and carefully displayed objects, having been transferred to the museum and city of Cleveland, was such that a young Chinese-American student could be “reorientalized” by mere association.

\textsuperscript{159} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{160} Ibid. Italics mine.
The example of Alfred Chang also nuances key points raised by Edward Said in *Orientalism*. Said contends that, in general, the citizens of ‘Western’ nations viewed those from the ‘East’ through a lens of “distortion,” which rendered the latter as inferior or backward ‘others.’\(^{161}\) While Said’s analysis is overwhelmingly accurate, it is not monolithic. The so-called “Orient,” while a subject of constructed fantasy for some, and a facet of hegemonic imperial expansion for others, was at the same time capable of producing feelings of anxiety in many Americans. Asian art objects and antiquities functioned as physical reminders of the so-called Orient’s facility in the fields of design and production. China pioneered the mass production of porcelain centuries before the Industrial Revolution.\(^{162}\) Chinese trade commodities spurred and supported international travel, from the medieval to early modern periods. Until the late Qing dynasty, China was effectively the wealthiest, most ‘modern’ state in the world.\(^{163}\) While the United States was, by the early twentieth century, effectively ‘modern,’ it lacked physical signs of visible antiquity that other states, like China, possessed. These issues impacted members of immigrant populations who lived within walking distance of their manufacturing jobsites, along with more privileged citizens who had the luxury to commute to work. These newer immigrants, whose ranks were largely comprised of non-English speaking individuals from Southern and Eastern Europe, were joined by the “Americanized” English-speaking descendants of prior immigrants in experiencing


feelings of ideological discomfort and civilizational inferiority when confronted with the long narrative history and cultural achievements of the peoples of China, Japan, and Korea. An analysis of Whiting and MacLean’s efforts to purposefully acquire art objects and antiquities from Asia, and place them on display at the museum via the medium of sympathetic appropriation, helps to illuminate the complexities associated with American perceptions and understandings of the nature of cultural sophistication and cosmopolitanism. While industry and technological development were valued, and for many were indicative of ‘progress,’ they were not representative of cultural development, or even civilizational sophistication. Said, writing later in Culture and Imperialism, offered a subtle, but important, observation on the nature of cultural ideals, stating that “all cultures are involved in one another; none is single and pure, all are hybrid, heterogeneous, extraordinarily differentiated, and unmonolithic.”\textsuperscript{164} The power of an ideal like hybridity was manifested through the display and sympathetic appropriation of Asian art objects and antiquities at the Cleveland Museum of Art, ensuring that viewers might, visit by visit, become more cosmopolitan.

By acquiring and displaying art objects and antiquities from China and Japan at the Cleveland Museum of Art, the director and curatorial staff established a system of appropriation which permitted an effective transfer of cachet or pedigree from the ancient, culturally wealthy ‘Orient’ to the upstart, technologically advanced but culturally bereft United States, via the medium of objects. By possessing and displaying these art objects and antiquities in Cleveland, the director, curators, and trustees of the Cleveland

Museum of Art ensured that the city would be both technologically advanced and culturally relevant; ultimately, physical objects from East Asia were central to the realization of these aspirations.

Under the guidance of first director Frederic A. Whiting, and with the assistance of the first curator of “Oriental” art J. Arthur MacLean, educational liaisons Emily G. and Katharine Gibson, and later Rossiter Howard, the Cleveland Museum of Art transitioned from being a popular local novelty to a powerful institution that effected change, through educational outreach programs, in the lives of people living in the city of Cleveland. Art objects and antiquities from China, Japan, and Korea were, in the minds of these museum officials, integral to the success of the museum and community at-large. By appropriating, through display in dedicated “Oriental” galleries, the intangible cultural cachet retained by these objects, museum officials were able to ensure that Cleveland was, by degrees, becoming more ‘refined’ and ‘civilized.’ The success of the museum in its first sixteen years, as an educational and recreational site, rested in large part upon the tremendous amount of attention paid, by Whiting and MacLean, to art objects and antiquities from East Asia. The first public lecturer engaged by the museum staff was British Museum employee Laurence Binyon, an Asian art enthusiast and specialist. Bulletins in the museum’s early years regularly featured, with lush photographs and descriptions, pieces from China, Japan, and Korea. Likewise, local schoolchildren were introduced to the art museum through outreach efforts that included lectures on Japanese block printing, and exposure to visiting exhibits of cultural objects from Asia. Children
and adults could freely sketch objects in the museum’s galleries, and more formal courses in drawing, sketching, and painting were offered by regional art schools after 1917.

