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This dissertation titled
The Louvre from China: A Critical Study of C. T. Loo and the Framing of Chinese Art
in the United States, 1915-1950

by

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ABSTRACT

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Based on archival research, this dissertation is a pioneering study of Loo Ching-Tsai (C. T. Loo, 1880-1957), a leading international art dealer, and his role in the circulation and reception of Chinese antiquities in the United States between 1915 and 1950. By investigating the modes of transaction, network, conceptual framework, and visual strategies in his business, I argue that C. T. Loo played a significant role in the framing of “Chinese art” by situationally capitalizing on the boundaries between different territories, concepts, and roles in the market-museum-academia network.

The introduction places Loo against the theoretical and historical background of the exchange, study, and display of Chinese antiquities in America. The first part of this dissertation focuses on the modes of transaction and social networks in his dealing. The second part investigates how Loo’s negotiation of the spatial-temporal-cultural boundaries recontextualized ancient Chinese art in modern America. The last part examines Loo’s presentational strategies, which articulated the power relations in his operations. This dissertation concludes that although C. T. Loo, as a network builder and cultural mediator, played an important role in the formation of Chinese art collections in America, his dealing was based on America’s capitalist and imperialist logic that Chinese antiquities were to be consumed by the rich and the powerful in modern America.
By examining a crucial figure, this dissertation serves as a sourcebook and conceptual map for art dealership study, a generally neglected field in Chinese art. Looking beyond cultural and disciplinary boundaries, this dissertation suggests a new ground to broaden understanding of Chinese art.

Approved: _____________________________________________________________

Charles Buchanan

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ABBREVIATIONS AND SPECIAL MARKS

AAOA-MFA: The Department of Art of Asia, Oceania and Africa Archive, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

BMAA: Brooklyn Museum of Art Archive.

Cat. no.: Catalogue number.


FCA: Frank Caro Archive, Institute of Fine Arts, New York University.


HUAMA: Harvard University Art Museums Archives.

JDR Jr.: John D. Rockefeller, Jr.

Met: The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

MetA: The Metropolitan Museum of Art Archive.

MFA: Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

Minneapolis: Minneapolis Institute of Arts.


OMR-RAC: Homes series, Record Group 2 Office of the Messrs. Rockefeller (OMR), Rockefeller Family Archives, RAC.

Pl.: Plate.

RAC: The Rockefeller Archive Center

RISD: Rhode Island School of Design Museum.

RISDA: Rhode Island School of Design Archives.
Sackler: the Sackler Museum, Harvard University.

SI: Smithsonian Institution Archives. Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.

S.N.: Unidentified.

TMS: The Museum System (commonly used museum database)

UPM: The University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology (formerly the University Museum).

WAM: Worcester Art Museum.


(?): Unidentified or missing words and letters in the handwritten materials in primary sources.

$: US dollar.
INTRODUCTION

Why C. T. Loo?

This dissertation examines the circulation and reception of ancient Chinese art in the United States in the first half of the twentieth century through an investigation of Loo Ching-Tsai, a leading Chinese art dealer, collector, publisher, and exhibition organizer (Fig.1). The placement of “Loouvre” in the title is a deliberate provocation, alluding to C. T. Loo’s stature in the international art world. Loo’s company was named “Luwu” in Chinese, a homophony for the Louvre. In the course of over forty years, Loo introduced an impressive array of Chinese antiquities to major Euro-American collectors, museums, and scholars.¹ Fifty years after his death, these objects still grace many art museums and major Chinese art history books in the West.

C. T. Loo merits critical attention because his personal history constituted an important chapter in the history of Chinese art collections in America. At the turn of the twentieth century, Loo, a native of China, settled in France. By the early 1910s he became an established art dealer in Paris. In the mid-1910s Loo moved the center of his business to the United States, where he emerged as one of the top international dealers of Chinese art. It is noteworthy that Loo’s rise coincided with the formation of major collections of Chinese art in America. In the first half of the twentieth century, as the U.S. replaced Europe as the world’s leader and increased its political and financial presence in China, it

¹ Although this dissertation deals with American collections of Chinese art, the analyses are often placed in the trans-Atlantic discourse of Chinese art, given the constant exchange of objects and information as well as the travel of dealers, collectors, curators, and scholars of Chinese art between Europe and America from 1915 to 1950.
became the largest collector of Chinese art. Collecting Chinese art served to articulate America’s national identity as well as its imperialist and capitalist power. In China, it was a time of political unrest, economic crisis as well as major archaeological discoveries. A vast quantity of antiquities surfaced in the market. These circumstances placed Loo in a strategic position between China and the U.S., between supply and demand. With enormous business acumen and the support of an elaborate network, Loo played a crucial role in the shaping of Chinese art collections in America. Moreover, Loo was recognized not only as a merchant, but also as a collector, connoisseur, publisher, exhibition organizer, and patron of art. His career, which intersected multiple aspects of the art world, affords us an excellent case to study the process and mechanism in which Chinese art was formed from 1915 to 1950 in America.

In this dissertation, “Chinese art”, “Chinese antiquities”, and “ancient Chinese art” are interchangeable. “Chinese art” is considered as artifacts and as concepts framed by a nexus of relations in a dynamic process. “Chinese art” had many manifestations. It could refer not only to an artifact produced in a specific moment in time and space, but also to an object/concept for circulation and consumption in a complex social and cultural network. It could be used for aesthetic appreciation, scholarly examination, financial investment, as well as social prestige, spiritual solace, and political propaganda. “Chinese art” was also a notion shifting across cultures and over time. In Loo’s business, all these forms and meanings of Chinese art were turned into a marketable spectacle.
Prior Studies

My research at nine American museums and archives shows that there exists a wealth of unique and important materials about C. T. Loo, including his firm’s inventory cards, invoices, photographs, negatives, correspondence, and museum registration cards. These materials allow the researcher to probe into the secretive world of this dealer. This first-hand information not only sheds light on how Loo acquired, documented, promoted, and distributed Chinese art objects, but also informs us of the objects’ origin, provenance, age, style, and condition. In addition, these materials allow us to trace the objects’ journeys through various geographical, social, and cultural territories. Furthermore, these materials reveal C. T. Loo’s extensive social network with the foremost dealers, collectors, scholars, and museum professionals. Information about Loo and his circle provides a springboard for the study of the mechanism and social context within which Chinese art was formed in America.

Recently there has been a growing interest in art dealers, who were viewed not as mindless vendors, but as taste shapers and cultural mediators (Steiner 1994, Lawton 1995, Leighton 2004). Considering the prominence that Loo attained in the international art world, it is remarkable that this crucial figure has been scarcely discussed in academic literature over the past five decades. Most writings contain sketchy biographical information (Heydt 1957, Fuller 1958). It is possible that the Loo materials have been neglected due to historical, cultural, political, and disciplinary obstacles, including the secretive nature of dealing in foreign art objects, and the breadth and scope of his activities. Loo’s business operations in Europe and the U.S., for example, are to be
further studied by most scholars in China. The objects Loo handled and their relevant documents are now dispersed in private hands and at over twenty institutions around the world.

The study of Loo is further hindered by the rising nationalistic sentiment in China, where Loo is remembered as a culprit for the depletion of the nation’s cultural heritage. The issue concerning the ownership of the Chinese antiquities he notoriously channeled into America can potentially raise serious concerns in the U.S.-China relations over the time.

Though a considerable amount of critical literature on museology and art historiography has been produced (Becker 1982, Vergo 1989, Pearce 1992, 1994, Wallach 1998), the tendency to detach a Chinese art object from its social life, especially its life as a commodity, has not completely disappeared in the museum and academic world. Although biographical and historical writing on dealers and collectors of Chinese art is plentiful (Lawton 1991,1995), literature that examines the formation of Chinese art in America from a critical perspective is virtually absent. For a large part of the twentieth century in the West, Chinese art was more or less a totalizing, unchanging, and unquestioning notion. While a critical historiography of Chinese art in the U.S. remains to be written, this dissertation attempts to answer the following questions: In Loo’s dealing how and why did the collection and the concept of Chinese art shift in a cross-cultural context over time? What were the strategies and techniques Loo deployed to construct and merchandise “Chinese art” in America between the 1910s and 1950s?
Theories and Methods

This dissertation largely addresses the history of Chinese objects outside China with a focus on how they were circulated and received in a cross-cultural environment. This approach is in marked contrast to traditional Chinese art history scholarship, which often concentrates on the production of art objects within their native contexts (Thorp and Vinograd 2001).

Three kinds of synthesis can be found in this dissertation. Both biographical research and interpretative analyses are employed. The paucity of published materials about Loo makes it necessary to reconstruct his life and career through archival materials, especially his dated correspondence with museums and private collectors. While gathering and studying a large amount of primary sources, this dissertation attempts to locate Loo in a larger arena by revealing the epistemological and institutional contexts that framed “Chinese art”. Loo’s dealing is viewed as a discursive knowledge-producing practice, where “Chinese art” was organized, produced, distributed, and consumed within the market-academia-display mechanism (Clunas 1994, Hall 1998). In this light, the word “framing” in the title serves as a metaphor, suggesting Loo’s role in the construction of a conceptual framework and a display environment to enhance the value of an object.

According to Foucault, the discursive spaces where knowledge operates are historically and culturally specific (Foucault 1970, 1972, 1980). Unfortunately, as the study of many prominent Chinese objects in American museums becomes canonical, their anchorage in a given historical moment in a changing environment has often been neglected. The travel of ancient objects from Chinese tombs and temples to modern
American stores, museums, and homes often resulted in the radical recontextualization of these objects (Clifford 1987, 215). Being in contact with both worlds, Loo was able to act as a mediator in these complex socio-political and cultural changes; he was not a passive transmitter of knowledge, but rather a cultural broker, who “interprets, modifies, or comments on the knowledge which is being communicated” (Steiner 1994, 155). The recontextualization of Chinese objects is also a complex process of identity negotiation. Loo constantly shifted his own position as well as the identity of his collection between “Chinese”, “European”, and “American”, between “ancient” and “modern”.

This dissertation also attempts to bring together an object’s cultural, political, aesthetic, and economic values. In many aspects, this dissertation is inspired and informed by Warren Cohen’s groundbreaking book, *East Asian Art and American Culture: A Study in International Relations*, in which art is viewed primarily from cultural and political perspectives. Yet attention to the object is also of paramount concern to this dissertation. Most of the objects examined here are bronzes, jades, sculptures, paintings, and ceramics currently in American museums and private collections. Special attention is given to the dynamics between the determinants of an object’s value. In Georg Simmel’s view, value “is never an inherent property of objects, but is a judgment made about them by subjects” (Appadurai 1986, 3, originally from Simmel 1978). It is important to note that many objects Loo handled were not only emblems of beauty and culture, but also commodities at certain points in their social life. In this light, Loo offers an extreme and complex case to further our understanding of the connection between the cultural, aesthetic, and commercial value of an object in a cross-cultural context. Loo’s role is not unlike that of
the African art trader, who is “mediating between art producers and art consumers—adding economic value to what they sell by interpreting and capitalizing on the cultural values and desire from two different worlds” (Steiner 1994, 14). This dissertation, therefore, examines an object’s physical and aesthetic properties as well as its movement through different hands and uses.

The range and complexity of Loo’s activities demands yet another synthesis. Disciplinary-based art scholarship is no longer adequate to address the dynamic nature of the mechanism that framed “Chinese art”. While the knowledge of Chinese art history and connoisseurship are indispensable to this study, to reconstruct a multifaceted picture of Chinese art in America, economics, museology, anthropology, international relations, and feminism are also drawn upon. This dissertation employs tools from art business and international trade to analyze Loo’s modes of transaction and selling techniques. Given that a large number of Chinese antiquities Loo handled are in American museum collections, the knowledge about the history and mechanism of museums is also important to this dissertation. In addition, Loo’s negotiation of knowledge in a cross-cultural context can be viewed from an anthropological perspective. Moreover, feminism throws light on the gendered objects, clients, and events in Loo’s dealing. Lastly, an investigation into the U.S.-China relations helps illuminate the nationalistic sentiment and international cultural diplomacy behind Loo’s dealing.

For such a vast and complex topic, my dissertation by no means aims at comprehensiveness. Instead, it takes a sampling approach by identifying the most representative objects Loo handled, the most representative museums, collectors, and
scholars he contacted, and the most representative publication, exhibition/sale projects he launched. Many sections in this dissertation are case studies, which deal with some of the basic questions in this rather new field of Chinese art dealership. Chapters One and Two, for example, are based mainly on primary sources. References to comparative dealers in and outside Chinese art are given in footnotes to broaden the scope of this dissertation and to illuminate shared modes of transaction in the world of dealers.

It is noteworthy that with the advancement of scholarship since the mid-twentieth century, some attributions made in Loo’s time about authorship and date may no longer be accepted today. This dissertation often uses direct quotations from Loo-related materials with the understanding that these attributions reflected how these objects were received in his time.

**Structure and Sources**

This dissertation is divided into three parts. Chapter One and Chapter Two concern the modes of transaction and mechanism in Loo’s business. Chapter One, *A Flow Chart*, offers an overview of Loo’s business by tracing the journey of an object in a typical transaction. Chapter Two, *The Network*, investigates how Loo’s relationship with other dealers, collectors, museum professionals, and scholars shaped major American collections of Chinese art. Part I relies heavily on primary sources that I gathered in museums and archives, including the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (MFA), Sackler Museum at Harvard University, Rhode Island School of Design Museum (RISD), Metropolitan Museum of Art (Met), Brooklyn Museum of Art, Rockefeller Archive Center (RAC), Frank Caro Archive at the Institute of Fine Arts at New York University
(FCA), Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery (FGA), Worcester Art
Museum (WAM), and Toledo Art Museum. The materials from museums and archives
are supplemented by Loo’s own publications and articles on Loo’s exhibitions and
collections in periodicals and newspapers. The identification and study of Loo’s key
correspondence, objects, exhibitions/sales, and clients are key to this examination.

Chapters Three and Four examine how Loo recontextualized ancient Chinese art in
modern America. Chapter Three, *Westernness and Chineseness*, investigates Loo’s
repositioning of Chinese art from a spatial-cultural perspective. On the one hand, Loo
marketed the affinities of Chinese art to Western art. On the other, he emphasized native
contexts to enhance the authenticity and exotic charm of Chinese objects. Chapter Four,
*Time and Timeless*, looks at Loo’s negotiation of Chinese art’s identity from a temporal-
cultural point of view. Loo marketed Chinese antiquities’ ancientness as well as their
compatibility with Western modern aesthetics in response to rising nationalism in China
and the new needs in modern American society. The issue of identity was also manifested
in Loo’s personal history, and his justifications for the removal of Chinese antiquities for
America’s consumption. The sources consist primarily of Loo’s exhibition/sale
catalogues, exhibition reviews in the press, and major scholarship in Chinese art
produced in the first half of the twentieth century.

Chapter Five, *Spectacle*, focuses on Loo’s display strategies, which visually articulated
the power relations in his dealing. Loo transformed Chinese art into a spectacle, which
invited the imperialist, capitalist, and erotic gaze of the viewers in America. This part
utilizes materials from exhibition reviews, Loo’s catalogues, and exhibition installation photographs to reconstruct the display context.

It is important to note that the three parts in this dissertation are necessarily interrelated to reveal the inner workings of the market-academia-display mechanism for the production of Chinese art. The analytical categories in this dissertation are not mutually exclusive but complementary ones. They can often be applied at the same time to analyze an object in Loo’s transaction.

The interest in museum provenance research and collecting is burgeoning (Appadurai 1986, Clifford 1988, Vergo 1989, Cohen 1992, Pearce 1992, 1994, Clunas 1994, Wallach 1998). The complicated life history of many prestigious Chinese art objects outside China, however, has made it increasingly difficult for researchers to find appropriate sources. The materials pertaining to many world-class Chinese art collections in museums are not often complete or available. For many Chinese scholars, access to objects outside China and the relevant information is still limited. It is hoped that this study of C. T. Loo, who was in direct contact with important artworks, dealers, collectors, scholars, curators, and institutions, can serve as a site map and source book for my fellow researchers. For this end, important objects that this dissertation deals with are given museum accession numbers. The location of archival research materials can be found in footnotes and the bibliography.

**Biography as History**

History, shaped by the character, deeds, and values of individuals, was written as biography in ancient China (Lawton 1991, 5). An important chapter in the history of the
American collection of Chinese art, indeed, was shaped by a singular figure: Loo Ching-Tsai. To write about C. T. Loo is to write a history of the exchange, study, and display of Chinese art, and a history of numerous important individuals and institutions in an eventful era. This research on Loo allows me to rediscover a large group of overlooked materials, including many significant exchange and exhibition activities and a body of Chinese art scholarship produced between the 1910s and the 1950s.

Loo was born into a scholarly family in 1880 in his ancestral village of Lou Chia-tu (Lu jia du) outside the city of Hu-chou (Hu zhou) in Zhejiang, the coastal province south of Shanghai. After schooling in Shanghai, Loo, at the age of twenty, went to Paris with meager funds to enter foreign trade. In 1902 Loo met Zhang Jingjiang, the wealthy commercial attaché to the Qing Minster in France. In the same year Loo and Zhang established a private trading company, “Ton Ying”, for the sale of curios, tea, and silk (Fuller 1958, 8). Part of the profit from their business helped finance the revolutionary cause of Sun Yat-sen’s (Sun Zhongshan’s) Xinhai Revolution, which overthrew the Manchu rule and ended the imperial history of China in 1911. Because of this connection to Sun Yat-sen and the Nationalists, Loo and Zhang² were in a privileged position to secure and export high quality antiquities, especially objects from the Qing imperial

² Zhang Jingjiang, the millionaire financier and patron of Chiang Kai-shek (Jiang Jieshi), held high positions in the Nationalist Government in the 1920s and 1930s. He was able to obtain first-rate art works directly from the Imperial collection. “Zhang also oversaw the beginning of the removal of more than half of the Imperial Collections to Shanghai in 1933 following the Japanese invasion of Manchuria. It was during this period that many imperial works of art found their way into Western collections…” (Chinese Art-Research into Provenance. “Ton-Ying & Co.”
collection, despite the Chinese government’s restrictions on the exportation of antiquities.³

In 1908, Loo established other antique business under the name “Laiyuan and Company” in Paris with branches in Beijing and Shanghai. Loo’s business benefited not only from China’s accelerating pace in its entry into the global economy at the turn of the twentieth century,⁴ but also from his contact with leading dealers, collectors, museums, and scholars in France.⁵ Loo was aware of the incipient interest in early Chinese art in the West. He observed that the taste for later works dominated the early twentieth-century Euro-American market, “Up to this time,⁶ with the art center in Paris, we were dealing only in Ch’ing porcelains, particularly three color on biscuit and at this time the famous Morgan, Altman and Salting Collections were made.” (Loo 1940, Preface) (Fig.2). Loo mentioned that in the mid-1910s he sold an ancient jade plaque to the French collector G. Gieseler for 320 francs (U.S. $ 64), and “…at the same time, three-color porcelain objects---such as black hawthorns, were selling for from 23 to 50 thousand dollars” (Loo 1950, Preface). It is in the field of early Chinese art that Loo detected a new market. In

³ In 1913 and 1914, the Chinese government passed two acts to impose restrictions on the exportation of antiquities (Tao 2003, 53).
⁴ At the turn of the twentieth century, Shanghai emerged as the largest commercial center of China. Foreign trade flourished there.
⁵ Loo’s associates include the dealer Marcel Bing, the collector Dr. G. Gieseler of the Northern Railways Company of France, the director Musée Cernuschi, d’Ardenne de Tizac, and Sinologists, such as Victor Segalen, Jean Lartigue, Edouard Chavannes, and Paul Pelliot.
1909 he decided to develop sculpture as “a new line in Chinese art” in France (Loo 1940, Preface). In 1912, Loo started to collect archaic jades for Gieseler. 

The Formative Years: 1915-the Early 1920s

After Europe entered World War I, Loo’s business expanded into America. Upon his arrival in the U.S. in the mid-1910s, Loo saw new opportunities. In the winter of 1914-5 he successfully sold his American clients several life-size Chinese stone sculptures, which he could not dispose in Europe (Loo 1940, Preface). Loo proudly claimed that with his contribution to the University Museum (UPM), the opening of Harrison Hall in 1915 was “a great revelation to the public” (Loo 1940, Preface).

Loo’s fruitful debut in America is not surprising. As the result of the devastating World War I in Europe, and America’s rise as the world’s leading power, the world’s center for collecting Chinese art had decidedly shifted from Europe to America by the 1910s. This situation was vividly depicted in a letter dated June 27, 1918 from Loo to the Harvard professor Paul J. Sachs. Loo gave a report on the market conditions in Paris, “As regard to art, there is nothing to be seen; the majority of the art treasures are already removed out of Paris…we are packing some of our things too, but it is very difficult to have any means of transportation…It is not necessary to say that there is no transaction possible during the present period, especially it is the summer and the majority of the rich

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7 According to Loo, around 1909 the French dealer Marcel Bing bought a fine stone head in China for only ten Chinese dollars (Loo 1940a, Preface).
8 Loo observed that the Western world had rarely seen any authentic archaic jades before 1912 (Loo 1950, Preface).
9 Loo’s clients include the University Museum, Philadelphia, Mrs. Eugene Meyer, the Detroit Institute, and another American collector.
Parisians has gone since some time already. “10 According to the statistics of the Chinese antique export trade with the U.S. in the port of Shanghai,11 the United States was the dominant exporter from 1916-1931. In 1916, for example, the U.S. exported 434,335 custom taels12 worth of Chinese antiques from Shanghai. In comparison, England exported 12,950, and France 10,881 (Futian 2005, 77).

Loo’s business also benefited from the chaotic situation in China and the growing interest in ancient Chinese art in America in the early twentieth century. After the fall of the Qing dynasty in 1911, imperial collections and many important private collections became available on the market. When Loo arrived in America, Asian art pioneers, such as Okakura Kakuzo, Ernest Fenollosa, and John E. Lodge at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, and Berthold Laufer at the Field Museum in Chicago, had laid a foundation for the reception of early Chinese art in America. The core of the early Chinese art collection at the Freer Gallery of Art was formed between 1914 and 1919, when the magnate collector Charles Lang Freer acquired a large number of fine Chinese paintings, archaic jades, bronzes, and sculptures from C. T. Loo and other art dealers.13 It is also during this period that American scholars made seminal contribution to the study of Chinese art in the West.14 Important publications include Ernest Fenollosa’s *Epochs of Chinese and

10 C. T. Loo to P. J. Sachs, June 27, 1918, folder: Loo T.C. Dealer, Paul J. Sachs files, HUAMA.
11 Shanghai with Beijing and Tianjin were the major ports for antique exportation in China.
12 Chinese currency.
13 Keith Wilson, e-mail message to author, September 20, 2007, and C.L. Freer purchase voucher, CLFP-FGA.
14 European scholars dominated Chinese art study in the West in the early twentieth century.
Japanese Art (1907), Berthold Laufer’s Chinese Pottery of the Han Dynasty (1909), Jade: A Study in Chinese Archeology and Religion (1912), and John C. Ferguson’s Outline of Chinese Art (1919).