Although Asian art was likely not foremost in the minds of most Clevelanders in the early twentieth century, its positive impact on the museum was noted by Whiting, who believed that the Cleveland possessed “many of the finest examples” of Chinese and Japanese art objects and antiquities.\textsuperscript{165} Because of his background in the Arts and Crafts movement, and his interest in object-centered study, Whiting saw great potential for the refinement of Cleveland’s industrial workers via the medium of exposure to “Oriental” art objects and antiquities. Asian art formed an “important contribution” to the museum’s collection, and by default, the city at-large.\textsuperscript{166} Whiting’s continued focus on including, and often elevating, Asian art in \textit{Bulletins} and other museum publications reflects a desire to encourage Clevelanders to recognize and participate in processes of sympathetic appropriation engaged in by museum staff members.

Whiting likewise highlighted the importance of exposing members of the public to fine art objects in a 1922 memo circulated among museum staff members. In the memo, Whiting transcribed a poem written by Cleveland School of Art Director Henry Turner Bailey. Bailey’s poem was entitled \textit{The Torch}, and read:

\begin{quote}
“Without Architectural design our city would be reduced to log cabins. Without Sculptural design we would have no monuments, no ornaments in relief, no coined money. Without Pictorial Art, no mural decorations, no pictures, no illustrations, no illuminated advertisements, no paper money nor postage stamps would be possible. Without Decorative design, we would have to dispense with rugs, carpets, wall papers, draperies and
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{165} Frederic A. Whiting to Mrs. Cornelia Warner, October 15, 1929, letter, The Cleveland Museum of Art Archives, Records of the Director's Office: Frederic Allen Whiting, box 15, folder 146d.

\textsuperscript{166} Ibid.
figured dress goods of every kind. Without Structural design, our furniture would be rustic only, our utensils, coarse baskets, clay bowls, flints and chop sticks; our fixtures, a campfire for cooking and a pine knot for light; our jewelry, bright-colored seeds, shells and knuckle bones. Without Costume design we would all be Adams and Eves. In short, without these arts we would be reduced to the crudities of primitive man.”

People could avoid falling into this trap of ‘primitivism’ by availing themselves of their local art museum and engaging with beautifully curated and displayed pieces – in this case, they could access these pieces at the Cleveland Museum of Art. By including this poem in an internal memorandum (focused upon how to “sell” the museum to potential new members during “Art Museum Week”) Whiting made clear his belief that the art museum, along with all of the objects it possessed, could collectively transform the ways that individuals interacted with the world around them. This notion was applicable in an ideological as well as practical sense – art objects and antiquities could trigger philosophical musings, but, perhaps more importantly in a city like Cleveland, they could serve as liaisons between individuals and the objects they interacted with on a daily basis. The process of making Clevelanders more aware of the impact of lofty artistic ideals on practical design and production could be transformative – in a culturally refining sense. When exposed to these objects, through an educational lens, the museum staff hoped to produce “cosmopolitan citizens,” who were, ironically, representative of a

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167 Frederick Allen Whiting, Memorandum, “Selling Arguments,” October 1922, The Cleveland Museum of Art Archives, Records of the Director's Office: Frederic Allen Whiting, box 59, folder 988. While “chop sticks” is used in a derogatory sense above, it is placed in context with “primitive” “Western” objects like “coarse baskets” and “clay bowls.” Whiting certainly did not equate the “primitive” with fine examples of Asian artistic and craft production; in the same way that he would not associate “clay bowls” or “coarse baskets” with more sophisticated art objects produced in European countries. In this way, I believe that Whiting’s use of the poem presents a sense of collective prior ‘primitivism’ overcome by the evolution of production and design, across the cultural board.
uniquely American ideal. Art objects and antiquities from China, Japan, and Korea contributed as much to this project as pieces from Europe and the Middle East.