In his first few years in America, Loo was busy establishing himself. His galleries under the name “the Société Chinoise Léyer” first opened at the 489 Fifth Avenue in New York,\(^{15}\) and then moved to 557 Fifth Avenue under “Lai-yuan & Co.” in 1915.\(^{16}\) Loo concentrated on the cultivation of his clientele. He approached curators at the University Museum, Pennsylvania, the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston,\(^{17}\) the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, and the Fogg Museum at Harvard University. He established contact with leading collectors such as C. L. Freer,\(^{18}\) Eugene and Agnes Meyer, and John D. Rockefeller, Jr. Loo arranged several exhibitions/sales. In March 1915 a painting exhibition, one of his earliest exhibitions in America, was launched in his galleries in New York.\(^{19}\) In May 1915 an auction of his collection was held at the American Art Gallery.\(^{20}\) Loo also acted as broker between C.L. Freer and other dealers such as Charles Vignier and Marcel Bing. In the 1910s and early 1920s, the most prestigious objects that Loo handled include two Yixian Lohans (MFA 15.255, Met 21.76), works in the 1916 Descriptive Catalogue of Ancient and Genuine Chinese Paintings, two relief stone panels

\(^{15}\) Letterhead, invoice from C. T. Loo to C.L. Free, November 8, 1915, C.L. Freer purchase voucher, CLFP-FGA.
\(^{16}\) C. T. Loo to J.E. Lodge, October 29, 1915, folder: Lai-Yuan Co., box: Unofficial Correspondence L, 1910-1922, AAOA-MFA.
\(^{17}\) The earliest correspondence retrieved in my research is dated January 2, 1915, when Loo visited the MFA (C. T. Loo to J. E. Lodge, January 2, 1915, folder: Lai-Yuan Co., box: Unofficial Correspondence L, 1910-1922, AAOA-MFA.)
\(^{18}\) In 1915 Loo met C. L. Freer for the first time (Loo 1940, Preface).
\(^{19}\) American Art New, March 20, 1915, 3.
of Taizong emperor’s horses (UPM C395, C396), and the Sui bronze altar previously in Duanfang’s collection (MFA 22.407).

America’s importation of Chinese antiquities, however, suffered from America’s entry into World War I. The statistical data in the chart below shows that in 1918 the volume of China’s antique export trade with the U.S. in the port of Shanghai dropped from 379,376 custom taels in 1917 to 42,317 (Futian 2005, 77).

Table 1

*Shanghai Port: Chinese Antique Export Trade Volume with the U.S. (custom tael), 1916-1931*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Shanghai Port: Chinese Antique Export Trade Volume with the U.S. (custom tael)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1916</td>
<td>434,335</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1917</td>
<td>379,376</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1918</td>
<td>42,317</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1919</td>
<td>210,360</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920</td>
<td>327,765</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1921</td>
<td>177,112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1922</td>
<td>325,135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1923</td>
<td>478,497</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1924</td>
<td>692,176</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1925</td>
<td>580,112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1926</td>
<td>778,325</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1927</td>
<td>742,407</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1928</td>
<td>629,918</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1929</td>
<td>570,014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td>462,314</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931</td>
<td>398,084</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The First Boom: 1923-1929

In the 1920s, peace resumed and the international art trade gradually recovered from the damaging effect of the war. By 1924, the volume of art importation in America reached the highest point since the beginning of the war. In 1919, the volume of the antique export trade with the U.S. began to increase in the port of Shanghai in 1919. In 1924 the volume of China’s antique export trade with the U.S. reached its highest point since 1916. In 1926 and 1927 the export trade volume reached a record high (Table 1, Futian 2005, 77). In the mid-1920s, the price of top-quality Chinese antiquities in America became comparable to that of the European Old Masters’ works. In Europe, the Chinese art business also flourished in the mid-1920s.

The surge of interest in Chinese art, especially pieces of early periods, was manifested not only in the booming market, but also in the museum world in America. In 1923 the Freer Gallery of Art in Washington D.C., the first national gallery devoted to Asian art, opened to the public. American institutions conducted a series of field expeditions to China. In the 1920s Langdon Warner from the Fogg Museum (Mowry 1996) and Carl Whiting Bishop from the Free Gallery organized expeditions to China. By the end of the 1920s museums in America, including the MFA, the Met, the FGA, Cleveland Art Museum, Field Museum, Honolulu Academy of Art, the UPM, the Rhode Island School

22 Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr. purchased from Yamanaka & Co. two Chinese gilt bronzes (Met 38.158.1a-n, 38.158.2 a-g), for $175,000 in January 1925. In May, 1925 Mr. John D. Rockefeller, Jr. acquired from Duveen Brothers, Inc. Botticelli’s painting, Virgin with Child and St. John, for $180,000 (Memo of special purchases, March 13, 1926, folder 1446, Yamanaka 1909-1940, box 144, OMR-RAC).
23 C. T. Loo to L.E. Rowe, March 10, 1924, folder: C. T. Loo & Co. 1920-1944, RISDA.
of Design Museum, had developed comprehensive or representative Chinese collections (March 1929a). Chinese objects in American museums had been admitted into the pantheon of fine arts, as Benjamin March observed, “Both China and Japan have now passed out of the stage of strangeness and strictly ethnological interest, and throughout the museum world their arts are increasingly collected, appraised and appreciated in full equality with the great arts of all time and peoples.” (March 1929a, 19)

The burst of energy in the field of early Chinese art and archaeology was also indicated by new developments in academia. From the mid-1920s onwards, Chinese art scholarship in the Euro-American world made remarkable strides. There was a parade of monographs on Chinese jade, bronze, sculpture, ceramics, and painting (Pope-Hennessy 1923, Laufer 1927; Koop 1924, Bishop 1927; Ashton 1924, Siren 1925; Hetherington 1922, Hobson 1923, 1925; Waley 1923, Ferguson 1927, Siren 1928). There also appeared a series of important survey books on Chinese art including Gaston Migeon’s *L’art Chinois* (1925), Robert L. Hobson’s *Chinese Art* (1927), and Osvald Siren’s *Histoire des arts anciens de la Chine* (1929), *Burlington Magazine Chinese Art* (Binyon et al 1925) and *the Romance of Chinese Art* (Binyon et al 1929). The last two books coauthored by authorities in the West were particular influential.24

The rising status of Chinese art in America was signaled by four landmark events in the 1920s. One was the International Conference on Oriental Art in 1926. The conference was acclaimed as “the most important Congress of this sort ever held in America” with

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24 These books were available both in Europe and America. While most contributors of the *Burlington Magazine Chinese Art* (1925) were Europeans, American scholars/curators Carl W. Bishop, Kojiro Tomita, Benjamin March played a significant part in *the Romance of Chinese Art* (Binyon et al 1929).
the participation of leading European experts.25 In the same year, the China Institute was founded to foster understanding between the U.S. and China through education, and to promote the study of Chinese culture in America.26 Another significant event was the publication of Benjamin March’s *China and Japan in Our Museums* (1929), a survey report of American museum collections of East Asian art. March proudly announced in the book, “…nowhere else in the world could Chinese and Japanese art be so conveniently and exhaustively studied as in eastern America” (March 1929a, 1). March also noted the comparatively small contribution that American scholars had made to Chinese art study and the lack of Chinese art specialists in American museums.27 The fourth remarkable event was the loan exhibition of Chinese art at the Detroit Institute of Arts, which not only showcased a wide range of Chinese antiquities but also indicated the marked interest in early Chinese art. As the exhibition review observed, “Porcelains were the first of the manual arts of China to achieve popularity in the West, but in recent years students and collectors have become increasingly concerned with other and earlier productions…Unusual opportunities and comparative monetary wealth have gone hand in hand with increasing knowledge and appreciation to help many American individuals and museum form distinguished Chinese collections.” (March 1929b, 4)

In China, though chaos and wars continued, art and archaeology initiatives as part of the nation-building program gained momentum. In 1924 the National Palace Museum

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26 [http://www.chinainstitute.org/about/history.html](http://www.chinainstitute.org/about/history.html)
27 See Chapter Three, p.156-7.
opened in Beijing. The excavation of the Shang dynasty capital at Anyang began in 1928 under the support of the new Nationalist government in China.

Vis-à-vis current market conditions and interests in Chinese art, Loo’s business flourished. He made a series of important acquisitions, exhibitions/sales, and publications. According to Loo, he secured a group of Song murals in 1923 (Loo 1949, Introduction). In 1924 he acquired an entire archaic jade collection unearthed in China (Loo 1950, Preface). During 1928-1929 Loo obtained a large number of outstanding excavated jades and bronzes (Loo 1950, Preface). Important sales Loo made include the sixth-century Buddhist votive stele (MFA 23.120) and the painted Han tiles to the MFA (25.110-3, 25.190). Under his patronage a series of important catalogues by leading experts were published, including Tch’ou Tō-yi and Paul Pelliot’s *Bronzes antiques de la Chine appartenant à C. T. Loo et cie* (1924), Berthold Laufer’s *T’ang, Sung and Yüan Paintings Belonging to Various Chinese Collectors* (1924), Paul Pelliot’s *Jades Archaiques de Chine: apartemant a M.C. T. Loo.* (1925), and Michael I. Rostovtzeff’s *Inlaid Bronzes of the Han Dynasty in the Collection of C. T. Loo* (1927). Loo’s thriving business during this period was signaled by the construction of his impressive new gallery in Paris on the rue de Courcelles during 1926-8 (Fig.3).

The efflorescence of Chinese art came to a stop in 1929 when the stock market crashed in U.S. and the depression that followed affected the world economy and international art trade. Compared to 1926, the volume of China’s antique export trade with the U.S. in Shanghai dropped almost by half in 1931 (table 1, Futian 2005, 77).
The Golden Age: 1929 -1941

Despite the Great Depression, Chinese art gained new impetus in the world in the 1930s. By the end of the 1920s Chinese art had become entrenched in American museums. In the 1930s, while pioneer collectors of Chinese art continued their earlier efforts, Chinese art interest spread from national, encyclopedic, and more established museums to regional, smaller, and newer museums, including the William Rockhill Nelson Gallery of Art, the Seattle Art Museum, the City Art Museum of St. Louis, the Toledo Museum of Art, and the Worcester Art Museum. The popularity of Chinese art also resulted from the increasingly internationalized art scene in the U.S. From the 1930s onwards non-Western art was collected and displayed in the U.S. with growing enthusiasm.28

The soaring energy in the field of Chinese art was also manifested in the academic world in the West. In the late 1920s and 1930s, new art journals such as the Eastern Art (1928-1931) and the Parnassus (1929-1941) became forums to advocate Chinese art in America. Art magazines with international scope, like the Art New, significantly increased their coverage of Chinese art (Fig.4). On the foundation that scholars laid in the 1920s, the study in Chinese art and archaeology broadened and deepened in this decade.

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28 The 1930s and 1940s saw a parade of exhibitions of non-Western art in America, including the Mexican Art exhibition (1930) at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, the Exposition of Indian Tribal Art (1931) at the Grand Central Galleries in New York, American Sources of Modern Art (1933), African Negro Art (1935), Prehistoric Rock Pictures in Europe and Africa (1937), Twenty Centuries of Mexican Art (1940), Indian Art of the United States (1941) Art of the South Seas exhibiting cultural materials of Polynesia, Micronesia and Australia (1946) at the Museum of Modern Art, New York (Rushing 2002). In 1936 the exhibition of Art Treasures from Japan was organized by Harvard University and the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.
Herrlee Glessner Creel published *The Birth of China: A Study of the Formative Period of Chinese Civilization* in 1937. Bernhard Karlgren developed a system to date ancient Chinese bronzes (Karlgren 1936). There emerged a new generation of American scholars/curators, including Laurence Sickman, Archibald G. Wenley, and Carl W. Bishop, who were solidly grounded in Chinese language, culture, and archaeology (Cohen 1992, 87). New energy in the field of Chinese art in America was injected by several distinguished European émigré or visiting scholars, such as Alfred Salmony (Salmony 1938), Ludwig Bachhofer, and Paul Pelliot. Chinese art study in the West also benefited from contributions from leading Japanese and Chinese scholars. From the 1930s onwards, Umehara Sueji (Umehara 1931,1933-5, 1936), Guo Moruo (Guo 1935), Li Ji (Li 1929-33), Rong Geng (Rong 1941), Chiang Yee (Chiang 1935,1938), received growing international recognition. It is also during this period that courses on Chinese art, language, and culture were integrated into the American university curriculum. From 1927 onwards Langdon Warner began to train Asian art specialists at Harvard (Mowry 1996). In 1932 the first Far Eastern Seminar, an intensive and integrated study of philosophy, literature, history and language, was offered at Harvard University.  