This idea gains further support from Alfred Chang’s experience of “re-Orientalization” at the museum. Although Chang’s “re-Orientalization” is, in itself, rather problematic, the underlying ideal of cosmopolitanism is still apparent in his experience. He was a Chinese-American youth, with a raw talent for drawing. When exposed to the exquisite Asian art objects and antiquities displayed at the Cleveland Museum of Art, Chang experienced a cosmopolitan transformation – he was both “re-Orientalized” and “Americanized.” Here, “Americanization” can serve as a metaphor for becoming a more “cosmopolitan citizen.” Chang’s “re-Orientalization” occurred as a result of his exposure to the museum’s Asian art objects and antiquities, displayed in mimetic settings that retained and transferred their original cachet to the museum. This helps to better illustrate the power of sympathetic appropriation at the Cleveland Museum of Art. Simultaneously, Chang became more American, or effectively more cosmopolitan, as a result of this contact. Chang’s Chineseness did not privilege him to this experience – other students and visitors might be expected to have similar experiences after viewing the Asian art objects displayed at the museum. In the Cleveland Museum of Art’s formative years, members of the museum’s directorial, curatorial, and educational staff implemented and engaged in processes of mimesis when

\[168\] Glenn, 200.
\[169\] Gibson, 6.
\[170\] Glenn, 200.
acquiring and displaying Asian art. These activities resulted in the sympathetic appropriation of the collective pedigrees of myriad art objects and antiquities from China, Japan, and Korea, and the transference of their collective *cachet* to the city (and citizens) of Cleveland.
CHAPTER VII
CONCLUSION

Under the guidance of Frederic A. Whiting, the Cleveland Museum of Art, by 1930, grew into a prime example of a “democratized” museum entity.¹ Whiting ensured that the museum acquired very fine antiquities and art objects from around the world, placing special focus on the acquisition of art objects and antiquities from East Asia. His efforts to engage in community outreach also bore fruit, with high attendance numbers consistent through the 1920s. Asian art, and the sympathetic appropriation by figures at the museum of the cultural _cachet_ attached to those objects, figured prominently in Whiting’s plan for Cleveland’s new art museum. This _cachet_ was transferred to the museum via the medium of display – as objects were placed in new museum galleries, the galleries functioned as effective facsimiles of their original settings and intended uses, via processes of _mimesis_.² The museum’s galleries, where these objects were displayed, functioned as copies of the original sites of use or display; however, these new representations nonetheless participated in the evolving pedigrees of the art objects and

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antiquities placed on display in them. As a result of this focus on embracing Asian art, art objects and antiquities from China, Japan, and Korea consistently featured in the museum’s Bulletin from 1914-1930. Whiting also nurtured and supported three different Curators of “Oriental” Art during his tenure as director of the museum: J. Arthur MacLean, Theodore Sizer, and Howard Coonley Hollis. MacLean went on to serve as Curator of Oriental Art at the Art Institute, Chicago,3 where he worked for a year, before resigning to accept the Directorship of the Herron Art Museum in Indianapolis, Indiana.4 Theodore Sizer left the museum in 1927 after accepting a professorship in Art History at Yale University.5 He was eventually named Director of the Yale University Art Gallery.6 Howard Coonley Hollis worked as Curator of Far Eastern and Near Eastern Art at Cleveland’s museum from 1928-1949, when he resigned to open his own antiquities gallery, Howard Hollis & Company.7 Both Sizer and Hollis were two of the so-called “Monuments Men,” who worked to preserve art during and after the end of the Second World War. Langdon Warner, who first worked as Director of the Pennsylvania Museum of Art in Philadelphia, and later accepted a position at Harvard University’s Fogg

3 “Notes,” Bulletin of the Art Institute of Chicago xvi (1922): 11.
6 Ibid.
Museum, was also a member of this group, as was Sherman Lee, eventual Curator of Asian Art, and later Director, of the Cleveland Museum of Art.

Frederic A. Whiting resigned from his Directorship at the Cleveland Museum of Art in 1930 after accepting an offer to be President of the American Federation of Arts, located in Washington, D.C. He worked at the Cleveland Museum of Art from its inception in 1914, and had a hand in literally building the museum’s collections from the ground up. His experiences with Boston’s Society of Arts and Crafts, and the broader American Arts and Crafts Movement, served him well in his capacity as Director of the Cleveland Museum of Art. Although Whiting had no formal training in the arts or art history, he did possess an acute appreciation for art objects and antiquities from around the world. He likewise believed that the best way to educate a population was via the medium of personal interaction with beautiful, high quality art objects accessibly displayed. Whiting lobbied hard in his tenure as Director for the establishment of a strong educational department at the museum. He encouraged regular public school visits to the museum, endorsed the initiation of traveling exhibits (located in local libraries), and permitted students to study and draw in the galleries during summer holidays. His work with Curator MacLean in the museum’s formative years resulted in the construction of a fine collection of very high quality art objects and antiquities from China, Japan, and Korea.


9 Robertson, 54.

10 Robertson, 53.

11 Ibid.
MacLean possessed a deep reverence for art objects and antiquities from Asia; his writings for the museum’s *Bulletin* provide clear illustrations of his own beliefs. MacLean clearly felt that Asian art objects possessed as much, if not more, cultural cachet and value as objects of similar age produced in Europe. When discussing the merits of a grouping of Japanese prints on display at the museum, MacLean indicated that the quality of these prints was such that the “blending and gradation of color … has never been surpassed either in the West or the Far East.”

He continued, stating that nothing existed that “paralleled them in European art, as monuments of good taste. They must be cherished and kept from harm.” The “excellence” of these prints, displayed in Cleveland, served a dual purpose: they were fine examples of the craft of printmaking, of use to local Cleveland-based craftsmen as objects of instruction; at the same time, they were spectacularly beautiful images, of unsurpassed aesthetic quality, suitable for triggering more inspired responses from local viewers. It was significant, for MacLean, that these pieces be “cherished” in Cleveland, where, by virtue of their display, they were simultaneously protected.

Langdon Warner employed similarly lofty language when discussing objects collected for the Cleveland Museum of Art on behalf of Worcester R. Warner, and during the “Oriental” Expedition. Warner was granted a staggering seven and a half single spaced pages of the museum’s December 1917 *Bulletin* to discuss the merits of a pair of Buddhist scroll paintings acquired on the Expedition. The paintings,

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13 Ibid.

14 Ibid.
called the “Cleveland scrolls” by Warner, were originally displayed in a Buddhist temple setting.\textsuperscript{15} The paintings were detailed, containing “significant” elements of “chiaroscuro” style, which Warner likened to later European painting practices.\textsuperscript{16} Additionally, Warner indicated that he knew “of nothing in Europe which suggests this mannerism, with the possible exception of Byzantine art;” thus, the “Cleveland scrolls” were, in Warner’s mind of at least equivalent artistic value to more popular pieces produced in the Byzantine Empire.\textsuperscript{17} Warner’s application of the title “Cleveland scrolls” echoes notions of \textit{mimesis} and sympathetic appropriation discussed previously. Warner’s title also implies a form of transference – when acquired for the museum, these objects became the property of the museum and region at-large. Although the paintings were no longer displayed in a temple, their display in Cleveland could still trigger a meaningful response in viewers, who might be moved by the high aesthetic and artistic quality of the scrolls.\textsuperscript{18} To reinforce his assessment of the value of the paintings, Warner referenced their similarity to a painting held in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.\textsuperscript{19} Cleveland, through the acquisition and display of art objects and antiquities from East Asia, was just as culturally cosmopolitan as Boston. Possessing art objects and antiquities from Asia was a key element in realizing and sustaining this Midwestern cosmopolitanism.


\textsuperscript{16} Warner, 158.

\textsuperscript{17} Warner, 159.