Though the 1930s was a decade of devastating wars and upheavals in China, antiquities received increased attention. Facing economic crisis, civil war, and escalating conflicts with Japan, the Chinese government employed art and archaeological objects to spur nationalistic fervor and to garner international support. In the 1930s series of excavations on the ruins of ancient dynasties were conducted. In 1935-6 the Chinese

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The government turned the *International Exhibition of Chinese Art* in London into a stage to glorify Chinese art, history and civilization. From the late 1930s to the mid-1940s, Chinese art became a tool for war relief and cultural diplomacy between China and the U.S.

The mid and late 1930s marked a watershed in the reception of China, its history and art in the world. In 1937 Carl W. Bishop remarked on the changing attitudes toward China in the U.S.: “China is now a subject of interest to everyone. Recent books about her have attained the rank of ‘best sellers.’ Her history, her civilization, her language—all that concerns her, in fact—are receiving a steadily growing amount of attention in our universities, our colleges, and our high schools. We find collections of Chinese art in all our larger and many of our smaller cities…No longer, in short, do we think of the Chinese people, when we think of them at all, as quaint, curious, and somehow different from the rest of the civilized mankind; as doing everything backward, and with manners and costumes unchanging, stereotyped, fixed for all time. On the contrary, we are beginning to realize that the development of China has been as eventful and variegated and picturesque as that of any country on earth.” (Bishop 1937, 7) World-wide interest in Chinese art was marked by a series of important exhibitions and publications in the late 1920s and 1930s. In 1929 the first comprehensive exhibition of Chinese art was staged at the Academy of Fine Arts in Berlin (Turkel-Dero 1929). In 1933 Bernhard Karlgren organized an *Exhibition of Early Chinese Bronzes Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities* in Stockholm. In 1934 an exhibition of Chinese Bronzes was organized by the Louvre. In the same year another exhibition of Chinese bronzes was held in the *Musée de*
l'Orangerie. In 1935-6, the ground-breaking *International Exhibition of Chinese Art* in London showcased over 3,000 objects from some 200 lenders all over the world.

Riding the rising tide of Chinese art, Loo’s business reached its peak in the second half of the 1930s. Loo was active in England, France, Germany, and America, expanding his international art emporium. Between 1933-1941 Loo launched at least one important exhibition or publication project every year. He contributed to the *Exhibition of Early Chinese Bronzes Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities* in Stockholm, and the exhibition of Chinese bronzes in the *Musée de l’Orangerie*. Loo was a major lender of the *International Exhibition of Chinese Art* in London. Sculptures, jades, and bronzes were the major categories in his business, as indicated by his exhibitions/catalogues, including *Sino-Siberian Art in the Collection of C. T. Loo* (1933), *Exhibition of Chinese Bronzes* (1939), *An Exhibition of Ancient Chinese Ritual Bronzes Loaned by C. T. Loo & Co* (1940), and *An Exhibition of Chinese Stone Sculptures* (1940). Loo’s activities in America during this period had a crucial part in the formation of Alfred Pillsbury’s bronze collection, and Grenville L. Winthrop’s sculpture, bronze, and jade collections. Loo also supplied the FGA, MFA and Met an outstanding group of bronzes and stone sculptures. While continuing his business with mega-museums, Loo played a crucial role in the formation of Chinese art collections in the newly established or regional museums. As a close associate of Laurence Sickman, Loo introduced a group of important objects to the Nelson Gallery. Loo also fostered an intimate personal and business relationship with Richard Eugene Fuller, the president and benefactor of the Seattle Art Museum. Loo
launched exhibitions of his collections at the City Art Museum of St. Louis, and the Toledo Art Museum.

By the mid-1930s, Loo’s business in the U.S. had acquired an encyclopedic stature. The culmination of Loo’s dealership was signaled by three feats. In 1936, Loo’s new galleries opened in the Fuller Building at 41 East 57th Street in New York with an impressive exhibition entitled Chinese Art Through the Ages. In 1937 Loo published the Index of the History of Chinese Arts: An Aide-Memoire for Beginners, summarizing his three-decade dealership and connoisseurship. In 1941, Loo organized a clearing exhibition/sale of over 1,000 objects in his New York galleries. All major categories in all major periods in Chinese art were well represented.

Loo’s business success in America in the late 1930s, however, was overshadowed by the impending world war. While Loo was active in America in the early 1940s, he was separated from his families, who were in German-occupied France.30 From the late 1930s onwards, Loo, with his connection with the Chinese government, played a significant role in the war relief drive and Chinese-American cultural diplomacy, such as the 1939 exhibition Three Thousand Years of Chinese Jade in New York, a fund-raising event for civilian sufferers in China.

**Strategic Shift and New Impetus: 1941-1950**

The early 1940s marked the end of an era for the collection of Chinese art in America. Loo sadly noted in the 1940 catalogue An Exhibition of Chinese Stone Sculptures, “...I

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30 C. T. Loo to K. Tomita, October 31, 1940, folder C. T. Loo, box: I to L. 1936-1947, AAOA-MFA.
think the collection of Chinese sculptures is nearly at its end” (Loo 1940, Preface). China was entangled in the anti-Japanese war and civil war. The sources for Chinese antiquities, especially large-scale monumental sculptures, were drained due to years of war, plundering, and tightened government control. In 1941 America was plunged into World War II. Subsequently, Loo’s major rival in the U.S., Yamanaka & Co. was out of business because of the Japanese-American conflict. The Asian art authority John E. Lodge passed away in 1942. The tycoon collector of Chinese antiquities Grenville L. Winthrop dies in 1943. The age of ambitious museums and magnate collectors were gone.

On the other side of the picture, the 1940s saw new opportunities in the field of Chinese art. With America’s entry into the Pacific war, its involvement with Asia was intensified. In the 1940s the band of American collectors of Chinese art broadened, and Chinese art infiltrated into the popular consciousness and daily life in America. It is in this decade that Chinese art and archaeology scholarship in America came of age, signaled by Carl W. Bishop’s *Origin of the Far Eastern Civilizations* (1942), and Grace Dunham Guest and Archibald G. Wenley’s *Annotated Outlines of the History of Chinese Arts* (Guest and Wenley 1946). American scholars of Chinese art became more specialized, and devoted more attention to the knowledge and methods in the native context (Waterbury 1942, Bachhofer 1946, Pope 1947). Chinese art study in this decade became more institutionalized, as indicated by the formation of the Chinese Art Society of America. Consisting of a group of collectors, curators, scholars, and dealers, the
organization was established in 1943 in New York to promote the exhibition, study, and publication of Chinese art.\textsuperscript{31}

In response to the changing environment, Loo formulated new strategies. The draining supply of antiquities in China forced Loo to rely more on resources within the Euro-American world. Loo frequently acquired objects from auctions or by exchanges in the U.S. He was also active in brokerage. Loo began to release his old inventory and to promote less known or less popular categories such as lacquer (China Institute in America 1945). Aware of the rage for modern art in the U.S., Loo started to merchandise the “modern” quality of ancient Chinese art objects, such as Song ceramics (C. T. Loo, Inc 1947), Song murals (C. T. Loo, Inc 1949), and Ming and Qing paintings (Asia Institute 1949). Noticing the changes in his clientele, Loo concentrated on smaller and less expensive items for private collectors’ personal or home beautification. In this decade, Loo continued organizing exhibitions or other philanthropic events for war relief and the improvement of China-U.S. relations. Loo also played an active role in organizations that promoted Chinese art and culture. He was responsible for art and exhibition affairs in the China Institute in America, and served as the treasurer of the Chinese Art Society of America.

The Communist party came to power in 1949, and the authority in Shanghai confiscated a large and important collection from Loo’s Shanghai branch. He realized that “dealing in Chinese antiques was at its end and that I would be deprived of all my

\textsuperscript{31} \textit{New York Times}, October 16, 1944.
enjoyment” (Loo 1950, 3). In 1950 Loo announced the liquidation of his New York firm and his retirement.32 Loo’s art empire, the “Loouvre”, fell.

32 Loo’s New York firm was taken over by Loo’s associate, Frank Caro.
CHAPTER 1: A FLOW CHART

Based on archival materials, Part I investigates the process and modes of transaction in Loo’s dealing. This chapter offers an overview of the Loo’s business operations by tracing the journey of the object in his collection. Each section looks at a particular phase in a typical transaction: supply, documentation, promotion, and distribution.

Supply

Even a brief look at C. T. Loo’s sources of supply yields the impressive scope, quality and mobility of Chinese antiquities in the international art market in the first half of the twentieth century.

Loo often presented himself as an adventurer who eagerly embarked on art hunting sagas around the world. Loo made regular buying tours in Europe, China, and the United States. His writings provide us some clues about his journeys in this eventful era. Loo mentioned his jade purchase trip in 1914 for the French collector G. Gieseler on the eve of World War I, “…I left Paris on July 21, (it happened to be the last train leaving France before the First World War) and arrived in Peking on the first of August, the very day when France declared the General Mobilization and the invasion of the East by the Germany Army occurred. I stayed in Peking for two or three days and then went to Shanghai” (Loo 1950, Preface). In 1917 Loo wrote to the Harvard professor Paul Sachs about his travel in China, “Since three weeks that I am in (Pekin?), I have also been to Shantung, but nowhere can I find any very important objects! I am leaving soon for the

33 Shandong.
States by way of Shanghai to Vancouver and will be pleased to see you again and show
you the few things secured during my stay in (Pekin?).”34

Loo’s objects came from a variety of sources, but the major one was China. The
impressive volume and quality of the objects that Loo acquired owed largely to a
fortuitous environment for art dealers. The fall of the Qing Empire in 1911, and the
constant domestic and international upheavals following the establishment the Republic
resulted in the breakup and world-wide dispersal of some of the most important imperial
and private collections. A vast amount of high-quality antiquities suddenly became
available in the market.

The objects Loo acquired often had illustrious pedigree. The velvet wall hanging that
Charles Lang Freer purchased from Loo, for example, was reportedly stolen from an
imperial palace in 1913.35 The painting, *Composing Poetry beneath Pine Trees under a
Cliff*, attributed to the Song painter Ma Hezhi, was in the collection of Prince Gong
before it came to Loo’s hand (Kwen 1916, Cat. no. 25) (Fig.5). The black jade scepter
(Sackler 1943.50.59) that Grenville L. Winthrop acquired from Loo in 1935 was in the
collection of Wu Dacheng, the renowned jade collector and connoisseur in China.36 The
Buddhist bronze altar (MFA 22.407), recognized as the finest example of the Sui dynasty,

34 C. T. Loo to P. J. Sachs, August 20, 1917, folder: Loo T.C. Dealer, Paul J. Sachs files, HUAMA.
35 The imperial palace refers to Jehol Palace.C.L. Freer’s purchase voucher, December 17, 1915, CLF-FGA.
36 Purchases from C. T. Loo, G. L. Winthrop account book, January 1, 1935, HUAMA.
came from the prestigious Qing antiquarian and official Tuan Fang (Duanfang)’s collection, which was dispersed after he was beheaded in a riot (Fig.6).37

The strong demand of the art market and loose government control also encouraged rampant plundering of Buddhist monuments and archaeological sites in China. Many stone sculptures were truncated and removed in a rather deplorable way. In the photograph, the stone lion (MFA 40.70) that the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston acquired from Loo was shown in situ in the cave temple in Longmen before it was chiseled out of the rock face (Fig.7a, b). The monumental mural (Met 1965, 65.29.2) at the Metropolitan Museum of Art were cut into over thirty pieces before they were packed into crates for shipping (Fig.8 a,b,c). It has been noted that after taking things available above the ground, looters turned to the underground. An article in the Parnassus commented on the two funerary relief panels (MFA 37.248, 37.249) on display in Loo’s 1936 exhibition, “Many tomb slabs have appeared on the market in the last few years. It would almost seem as if those who collect the sculpture in China, having stripped most of the countryside bare, had now to look into the ground for something with which to fill the market.” (Roberts 1936, 21-22) (Fig.9) The first five decades of the twentieth century witnessed a parade of archaeological findings in China. Many ancient bronzes and jades for which Loo was best known were reportedly excavations. It is not surprising that Loo

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37 The major part of the bronze altar was acquired in 1920s and the rest in 1940s. The major part (MFA 22.407) was acquired through C. T. Loo. The dealership in transaction of the other part (MFA 47.1407-1412) was unclear. According to Lawton, the altar piece was offered by Adolph Worch to Freer for $80,000 before MFA acquired it through Loo (Lawton 1991, 89-90).
was honored by the American press as Chinese “archeologist”.\(^{38}\) In the 1920s, John E. Lodge, director of the Freer Gallery of Art commented on Loo’s quick response to new archeological findings, “Loo and others, for example, are brimming with information about the Hsin-ch’eng finds, ---the disposition that has been made of them, or that may later be made of them, or the possibility of getting some of them by purchase…”\(^{39}\)

According to Loo, he secured the entire collection of the excavated archaic jades from two tombs, one near Chang-the fu, the other near Loyang in 1924 (Loo 1950, Preface). In the late 1930s and the 1940s, a large group of ancient bronzes and jades that Loo handled were reportedly unearthed in An-yang and Jincun.\(^{40}\)

In order to scout and obtain first-rate objects, Loo established an elaborate network in China, consisting of staff in his branch offices in Shanghai and Peking (Beijing), and local agents, whom he called “friends” or “buyers” (Tao 2003a,b). Paintings in the 1916 Descriptive Catalogue of Ancient and Genuine Chinese Paintings, for example, were assembled, researched, and published by F.S. Kwen, manager of the Shanghai office of Loo’s business.\(^{41}\)

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\(^{38}\) *New York Times*, June 20, 1926.