\textsuperscript{18} Warner, 155.

\textsuperscript{19} Warner, 156.
While the acquisition of Asian art objects by American museums was not unique in the early twentieth century, the Cleveland Museum of Art’s focus on forming a very fine collection of pieces from East Asian countries was singular, when viewed within the broader context of the collecting practices of similarly sized museums located throughout the Midwestern United States. Although the founders of the Cleveland Museum of Art were perhaps inspired by large East Coast museums, Whiting ultimately felt that, given the resources at hand, Cleveland’s museum would never be able to compete with those larger entities. At the same time, Whiting did not want to see Cleveland's museum function as a revolving door of traveling exhibits – he wanted to create a new “happy medium” in Cleveland.20 Whiting also strove to ensure that the museum find its own place, or “distinct individuality among Museums throughout the world.”21 While Boston’s Museum of Fine Arts possessed the United States’ first systematically curated collection of Asian art (established in 1890), Cleveland did not begin constructing its collection until 1914.22 However, the Cleveland museum’s Asian art department emerged at roughly the same time as that of New York’s Metropolitan Museum of Art, which was established in 1915. Chicago’s Art Institute staged shows of Asian art between 1910-1930, but did not engage in systematic expansion of their small existent...

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21 Ibid.

collection until the postwar period.\footnote{Elinor L. Pearlestein and James T. Ulak, eds., *Asian Art in the Art Institute of Chicago* (Chicago: Art Institute of Chicago, 1993), 7.} No other regional museum focused as heavily upon the acquisition of art objects and antiquities from Asia as did the Cleveland Museum of Art. American museums devoted exclusively to the collection and display of Asian art objects did not open until the 1920s, well after Cleveland initiated its own program of collecting these pieces. The Freer Gallery of Art, located in Washington, D.C., did not open until 1923,\footnote{Linda Merrill, “The Washington Building,” in *Freer: A Legacy of Art* ed. Thomas Lawton and Linda Merrill (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution, 1993), 235.} while the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, located in Kansas City, Missouri did not open to the public until 1933.\footnote{Ross E. Taggart and George L. McKenna, eds., *Handbook of the Collections in the William Rockhill Nelson Gallery of Art and Mary Atkins Museum of Fine Arts Kansas City, Missouri* (Kansas City: University Trustees W.R. Nelson Trust, 1973), 8.} The director and curators at the Cleveland Museum of Art were ahead of the curve, so to speak, in terms of identifying a medium to serve as a distinguishing factor for the new museum. This is not to say that European and American art objects were rejected – only that art objects and antiquities from China, Japan, and Korea played a central role in determining the trajectory of collecting and acquisition that later directors and curators working at Cleveland’s museum took in later decades. In this way, the purposeful acquisition of art objects and antiquities from East Asia, along with the sympathetic appropriation of these objects’ attendant pedigrees and *cachet*, distinguished the Cleveland Museum of Art from peer museums. It was unlike the large, wealthy museums located in Boston, New York, and Chicago, since it functioned with a relatively small budget and donor base. However, Cleveland’s museum stood out amongst other Midwestern neighbor institutions, as a
result of its diverse focus on acquiring exquisite examples of art from around the world, with a particular focus on objects originating in East Asia.

Whiting departed the Cleveland Museum of Art in 1930 satisfied with the progress he initiated there in his tenure as Director. In his final report as Director, published in 1930, Whiting highlighted the “steady progress” made at the museum “in all its phases.”26 Whiting specifically highlighted the “important purchases” that were made “especially in the Oriental field.”27 Many “significant purchases were [also] made from [an] exhibition of Far Eastern Art” staged at the museum late in 1929.28 These purchases were still made in spite of a disappointment: Worcester R. Warner, benefactor and Asian art enthusiast, died in 1929, “without making good on the substantial endowment fund or oriental art that he had promised.”29 This was a setback, but not a major blow for the museum; Warner still provided funding for the “Oriental Expedition,” and spent tens of thousands of dollars purchasing Asian art objects and antiquities for the museum. The new Curator of Far Eastern and Near Eastern Art, Howard Coonley Hollis, worked to stimulate a “revival” of the Asian art department at the museum.30 In 1929, two exhibitions of “Oriental” art were staged (out of twenty nine total exhibitions) at the