\(^{39}\) Hsin-ch’eng (Xinzheng) was an archaeological site in Henan. J.E. Lodge and C.W. Bishop, March 31, 1924, F/S Field Expedition Records, 1914, 1923-42, Box 7 of 22, SI.

\(^{40}\) Purchases from C. T. Loo, G. L. Winthrop account book,1939-1942, HUAMA.

Anyang and Jincun were important archaeological sites in Henan.

\(^{41}\) Loo ingeniously used his partners in China to negotiate with Charles L. Freer in the transaction of a painting collection in 1916. Loo wrote to Freer, referring to his partners in Shanghai as “friends”, “Our friends wired me twice saying that they hope you will excuse them for not being able to accept your kind offer: it is beyond their means to do so. They have decided a special price only for you of the whole collection for 60000.” (C. T. Loo to C.L. Freer, October 23, 1916, CLFP-FGA)
supplies him with first-rate antiquities. According to Loo, the wall paintings\textsuperscript{42} included in his 1949 catalogue, \textit{Chinese Frescos of Northern Sung}, were found by his traveling buyer (Fig.10). Loo wrote, “During my second visit to China after the First World War in 1923, our Peking office offered me a dinner, with all the members of our firm. Among those present, was one of our traveling buyers, who mentioned to me that somewhere near the Honan-Shansi border, there was a ruined temple in which still remained some fragments of wall paintings that we may have the chance to secure…” (Loo 1949, Introduction) Loo mentioned that in the late 1920s an expert buyer stationed by his firm secured nearly everything that came out from the tombs in Jincun village (Loo 1950, Preface).

It is also worth noting that Loo’s connection to the Guomindang government in China put him in a privileged position to acquire and export Chinese antiquities. Edward von der Heydt, Loo’s client and close friend, observed, “Being in touch with important people of the then comparatively new kuo-min-tang regime, he was able to know of precious works of art which had been hidden from the storms of many revolutions.”\textsuperscript{43} (Heydt 1957, 186)

Not all the object that Loo offered for sale in the U.S. came directly from China. With his social network and branches in Paris and New York, Loo was able to acquire Chinese antiquities from a variety of Euro-American sources. The bronze kneeling figure that Loo introduced to the Pillsbury collection (Minneapolis 50.46.114), for instance, was in the possession of Emorphopolous, a renowned collector of Chinese art in England (Fig.11). The terra-cotta actor figure, which was offered to the Rhode Island School of Design

\textsuperscript{42} One of the mural fragments is in the collection of the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art.  
\textsuperscript{43} kuo-min-tang (guomindang) refers to the Nationalists.
Museum, was bought by Loo in the Benson Sale in 1924 in London. Loo also acquired objects from local sources in America, including auctions, dealers, collectors, and museums. Loo, for example, paid $1,350 for a Sung T’zu Chou (Cizhou) gallipot at the 1942 sale of Mrs. Christian R. Holmes at the Parke-Bernet Galleries, Inc. in New York.

It is important to note that some objects, even before they came into Loo’s hands, had already had a complicated life history in and out China. The journey of the painted tiles (MFA 25. 10-13, 25.190 ) in the MFA collection offers a good example (Fig. 12). According to Loo, before he sold the tiles to the MFA in 1925, Mr. Kwen already brought them to the U.S. in 1918 and offered them to Mrs. E. Meyer. Unable to sell, they were sent back to China. Loo then acquired them in China and shipped them to Paris.

Substantial financial resources, high-powered connections, and marvelous opportunities placed Loo in a unique position to channel a vast amount of first-class Chinese antiquities into the United States. There are good reasons why Charles L. Freer, the tycoon collector-connoisseur, complimented Loo by stating that American needed him.

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44 Loo stated in the letter to the RISD director L.E. Rowe that it was acquired two years ago (1923) in the Benson Sale (C. T. Loo to L.E. Rowe, February, 11, 1925, folder, C. T. Loo & Co.1920-1944, RISDA). According to the New York Times, this sale was conducted in 1924 (New York Times, July 2, 1924).
45 Loo’s contact with American dealers, collectors and museums is discussed in detail in Chapter Two.
46 New York Times, April 15, 1942.
47 Mr. Kwen probably refers to Loo’s partner F.S. Kwen. C. T. Loo to J.E. Lodge, October 27, 1924, folder and box unknown, AAOA-MFA.
48 C. T. Loo to C.L. Freer, June 12, 1916, CLFP-FGA.
**Documentation**

Once an object came into Loo’s hand, it was carefully inventoried, photographed, and researched. This process allowed Loo not only to keep track of his merchandises, but also to prepare for his promotional and selling activities. The materials from the Frank Caro Archive (FCA), which holds inventory cards, negatives, photographs, and research materials of Loo’s firm, shed light onto Loo’s business operations and the life histories of the objects that passed through his hands from the mid-1930s to early 1950s.49

**Inventory-making**

The properties, prices and circulation history of the objects in Loo’s hand were carefully organized and recorded in typewritten inventory cards (sometimes with added handwritten notes), as illustrated by the one for a bronze phoenix vessel (Fig. 13 a,b).50

On the front

- “(Cat 7 (?)) 41”51
- 50045
- cat. No. 12 Inv. P-5-cxppp
- 41 cat. #74 Inv. Oct -6-36-Mex $ axppp
- bronze phoenix vessel Chow 6 th BC (early chou)52
- h 9” L 5 X2400 $8500
- Feb 1937 sent to London (H 9? 2 5 X2400 $8500)53

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49 Frank Caro was Loo’s associate since 1928. In the 1980s, Caro donated the materials including inventory cards, negatives, photographs, and other documentation and research materials to the Visual Resources Collections, Institute of Fine Arts, New York University.

50 Handwritten notes were made when there was additional or special information on the card.

51 Handwritten note in pencil.

52 “Chow 6 th BC” was crossed out and “early chou” was added.
* 1938 Nov returned to New York
* 1938 Feb 12 sent to Paris ($4000)\(^54\)
* 1938 Oct returned Inv-P-12: SH$ axpp (3000)\(^55\) (less 50 % -?)\(^56\)
* (Inscription in the neck)\(^57\)
* Wine Vessel (Tsun) in the form of a phoenix Green patina Inscribed. Early Chou Period, Height: 6 ¼”
* 1940 Oct 8 Sent to Detroit Institute of Arts
* 1940 Dec sent to St. Louis ($3000) \(^58\) #31
* 1941 Jan sent to Chicago
* 1941 Feb 2nd left by Mr. Loo to Toledo museum” ($4000)\(^59\)

On the back
* “1941 March returned from Toledo
* 1943 May 8 on loan to Mr. Neinirdorff $4000
* 1943 Jen 29 ret from Niendorff
* 1947 March 8 on app. At Mr. Junkunc for $3500
* 1947 Sept, ret from Junkunc
* 1949 Feb 4 on app. At Mr. Tutsin for $2500
* 1949 Feb 18 returned by Mr. Tutsin
* 1953 Dec sold to Brundage for $1500\(^60\) \(^61\)

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\(^53\) Handwritten notes in pencil.
\(^54\) Handwritten notes.
\(^55\) Handwritten notes in blue in a circle.
\(^56\) Handwritten notes in red.
\(^57\) Handwritten notes in pencil.
\(^58\) Handwritten notes in green.
\(^59\) Handwritten notes upper to this line.
\(^60\) Handwritten notes.
\(^61\) Inventory card 50045, FCA.
A typical inventory card as the one above has three parts. The first part, located above the card’s first red horizontal line, consists of the following information: an identification number, the date possibly when the inventory was made, its acquisition price, the location of its source, its publication history, and sometimes, repair information. The identification number for this bronze vessel is “50045”. Some objects were given a combination of numbers and letters to indicate their special status. The objects numbered as LD-6/003 to LD-7, for example, came from Jean-Pierre Dubosc in April 1946, August and November 1947. “Inv.Oct-6-36” in this card indicates that the bronze phoenix vessel may have been inventoried on October 6, 1936. Its buy-in price was possibly “Mex $ axppp”, an encoded number valued in Mexican dollar.62 “41 cat. #74” indicates that it was published as no. 74 object in Loo’s 1941 catalogue, *Exhibition of Chinese Arts: New York. Special Sale* (C. T. Loo and Company 1942). The second part contains the information about the object’s properties, including its title, a brief description of its formal elements, its age and dimensions. Sometimes an image is attached. The inventory card for the bronze vessel, for instance, contains a descriptive title and its Chinese name (*tsu*), its shape, patina, and inscription, as well its period and height. At the lower left corner on the back of the inventory card is a small photograph of the vessel with its identification number and catalogue number. Once the basic information is filled in the first two parts, the object is ready to enter the promotional and sale stages. The third part

62 According to C.W. Bishop, the so-called Mexican dollar is the Chinese silver dollar, which bears a fluctuating rate to American dollar based upon a gold standard. (C.W. Bishop to J. E. Lodge, May 21, 1927, box 7 of 22, F/S Field Expedition Records, 1914, 1923-42, SI)
of the card records in detail the information about the circulation of the object, such as prices, who handled the object, when and to whom it was offered.

Photography

The reproduction of the objects relied on photography. The Frank Caro Archive contains eight cases of negatives of the art objects that Loo handled. The number and quality of the negatives in the archive leaves no doubt of the importance of photography to Loo’s business. Most negatives in the archive are candid black-and-white views of the objects against a neutral background. Minor objects were often given group portraits. For important objects, high-quality images were made. In the offer of a gilt bronze statue of Guanyin to the MFA in 1921, Loo sent a color lithograph reproduction to the curator J.E. Lodge. In 1949 Loo had colored kodachrome made for a group of Song murals. In the Frank Caro archive a small number of the photos were views of the object in storage, or gallery or exhibition installation views. Negatives were organized mainly by medium (e.g. bronze, jade, ceramics, sculpture, painting), period (e.g. ceramics from Neolithic period to the Tang dynasty), type (e.g. bronzes), site (e.g. Buddhist sculpture sites such as Tianlongshan and Yungang ), or clients (e.g. Freer, Met, Pillsbury).

Photographs were used not only for documentation, but also for research, publication, and advertisement.