27 Ibid.

28 Ibid.


30 Howard Coonley Hollis, quoted in Cunningham, 14.
museum. This is a significant number, as the majority of these exhibitions were of “Prints” (eight) and “Textiles” (eight), with four exhibitions of “Oil Paintings,” but only one exhibition each focused on “Ceramics,” “Water Colors,” and “Cleveland Artists.” Hollis, in his bid to continue to acquire Asian art for the museum, regularly traveled, where he met with art dealers and hand-picked several “major works of oriental art” for the museum’s collections. In this way, previously established patterns of emphasizing the acquisition of art objects and antiquities from East Asia were retained, and in some cases, enhanced, at the Cleveland Museum of Art.

These patterns continued through the mid and later twentieth century, under the guidance of Sherman Lee. Lee received a PhD in Asian Art History in 1941 from Case Western Reserve University. After serving in the Navy in World War II, he was tapped as a “Monuments Man,” assigned to Japan. Lee, as a “Monuments Man,” was hired in 1952 as Curator of Asian Art by Whiting’s successor, Director William Mathewson Milliken. By 1956, Lee was made Associate Director of the Cleveland Museum of Art,

32 Ibid.
33 Cunningham, 14.
35 Ibid.
and in 1958, was named Director. In his tenure as Director, which lasted until 1983, Lee worked to enhance the Cleveland Museum of Art’s Asian collections. Armed with energy and a “$34 million bequest from industrialist Leonard C. Hanna, Jr.,” made in 1959, Lee set about enhancing and extending the museum’s existent Asian art collection. Lee “envisioned a truly Pan Asian assemblage of works of art of the highest quality, comparable to those in the Western art collections of several distinguished American and European museums.” With the assistance of Wai-kam Ho, Stanislaw J. Czuma, and Michael Cunningham, Lee constructed “the most distinguished collection of Asian art assembled since the second decade of the twentieth century.” Lee’s work at the Cleveland Museum of Art in the mid to late twentieth century built upon an existent foundation of acquiring art objects and antiquities from East Asia. His success in expanding the museum’s collection, which “propelled the museum into the forefront of the American cultural landscape” rested upon the work initiated by his predecessors in the museum’s formative years, when sympathetic appropriation enabled the cultural cachet attached to exquisite art objects and antiquities from Asia to be transferred to the Cleveland Museum of Art, an early twentieth century site of Midwestern cosmopolitanism.

37 Cunningham, 16.
38 Litt, “Cleveland’s own Monuments Man…”
39 Cunningham, 16.
40 Ibid.
41 Cunningham, 17.
An analysis of patterns of acquisition of art objects and antiquities from China, Japan, and Korea by staff members at the Cleveland Museum of Art illuminates the wide dissemination of Arts and Crafts Movement sensibilities beyond havens on the East and West coasts of the United States. Citizens of Midwestern cities, like Cleveland, were aware of and participating in elements of the movement – specifically with regard to the consumption of aesthetically pleasing, artfully designed, and hand crafted art objects and antiquities from around the world. These objects served as both teaching tools, providing inspiration to local craft producers, as well as pleasing sources of visual engagement for casual visitors to the museum.42

Designers like Frank Lloyd Wright, active in the Midwest, likewise helped to popularize Asian stylistic influence in the early twentieth century United States. Wright, in addition to amassing a large personal collection of Japanese prints, also moonlighted as an art and antiquities dealer when not engaging in activities associated with architectural design.43 The homes he did design clearly illustrated his own fascination with, and appropriation of, Asian aesthetic ideals. His residential designs featured open “interior spaces” with “a low, horizontal flow of space that is also characteristic of Japanese residential architecture.”44 Midwesterners were aware of, and valued, elements of Asian art and design. Whiting’s own position as former secretary of the Society of Arts and


44 Ibid.
Crafts informed his work at the Cleveland Museum of Art.\(^{45}\) In this way, elements of the broader American Arts and Crafts Movement profoundly influenced patterns of collection and production in cities outside of the east or west coasts of the United States.