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63 The statistics do not include glass plates.
64 Only a select group of objects were photographed due to the cost of photography in Loo’s time.
65 C. T. Loo to J.E. Lodge, February 4, 1921, folder: Lai-Yuan Co., box: Unofficial Correspondence L, 1910-1922, AAOA-MFA.
66 C. T. Loo to G. Washburn, March 9, 1949, folder, C. T. Loo & Co.1920-1944, RISD.
Repair

There is abundant evidence showing that some objects were cleaned, repaired or mounted after they came into Loo’s hand due to their age, or the damage caused in the process of removal, shipping, or handling. For instance, Loo had a stone slab cleaned upon the request of J. E. Lodge.\(^{67}\) A Tang dynasty silver plate was repaired at Turnbach for $25 before it was sold to Minneapolis.\(^{68}\) Some sculptures were framed and mounted.\(^{69}\) In the 1940s, Loo reached an agreement with the MFA curator K. Tomita that if the museum purchased the painting he offered, Loo would send it to China to be remounted.\(^{70}\)

Repair was a sensitive issue in antique trade. It was a standard practice that Loo would have photographs taken before an object was repair. In his offer of the Buddhist stele (MFA 23.120) to the MFA, Loo mentioned, “As we always do, I have those photos taken before the repairing so you will be able to see all the damages, they are now being repaired and will be finished in the next month.”\(^{71}\) (Fig. 14) When the stele was sold to

\(^{67}\) C. T. Loo to J.E. Lodge, December 29, 1920, folder: Lai-Yuan Co., box: Unofficial Correspondence L, 1910-1922, AAOA-MFA.
\(^{68}\) Turnbach might be a professional restorer or a company. There existed a group of professionals who engaged in artwork repair. For example, JDR Jr. employed Kiyo Okajima from “The Art Company, Inc. Works of Art, Fine Art Repairs, 690 Madison Ave. Cor, 62 nd St.” to repair his ceramics (JDR Jr. to K. Okajima, July 21, 1944, folder 99 Art objects 1939-1961, box 11, OMR-RAC). “Minneapolis” may refer to Minneapolis Institute of Arts. Inventory card LI-9/126, FCA.
\(^{69}\) C. T. Loo to J.E. Lodge, October 6, 12, 1917, folder: Lai-Yuan Co., box: Unofficial Correspondence L, 1910-1922, AAOA-MFA.
\(^{70}\) C. T. Loo to K. Tomita, May 9, 1946, folder C. T. Loo, box: I to L, 1936-1947, AAOA-MFA.
\(^{71}\) C. T. Loo to J.E. Lodge, August 23, 1922, folder: Lai-Yuan Co., box: Unofficial Correspondence L, 1910-1922, AAOA-MFA.
the MFA, it had been repaired in Paris. The restoration of the stele seemed to concern curator Kojiro Tomita, as indicated by his letter to J.E. Lodge, “Have you finally decided to remove the French head of the central figure and the other restorations on the stela (sic)?” Loo was aware that John D. Rockefeller, Jr. would pay meticulous attention to marks of repairs in ceramics (Altman 2006, 70). In the offer of a Ming vase, Loo, therefore, enclosed a photograph with handwritten notes about its condition.

On the middle left
* “Crackled also on the other side.”

On the upper right
* “section movable from the lower part.”

On the middle right
* “section.”

On the lower right
* “When fired this section (stick?)? dropped apart. Very (?) (?) (between?).”

(Fig. 15)

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72 C. T. Loo to J.E. Lodge, November 7, 1922, folder: Lai-Yuan Co., box: Unofficial Correspondence L, 1910-1922, AAOA-MFA.
73 K. Tomita to J. E. Lodge, March 8, 1923, folder and box unidentified, AAOA-MFA. The MFA seemed suspicious about dealer’s repair practices, which was also reflected in the museum’s response to the conditions of the painted Han tiles acquired from Loo (MFA 25.10-13). Tomita reported to Lodge, “Mr. Thompson has one of the tiles in his room observing the condition of the paint. I think he is inclined to believe that a certain matter applied to the surface in France has a tendency to pull off the paint, and therefore he may find it necessary to clean it before he treats the surface in his own way. Dr. Ross, however, wished to have nothing done until Mr. Loo has been asked in regard to the work done in Paris.” (K. Tomita to J.E. Lodge, January 28, 1925, folder and box unidentified, AAOA-MFA)
Research

Research was a crucial component of Loo’s business not only because many objects came into Loo’s hand without information about their provenance, place of origin, or age, but also because research conducted by eminent scholars would increase the objects’ value and prestige. Research materials also served as a clearinghouse for Loo’s promotional and selling activities. Loo was aware of the critically important role of scholarly research in promoting the categories that were new to the American audience, such as ancient jades and bronzes. Loo, for example, gathered an all-star international research team to prepare the 1940 catalogue, *An Exhibition of Ancient Chinese Ritual Bronzes*. Alfred Salmony, a prominent scholar of Chinese art, was responsible for the description. James M. Menzies, a specialist in the oracle bone, revised the translation of the inscription. J. E. Lodge, and J. A. Pope, curators at the FGA, and Chang Nai-chi, a Chinese collector-connoisseur, contributed to the reading and translation of the inscriptions on some objects. The research materials created around the late 1930s and the early 1940s for a group of ancient bronzes demonstrate the thoroughness of Loo’s research work. The research folder for the wine vessel *yu* contains description of its form and symbolism, a transcript and translation of the inscription, as well as information about its age, historical relevance, provenance, comparative piece, and references to scholarship both Chinese and Western, ancient and current.\(^75\)

\(^75\) The bronze vessel was inventoried in May 1939, and left by C. T. Loo on approval at A. Pillsbury in November 1939, and sold to him in May 1940 for $3,000. (Inventory card
Promotion

Publicity

Loo understood that visibility and reputation were crucial to the value of art merchandises. Loo made a great effort to imprint his art collection on the public consciousness through publications and exhibitions. With an awareness of the incipient interest in ancient Chinese art in the West, Loo organized a series of activities in the 1920s to promote a collection of the excavated jades from Henan. Loo stated, “Those small jade ornaments with beautiful color, were quite new to all of us and so interesting that I felt they should be published as documentation for future research. Professor Paul Pelliot, a good friend of mine, finally agreed to help me and we published: Jades Archaiques de la Chine. C. T. Loo & Cie, Paris, 1925.” (Loo 1950, Preface) According to Loo, during 1925-1926, he brought the collection to the U.S. and exhibited them in Chicago, however he failed to sell them as a lot. He observed, “…it seems that the time was not ripe for the public to understand this type of art, so I was unable to sell them” (Loo 1950, Preface).

Loo’s publications often went hand-in-hand with his research and sale/exhibition projects. After the acquisition of an outstanding bronze collection, Loo launched a research and promotion campaign. He enlisted two leading experts in the field, Tch’ou Tō-yi and Paul Pelliot, to compile a well-researched catalogue with high quality photographic illustrations. After the catalogue was published, Loo traveled from Paris to New York, and launched an exhibition in Montross Gallery from December 5 to 20,
1924. Upon his arrival, Loo fanfared his fabulous new acquisition and the upcoming sale/exhibition in major newspapers and art periodicals. An *Art News* article, for example, announced that Loo “has just returned from France, bringing an unusually fine collection of bronzes and pottery as well as paintings and other objects recently obtained in China.”\(^{76}\) Loo’s publicity campaign was intensified during the exhibition. On the opening day of the exhibition, the article titled “Loo Exhibits Rare Bronzes from China” appeared in the *Art News*.\(^{77}\) An article in the *New York Times* on December 7 gave a report on the exhibition at length in a rather flattering tone, “The Exhibition of C. T. Loo’s collection of antique Chinese bronzes, ceramics and paintings at the Montross Galleries is not one to be light-heartedly appraised.”\(^{78}\) A few days later another report related to Loo’s show was given by the *Art News*. Entitled, “Diplomat Buys an Ancient Chinese Bronze”, the report presented the first object in the 1924 catalogue, a bird-shaped bronze in a striking photograph (Fig. 16). The text beneath the image announced, “Bronze Libation Vessel, Shang Dynasty. This bronze libation vessel in the form of an owl, dating from the Shang dynasty (1766-1122 B.C.) has been purchased from the collection of C. T. Loo now on exhibition at the Montross Galleries. Mr. and Mrs. Robert W. Bliss were the purchasers. Mr. Bliss, who is Minister to Sweden, is now on his way to Europe. He is loaning the piece to the Metropolitan Museum during his absence.”\(^{79}\) This report was not only an announcement of an acquisition by a celebrity, but also an acknowledgement of the quality of Loo’s collection at the exhibition. It also sent a

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\(^{76}\) “Loo Brings Bronzes Buried for Ages,” *Art News*, November 29, 1924.
\(^{77}\) “Loo Exhibits Rare Bronzes from China,” *Art News*, December 5, 1924.
\(^{78}\) “Art Notes: Antique Art from China,” *New York Times*. December 7, 1924.
tantalizing invitation to those who had not seen Loo’s exhibition. In addition to catalogues, exhibition announcements, and reviews, more direct advertisements of Loo’s business and special exhibitions appeared in the Art News, and Parnassus on a regular basis. Loo’s advertisement often featured one eye-catching item in his current exhibition. The cover of the January 6, 1940 issue of the Art News for example was occupied by the image of the stone lion (MFA 40.70) on display at the Loo’s Exhibition of Chinese Stone Sculptures (Fig. 4).

Compared with catalogues and reviews devoted to Loo’s collections and exhibitions, publications of a scholarly nature served as equally effective advertisements for Loo. Loo often supplied scholars or museums with objects for their publication/exhibition projects. Alfred Salmony’s monograph, Carved Jade of Ancient China, included at least twenty pieces in Loo’s collection (Salmony 1938). Loo also contributed several pieces to the University Museum’s exhibition and the accompanying catalogue, Archaic Chinese Jades in 1940. Several items included in Loo’s 1950 Exhibition of Chinese Archaic Jades benefited from their publication history in Salmony’s book and the University Museum’s 1940 exhibition catalogue (Loo 1950).

**Exhibition**

Objects in Loo’s holding could be organized and displayed in various ways. Some of the exhibitions showcased objects in a wide range of media. Loo’s 1941-2 sale, the *Exhibition of Chinese Arts*, included all the major categories that Loo dealt in: bronze, bronze, bronze.

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80 The future display of the bronze vessel as a loan in the Met could well be an extension of Loo’s publicity campaign.
81 The number may be larger because the book also included a few pieces from G.L. Winthrop and Freer Gallery collections, which were acquired from Loo.
jade, ceramics, sculpture, and painting. Some exhibitions featured specific media, such as the *Descriptive Catalogue of Ancient and Genuine Chinese Paintings* (1916), the *Exhibition of Chinese Stone Sculptures* (1940), the *Exhibition of the Wares of the Sung Dynasty* (1947), and the *Exhibition of Chinese Archaic Jades* (1950). Some exhibitions presented a special collection or works by an artist. The paintings in the collection of Chang Ts’ung-yu (Zhang Congyu), for example, constituted the core of the *Exhibition of Authenticated Chinese Paintings* in 1947. In 1943 Loo staged an exhibition featuring Alison Stilwell’s Chinese paintings. Some exhibitions were topical. *An Exhibition of Figures in Chinese Art* (1946) for instance, displayed statues of human figures in various medium from the Han dynasty to the Qing dynasty. Other exhibitions followed a chronological order, such as *Chinese Art Through the Ages* (1936).

Loo staged shows not only in his own galleries, but also in other commercial galleries and museums. In the 1910s and 1920s, Loo’s collections were displayed in auction houses before the sales. The *Exhibition of Chinese, Indian and Cambodian Art* was held in the Wildenstein gallery in 1931. A few exhibitions of Loo’s collections were launched in museums, such as the 1941 exhibition *Ancient Chinese Bronzes and Chinese Jewelry* at the Toledo Museum of Art. Some exhibitions were on the move. The *Exhibition of Ancient Chinese Ritual Bronzes* was first on view in the Detroit Institute of Arts from October 18 to November 10, 1940, then traveled to the City Art Museum of St. Louis from November 22 to December 15.

Loo not only organized exhibitions to display exclusively his own collections, but also participated in “group” shows, which included objects from multiple sources, such as the

In addition to the press, Loo advertised his collections and exhibitions through personal contact. He wrote to curators, collectors and scholars and sent them catalogues and exhibition invitations. Before the 1924 exhibition of Loo’s bronze collection at Montross Gallery, he wrote to the Harvard professor Paul Sachs, “You might have already heard that I have actually on hand a collection of bronzes and it is rather difficult to get together an ensemble of so many specimens that I have published a catalogue with the help of Mr. Pelliot. This catalogue has just came out and I wish you to have one for your personal library…”82 Later he sent Sachs an invitation card for the exhibition. Loo’s promotional strategies were often quite effective. After receiving Loo’s catalogue of the 1947 *Exhibition of the Wares of the Sung Dynasty*, the MFA curator K. Tomita wrote to Loo, “…what an incredible array of splendid examples of Sung ceramics! Who but you alone could assemble such a collection single-handed! I am planning to be in New York about the 24th of this month to feast my eyes on the fine pieces in the exhibition.”83

Exhibitions, together with publications and media exposure, created a favorable environment for Loo’s sales by attracting public attention, stimulating scholarly interest, and whetting collectors’ appetite. In response to the RISD’s interest in a fresco displayed in the 1949 exhibition of *Chinese Frescos of Northern Sung*, Loo boasted about the positive reception of the show, “…this Exhibition has provoked (sic) many enthusiastic

82 C. T. Loo to P. J. Sachs, November 8, 1924, folder Loo, T.C. Dealer, Paul J. Sachs files, HUAMA.
83 K. Tomita to C. T. Loo, April 10, 1947, folder C. T. Loo, box: I to L, 1936-1947, AAOA-MFA.
comments in the newspapers and amongst the art lovers. We have many visitors every
day, more than for any other Exhibition we have had up to-day.\textsuperscript{84}

Loo’s promotional activities not only increased an object’s visibility, but also created a
recorded history for it. When the bronze phoenix vessel was offered to Mr. Neinirdorff
for $4,000 on May 8, 1943, Loo could boasted about its illustrious life: It had been
catalogued and exhibited in the 1935-6 \textit{International Exhibition of Chinese Art} in
London, the 1939 \textit{Exhibition of Chinese Bronzes}, the 1940 \textit{Exhibition of Ancient Chinese
Ritual Bronzes} in museums in Detroit and St. Louis, and in the 1941-2 \textit{Exhibition of
Chinese Arts} in Loo’s gallery (Fig.13b). Loo knew all these could be translated into
market value.

\textbf{Distribution}

\textbf{Stock}

Many objects in Loo’s possession changed hands in a brief period of time. The
“handscroll painting, representing bamboo in a misty day by Ni Yang Lo”, for example,
came from China in May 1947, and was sold in October 1947 in America.\textsuperscript{85} Not all the
objects were put out for immediate sale after they came into Loo’s hands. Loo kept a
private collection, as indicated by the category “C. T. Loo Private”, in the negative
collections at the Frank Caro Archive.\textsuperscript{86}

The boundary between the collection for sale and Loo’s private collection could be
fluid. For example, in 1919 Loo mentioned a painting in his personal collection to the

\textsuperscript{84} C. T. Loo to G. Washburn, March 9, 1949, folder, C. T. Loo & Co.1920-1944, RISDA.
\textsuperscript{85} Inventory card 87526, FCA.
\textsuperscript{86} Case 16-18, FCA,
MFA curator Lodge, “It is the only one owned by me personally and I have never shown it to any of my clients.”\(^{87}\) After showing it to Lodge, Loo offered it for sale at the price of $25,000.\(^{88}\)

Loo kept a large stock of antiquities, which would increase in value over time. The review of the 1931 *Exhibition of Chinese, Indian and Cambodian Art* was impressed by the quality of the items on display despite the difficult situation in the Asian art market. The review suggested, “Perhaps Mr. Loo has had these treasures well hidden for decades in his Paris cellars.” (Jayne and Fernald 1931, 25) This speculation was confirmed by Loo’s correspondence with K. Tomita in 1947. Loo mentioned that he was taking out for sale a bronze, which he acquired two or three years before the war in the Pacific.\(^{89}\)

Loo’s 1940 *Exhibition of Chinese Stone Sculptures* was a calculated market move in response to the draining sources of Chinese sculpture due to years of pillage and the Chinese prohibition against exportation of its national treasures (Salmony 1940b, 8). The *Art Digest* review of exhibition noted, “Some of the stones have been in the firm’s possession in Paris for upwards of 20 years.”\(^{90}\) Loo’s strategy capitalized on the rule of supply and demand, as indicated by Loo’s prediction of the increased value of stone

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\(^{87}\) C. T. Loo to J.E. Lodge, January 3, 1919, folder: Lai-Yuan Co., box: Unofficial Correspondence L, 1910-1922, AAOA-MFA.  
\(^{88}\) C. T. Loo to J.E. Lodge, March 28, 1919, folder: Lai-Yuan Co., box: Unofficial Correspondence L, 1910-1922, AAOA-MFA.  
\(^{89}\) C. T. Loo to K. Tomita, May 19, 1947, folder C. T. Loo, box: I to L, 1936-1947, AAOA-MFA. “two or three years before the war in the Pacific” possibly indicated the late 1930s and the 1940s.  
\(^{90}\) “China’s Monumentality in Stone,” *Art Digest*, January 15, 1940, 15.
sculpture in the early 1930s, “…this kind of stone is bound to go higher in price because it will be more and more difficult to get anything of this size from China.\textsuperscript{92}

\textbf{Selling Techniques}

From the Mid-1910s into the early 1920s, Loo had a series of auction sales.\textsuperscript{93} The Loo et Cie Sale, for example, was conducted at the American Art Galleries in May 1915. The total of the 425 lots was $23,259.50.\textsuperscript{94} Items listed in the \textit{Catalogue of Antique Chinese Porcelains; Pottery, Carved Jades, Agates and Rugs and Carpets belonging to Loo & Cie., Société Chinoise Léyer} were mostly decorative objects of the Ming and Qing dynasties, which were less valuable or important compared to the prominent ancient objects for which Loo was best known.

Loo became less active in auction sales from the 1920s onwards. As he emerged as the leading dealer of first-rate Chinese antiquities, Loo concentrated on the type of sales that relied on a favorable long-term relationship with a group of frequent buyers. The success of his sales depended largely on his selling techniques as well as his knowledge about his clients’ preferences and the market conditions.

If Loo’s exhibitions and other publicity campaigns in the previous phase were to get the word out, his selling activities were behind-the-scene operations. The selective and exclusive nature of Loo’s salesmanship was observed by Edward von der Heydt, Loo’s close friend and client: “Like most Chinese dealers Loo had the habit of not showing his

\textsuperscript{91} Loo referred to a stone animal he offered.
\textsuperscript{92} C. T. Loo to K. Tomita, November 27, 1931, folder: C. T. Loo, box: Kinosh- to M, 1930-1935, AAOA-MFA.
\textsuperscript{93} \textit{American Art News}, December 30, 1916. Other auctions of Loo’s collections include the ones at the Anderson Galleries in January 1917 and April 1921.
best pieces to every visitor. Some of his Chinese pieces were hidden away in the cellar. He showed them only to those he believed to have real understanding of Chinese art.” (Heydt 1957, 186)

In Loo’s dealing, the key to a successful sale was to identify prospective buyers and pair them with objects based on their preferences, buying power, and market conditions. In the late 1930s and early 1940s, the most valuable bronzes, for example, were offered to top museums and tycoon collectors, including the FGA, Met, A. Pillsbury, and G. L. Winthrop. The bronze vessel gui priced $10, 500 and $10,000, for example, was offered first to Winthrop, then to the Freer, and the MFA, as the inventory card shows.

* “L 19/41
* 87062 Inv.c –38-Nov.40 SH$: CVPPP
* Bronze kuei Shang 95 3000 96
* 1941 Jan, 2nd sold to Winthrop for $10,500
* 1941 Jan 6 returned from Mr. Winthrop
* 1941 Jan 17 taken by Mr. Loo to Mr. Lodge $10,500
* Bronze KUEI with two ram’s head handles. Masks of T’ao t’ieh in deep casting. Black patina. Shang.
* 1941 Jan 20 returned from Freer
* 1941 Feb 28 th taken by Mr. Loo to Boston $10000
* 1941 Marc on app at Boston Museum for $10000
* 1941 May returned broken
* 1942 April 7 Mr. Loo took it to Boston
* 1942 April 10 ret. from Boston
* 1942 May 1 sold to Mr. Winthrop for $7000 (?).”97

95 It was crossed out.
96 It was marked with a circle.
Less valuable objects like the bronze phoenix vessel (priced between $2,500-$4,000) were sent to smaller or regional museums such as the City Museum of St. Louis and the Toledo Museum of Art, and less prominent collectors (Fig. 13 a,b). Size and medium of the objects also mattered in Loo’s pairing. Large-scale, first-class stone sculptures were often reserved for prestigious museums like the MFA, FGA, UMP, and Met. In 1922 Loo, for example, sent the MFA curator and the FGA director J.E. Lodge two sets of photographs of the stone sculptures, including the Buddhist stele that the MFA acquired later (MFA 23.120) (Fig. 14a). In his letter to Lodge, Loo expressed his opinion that they were appropriate for the MFA or the FGA. In contrast, smaller decorative objects like the Ming and Qing porcelain vases and figures were sent to collectors like John. D. Rockefeller, Jr., who collected them primarily to decorate his home and office.

The place where the transaction took place was also significant. Loo would conduct business in the most favorable market. In 1924, Loo noticed that the changing exchange rate had affected the international art market. Loo wrote to the RISD director E. L. Rowe, “I am here since about 3 weeks and have not been away, I may go to London very soon: The business here is very good, majority of the buyers are foreigners, who are encouraged by the low exchange of the franc." It is noticeable that some objects were shipped back and forth for sales or exhibitions between Europe and America. For

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97 Inventory card 87062, FCA.
98 Inventory card 50045, FCA.
99 C. T. Loo to J.E. Lodge, August 23, 1922, folder: Lai-Yuan Co., box: Unofficial Correspondence L, 1910-1922, AAOA-MFA.
100 “Here” refers to Paris. C. T. Loo to E. Rowe, March 10, 1924, folder C. T. Loo & Co., 1920-1944, RISDA.
instance, the incense burner that Loo sold to A. Pillsbury in 1939 was dispatched to Paris in 1934, 1937 and 1938.\textsuperscript{101} In 1927, unable to sell his archaic jade collection as a lot in the U.S., Loo brought it to London and made an exhibition there, which resulted in the dispersal of the collection in England (Loo 1950, Preface). Loo would also wait for the best occasion to sell his objects. Knowing his potential buyers were flocking to visit the epoch-making \textit{International Exhibition of Chinese Art} in London, Loo timely launched a sale/exhibition there in 1935, featuring “…an extensive and varied collection of fine products in bronze, pottery and porcelain, many of which vie in importance with those now at Burlington House”.\textsuperscript{102}

Once prospective buyers were identified, Loo approached them by letters, sent them photographs and catalogues, or invited them to come to his galleries or exhibitions to see the actual objects. One of Loo’s selling techniques was to show important objects to his clients in person. Loo, for instance, invited John D. Rockefeller, Jr. to see the pottery Lohan (Met 21.76), “…so I may better explain its full history to you. It is certainly the

\textsuperscript{101} Inventory card content
* “15347
* (Ting -handwritten) bronze-brule-parfum, trepied avec couvercle, incrustations argent Ching’sun 5 B.C. cxpxp
* 1934 Dec. 4 th on appro at Freer ((ret) cxpxp –may refer to Freer or Paris)
* 1937 6 mars, expedie a paris
* 1937 Nov. returned from paris
* 1938 Jan 7 th on appro at Freer 18000
* 1938 May 14 returned from freer
* 1938 May 18 sent to Paris
* 1938 Oct ret to New York Inv. P-11-sh$: chxpp
* 1939 Jan 24 sold to Mr. Pillsbury for 11000.” (Inventory cards 15347, FCA)

most unique piece that we can imagine from the pottery world. The photo is not a good one and does not show the real beauty of expression or color of the figure” (Fig. 18).103 Loo often traveled internationally with important objects to meet his clients. The transaction of the stone shrine (MFA 22.380) and the famous Duanfang bronze altar (MFA 22.407) between Loo and the MFA offer a good example (Fig. 17, 6). On October 13, 1921, Loo notified curator Lodge, “The shrine has left Paris and is going to be the steamer leaving Le Havre the 15th inst. So the stones may be in New York about the 25th, and I am sailing on the 22nd. On S.S. Paris, I might be there on the 30th. In the meantime I have instructed Miss Wheildon to ship the shrine directly to your honorable museum from the Customs. This will give you all the time necessary to examine stones at your leisure.”104 Upon his arrival in New York on October 28, Loo expressed his wish to examine with Lodge the stone temple and the bronze altar.105

Another selling technique was to make his clients believe that they were the first persons to see the objects or to receive the offer. Loo was aware that collectors preferred to acquire objects that had never been owned by other collectors before. This technique not only made his customers feel privileged, but also conveyed the message of freshness, uniqueness and genuineness of the object he offered. Loo, for example, mentioned a pair of objects with animal motifs to John D. Rockefeller Jr., “…because of our troubles last year with the Chinese government, we have kept them without showing to any body

104 C. T. Loo to J.E. Lodge, October 13, 1921, folder: Lai-Yuan Co., box: Unofficial Correspondence L, 1910-1922, AAOA-MFA.
105 C. T. Loo to J.E. Lodge, dated Sunday (October 31, 1921) folder: Lai-Yuan Co., box: Unofficial Correspondence L, 1910-1922, AAOA-MFA.
(yet?), but they are so rare and great as art. I will be happy to show them to you when I will be in New York; they are in the storage unpacked.”