The popularization of Asian aesthetic sensibilities occurred simultaneously with the dissemination of Arts and Crafts ideals. Although Americans popularly consumed objects from the “Orient” in the late nineteenth century for the production of home “cosy corners,” by the early twentieth century consumers and collectors sought ‘authentic’ objects to display in their homes.\(^{46}\) Emporia, like Vantine’s, opened in large American cities to cater to consumer and collector tastes. However, Cleveland, as a moderately large, industrial Midwestern city, was not immune from the expansion of stores peddling kitsch and even antiques and antiquities from Asia. In 1910, Cleveland boasted several “Oriental” stores, including the Manila Trading and Supply Company, located at 1305 Euclid Avenue.\(^{47}\) The Chinese proprietors of several nondescript stores peddled goods in Cleveland’s Chinatown, located along Rockwell Avenue downtown. Additionally, Higbee’s department store, situated on Cleveland’s Public Square, sold goods produced by Vantine’s.\(^{48}\) Ye Olde Curiosity Shop, located at 2520 Prospect Avenue in Cleveland, sold goods from Yamanaka and Company, a Boston based firm.


renowned for selling both kitsch and legitimate art objects and antiquities from Asia.\textsuperscript{49} A sale advertised in 1911 promised Cleveland area consumers access to an “important collection of beautiful objects, including Old Embroideries, … Mandarin Coats, … Porcelains, Potteries, … Bronzes, Irons, Rare Jades, [and] Old Prints.”\textsuperscript{50} These objects, representing China’s ‘traditional’ culture, were likely castoffs during the waning days of the Qing dynasty. They nonetheless were ‘authentic’ pieces, imbued with and representative of the cultural \textit{cachet} of late-imperial China. Clevelanders thus had regular access to goods produced in East Asia; they participated in the appropriation of Asian artistic sensibilities in ways similar to their counterparts living in large, cosmopolitan east coast cities. An examination of local responses to Asian art, both in terms of consumer goods and finer objects displayed in the Cleveland Museum of Art illustrates that Midwesterners, too, looked to Asia for aesthetic inspiration and engagement with the cosmopolitan in the early twentieth century.

While members of the art museum’s staff, including Frederic Whiting, certainly sought and acquired art objects and antiquities from European states to help enhance the \textit{cachet} of the new museum, they likewise looked to East Asia for inspiration. Antiquities produced in China, Japan, and Korea, were valued equally to similar pieces made in Europe by staff members at the Cleveland Museum of Art. J. Arthur MacLean, Curator of Oriental Art, often argued that pieces produced in East Asia exceeded the quality,

\footnote{Advertisement, “Yamanaka Collection,” \textit{Cleveland Plain Dealer}, April 2, 1911. N.B. Yamanaka and Company employees regularly corresponded with Charles Lang Freer.}

\footnote{Ibid.}
craftsmanship, and design of similar objects made in Europe and the United States.\textsuperscript{51} Langdon Warner, as well, indicated that ancient Chinese bronzes were some of the "finest" pieces produced globally.\textsuperscript{52} This collective appreciation for art objects and antiquities produced in East Asia represents more than simplistic Orientalist processes of appropriation. While early twentieth century Americans did engage in stereotyping and denigration of the Asian "other," there was a "peculiar" sense of valuation attached to art objects and antiquities produced in China, Japan, and Korea.\textsuperscript{53} This collective regard, referred to by J. J. Clarke as a "subversive" element within broader system of Orientalism as related to cultural appropriation, complicates contemporary concepts of the very nature of appropriation itself.\textsuperscript{54} An individual, collector, or institution, by engaging in processes of acquisition, display, and appropriation, could effectively become a participant within the broader narrative of ownership of a given object. Interestingly enough, this sense of participation, granted to the collector, also reflects ideals associated with traditional processes of connoisseurship adopted in East Asia broadly, and China specifically.\textsuperscript{55} Art objects and antiquities from East Asia were not collected in Cleveland to serve as simple props or anachronistic representations of the "other;" they were acquired because of their

\textsuperscript{51} See "Plain Dealer Post Box; The Art of China; Editor Plain Dealer," \textit{Cleveland Plain Dealer} August 12, 1915. Clipping located in The Cleveland Museum of Art Archives, Records of the Director's Office: Frederic Allen Whiting, Box 13, Folder 135.

\textsuperscript{52} Langdon Warner to Frederic A. Whiting, memo, April, 1915, The Cleveland Museum of Art Archives, Records of the Director's Office: Frederic Allen Whiting, box 14, folder 146a.


\textsuperscript{54} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{55} See Michael Beurdeley, \textit{The Chinese Collector Through the Centuries: From the Han to the 20th Century} (Rutland, VT: Charles E. Tuttle Company, 1966).
collective historical *cachet*, aesthetic beauty, and cultural value. As Clarke indicates, such systems of acquisition and ultimate appropriation “disrupt” and sometimes undermine the “master narratives of the colonising powers.”

While Cleveland’s consumers looked to China, Japan, and Korea for design inspiration to decorate their homes, staff at the Cleveland Museum of Art likewise sought to distinguish the city’s new museum via the medium of art objects and antiquities from the region. An examination of the methods of acquisition engaged in by Frederic Allen Whiting, and first Curator of Oriental Art, J. Arthur MacLean, on behalf of Cleveland’s Museum of Art, provides insight into processes that I call *sympathetic appropriation*. An analysis of the collecting practices engaged in at the Cleveland Museum of Art in the early twentieth century provides an excellent case study for examining similar processes engaged in by staff at other smaller, regional art museums around the United States. The staff in Cleveland, like their counterparts at other art museums located in large American cities, sought to provide the public with exposure to aesthetically pleasing objects. Practically, displayed art objects and antiquities might positively influence working class visitors to the museum. In these ways, Cleveland’s museum was not remarkable; staff members at Boston’s Museum of Fine Arts, New York’s Metropolitan Museum of Art, and Chicago’s Art Institute likewise engaged in didactic activities meant to educate members of the visiting public. The methods employed at the Cleveland Museum of Art did, however, differ in one important way: the attendant cultural *cachet* and historical pedigrees of Asian art objects and antiquities were, by virtue of display, transferred to the

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56 Clarke, 9.
museum via the medium of mimetic processes.\textsuperscript{57} Mimesis implies both the retention and transference of intangible elements of cultural capital or \textit{cachet}; in the case of the Cleveland Museum of Art, objects and antiquities from China, Japan, and Korea might still retain and reflect the aesthetic superiority and cultural achievements of their respective periods and regions of origin. The art museum, as the most recent in a series of previous owners, could still participate in the evolving and unfolding object narrative of a displayed art object or antiquity. By engaging in this process, which I call sympathetic appropriation, members of the museum staff ensured that the Cleveland Museum of Art might benefit from the existent \textit{cachet} attached to a given object or group of objects. This benefit was also extended to members of the visiting public, as well as the region at-large.

In this way, the museum itself, as the site of display, became the latest in a series of prior owners of a given art object or antiquity. Curators at the Cleveland Museum of Art effectively applied processes of mimesis to pieces acquired from other regions, including European states. Of note here is the universality of application of sympathetic appropriation at the Cleveland Museum of Art. Art objects and antiquities produced in China, Japan, and Korea were valued to the same degree, or, in some cases, an even greater degree, than similar pieces made in corresponding periods in Europe. An analysis of the sympathetic appropriation of the cultural \textit{cachet} of Asian art objects and antiquities by staff members at the Cleveland Museum of Art in its formative years serves as excellent case study to examine similar processes at other smaller, regional American art

museums. It likewise illustrates the degree of relative cosmopolitanism present in American cities located far from the country’s coasts. Ultimately, art objects and antiquities from East Asia were integral to the realization of the Cleveland Museum of Art’s mission – to bring culture and education to the residents of the city of Cleveland.
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