In the transaction of the Buddhist stele (MFA 23.120), Loo informed the curator J.E. Lodge, “I am reserving them for you: I will not speak or send photos to any one unless I hear from you not interested on them. In case should you wish to try to secure I will ship them directly to you as we have done with the shrine in order that nobody either here or in the States would have know of their existence.”

(Fig. 14a) In the transaction of a bronze figure (WAM 1941.47), Loo informed the WAM director Charles Sawyer that it was secured by his firm “two or three months after its discovery and has never been owned by any collector before”.

When the prospective buyers showed a further interest, Loo often had the objects delivered to them. This method allowed his clients to develop an intimate relationship with the object and to harmonize the object with their own space. This technique spoke to Loo’s customers like John D. Rockefeller, Jr., who stated, “…it often takes time to come to know and fully appreciate a great work of art. By living with it over a period of time you gradually discover that you were right to put your faith in a respected adviser’s quicker perception” (Washburn 1970, 7). For private collectors, Loo had objects delivered to their homes or offices. Loo’s offer of two pieces of bronzes to Mrs. and Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr. provides an extreme example. Loo allowed them to take two

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106 Undated, prior to November 17, 1930, C. T. Loo to JDR Jr. folder 1370, C. T. Loo 1916-1949, box 137, OMR-RAC
107 C. T. Loo to J.E. Lodge, August 23, 1922, folder: Lai-Yuan Co., box: Unofficial Correspondence L, 1910-1922, AAOA-MFA.
108 C. T. Loo to C. Sawyer, November 17, 1941, WAMA.
bronzes to the Hotel Plaza-Athenee, where they stayed during their visit to Paris, for their study and enjoyment over the weekend. It was a common practice for Loo to deliver objects to the museum so that the curator could study the object, show it to museum benefactors, and even put it on public display before the acquisition decision was made.

**Packing, Shipping, and Insurance**

In the process of offering objects to prospective clients, packing, shipping, and insurance were aspects that Loo and his staff must have dealt with on a regular basis due to the heavy traffic of objects passing through their hands. Loo often had objects delivered to his prospective buyers at his own expense. In some cases, clients could pick up the object from Loo’s store. Loo’s instruction to W. Gordon, director of the RISD, as how to pick up a mural piece from his store gives us a vivid picture of his operation. Loo wrote, “We will have it packed carefully in a small case…we will have the case ready in the service elevator, which is next to the entrance of the building…your truckman can call us up a few minutes before, so that our men will wait for him downstairs with the case in the elevator service.” If a return occurred, Loo would also cover the shipping fee. Loo, for example, gave an instruction to Lodge as how to return the objects, “They can go by the mail with value of $1000 for the scroll and (?) if possible, I wish you let

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109 JDR Jr. to C. T. Loo, November 17, 1930, folder 1370, C. T. Loo 1916-1949, box 137, OMR-RAC.
110 When an object was delivered to potential buyers on approval, it would be considered as a loan, which has the potential to become a commodity.
111 C. T. Loo to G. Washburn, March 25, 1949, folder, C. T. Loo & Co. 1945-1949, RISDA.
Sometimes, he asked his client to ship the object directly to his next prospective buyer.

Loo’s firm also handled international shipping. Take the Buddhist stele (MFA 23.120), for example. It was shipped out from Havre, France on November 7, 1922 on the Steamer Rochambeau. Loo expected the stone to reach Boston sometime around November 20. On November 19, 1922, Loo informed Lodge that the stele had arrived but was still in the customs and would take one or two days before it would be shipped to Boston. The stele was then delivered to Boston per express, which took about two or three days.113

Loo would have insurance placed on an object when it was shipped due to the high risk involved in the transportation of valuable and often fragile antiquities. The accident that happened in the transaction of the bronze vessel gui between Loo and the MFA well illustrates some of the issues in packing, shipping and insurance. In March 1941, Loo offered and delivered a bronze vessel to the museum for $10,000.114 In May 1941, unable to acquire it, the curator Tomita informed Loo that he had it returned by Railway Express prepaid. A few days later, Tomita received Loo’s report about the damage of the bronze, “Have just unpacked bronze which has a great hole with fifteen to twenty pieces impossible to repair the breakage caused by your museum mistake in shipping such a

112  C. T. Loo to J.E. Lodge, March 26, 1919, folder: Lai-Yuan Co., box: Unofficial Correspondence L, 1910-1922, AAOA-MFA.
113  C. T. Loo to J.E. Lodge, November 7, 19, Sunday (from the context, Sunday may indicate November 26, 1922), November, 1922, folder: Lai-Yuan Co., box: Unofficial Correspondence L, 1910-1922, AAOA-MFA.
114  C. T. Loo to the MFA, March 3, 1941; Tomita to C. T. Loo, May 13, 1941, folder C. T. Loo, box: I to L, 1936-1947, AAOA-MFA.
delicated * (sic.)* bronze in a cardboard box only kindly make inquiry. C. T. Loo.”\textsuperscript{115} Loo notified Tomita that his insurance company would make a report of the accident. Loo further informed Tomita of the cause of the damage, “…this bronze has been sent over here in a small cardboard and from what I can see, the box has been knocked against some heavy cases and crashed the bronze inside.”\textsuperscript{116} The insurance company was of the opinion that the museum should be liable in view of the way it was packed for shipment to Loo.\textsuperscript{117} After a few months of negotiation among Loo, the museum, and the insurance company, Loo informed Tomita that he finally obtain the indemnity for the amount of $3,000 from the insurance company.\textsuperscript{118}

**Offer Letter**

Once the prospective buyer expressed a further interest, or inquired about the price, C. T. Loo would issue an offer letter, which included the name of the items being offered, sometimes, their inventory identification numbers, and their prices (Fig.19). For special

\textsuperscript{115} C. T. Loo to K. Tomita, May 15, 1941, folder C. T. Loo, box: I to L, 1936-1947, AAOA-MFA.
\textsuperscript{116} C. T. Loo to K. Tomita, May 16, 1941, folder C. T. Loo, box: I to L, 1936-1947, AAOA-MFA.
\textsuperscript{117} Mr. Baker to K. Tomita, July 10, 1941, Toplis and Harding Incorporated International Adjusters and Surveyors, file No. G. 1838-B, folder C. T. Loo, box: I to L, 1936-1947, AAOA-MFA.
\textsuperscript{118} C. T. Loo to K. Tomita, September 24, 1941, folder C. T. Loo, box: I to L, 1936-1947, AAOA-MFA. Later Loo ingeniously offered the damaged bronze vessel again to the MFA at a reduced price. He stated, “And in order to encourage your Committee, we would accept a reduction of $2000, which would be net 5000, for your Museum, if you still wish to have it. This special quotation is only for your Museum because once repaired I do think that we will be able to sell it at 7000.” (C. T. Loo to K. Tomita, September 24, 1941, folder C. T. Loo, box: I to L, 1936-1947, AAOA-MFA.) On the museum side, they wanted to make sure that before they recommended the bronze again to the Committee the insurance company would not collect from the Museum the amount of insurance that Loo received from the insurance company.
or important items, more detailed descriptions of the objects, their place of origin, condition, provenance, publication and exhibition history, and previous market values would be included in the offer letter. The offer letter was often sent with a personal note from Loo. When an offer was made and the object was sent to the client, a note would be made on the inventory card to keep track of the whereabouts and price of the object.

**Pricing and Bargaining**

The price Loo quoted for an object was affected by market conditions. Loo often used market rule to justify his quotations. In his offer of several stone sculptures to the RISD, Loo wrote to its director, G. Washburn, “I am sorry to say that because of the increasing value in Chinese Arts lately and also because of the little prospect of getting anything from China in future, the price I am sending you are much higher than the ones mentioned in the catalogue, which I hope you will understand, as I do not wish you to feel that we have changed our prices for you; we have done this only according to the evolution of the market.”\(^{119}\) In the negotiation over the piece of the bronze offered to Eugene Meyer, Loo hinted at the existence of other interested buyers. He wrote to Charles L. Freer, “Mr. Meyer has offered $25000 for the Bronze, twice Shanghai has repeated they want $30000 particularly on this piece they are very insistent because they probably see a better market in Japan.”\(^{120}\) Another way to justify the price was to trace the history of the market value of an object or a comparable object. Loo, for example,

\(^{119}\) There is a price list attached to the catalogue, C. T. Loo and Company. *Exhibition of Chinese Arts: New York. Special Sale, November 1, 1941 to April 30, 1942*. C. T. Loo to G. Washburn, November 15, 1943, folder, C. T. Loo & Co.1920-1944, RISDA.

\(^{120}\) Shanghai refers to Loo’s partners in his Shanghai office. C. T. Loo to C.L. Freer, June 15, 1916, CLF-FGA.
wrote to Freer to offer two objects, “I bought those 2 pieces with my personal money and will give those to you at the price I paid-they are very cheap…”121 In the transaction for a stone statue of a winged chimera (RISD 43.592), Loo quoted $6,000 with reference to the market value of the other one in the pair.122 “It originally belonged to a pair which came to Paris about twenty years ago; one of them had the circular base removed because it was originally damaged and was sold to Mr. Octave Homberg, illustrated in Siren’s book, Plate XIII. It was then sold in auction around 1933-1934 and was bought by Edouard Lacarde for 75,000 francs equaling, at that time, around 5000 U.S. dollars.”123 Loo’s buyers were also aware of market conditions. In response to Loo’s quote for a pair of Ming porcelain statues at $1,800, John D. Rockefeller Jr. made a counteroffer of $1,000 on the basis that he bought in 1929 from Loo a larger figure of similar type for $570.124 Loo explained, “…unfortunately, it is so difficult to-day to get anything of this type and, from what I can judge by the news from England, China and everywhere, the value of porcelains-after being very low during the last few years-is now going up every day. In fact, there is no possibility to discover any porcelain on the market in China, and in England, the prices are so much higher than before the war.”125

The price that Loo placed on his merchandises was affected by the value of American currency and the economy situation in the U.S. In his negotiation with the WAM over

121 C. T. Loo to C.L. Freer, July 16, 1916, CLFP-FGA.
122 The listed price is $3,000 (C. T. Loo and Company 1941, Price-list of illustrated Catalogue of Chinese Arts).
123 C. T. Loo to RISD, January 19, 1944, folder, C. T. Loo & Co., 1920-1944, RISDA.
124 JDR Jr. to C. T. Loo, March 8, 1945, folder 106, C. T. Loo 1945-1951, box 11, OMR-RAC.
125 C. T. Loo to JDR Jr., March 9, 1945, folder 106, C. T. Loo 1945-1951, box 11, OMR-RAC.
the price of a Buddhist stele (WAM 1934.34), Loo explained why he could not keep the price he originally asked for, “…it is absolutely impossible for me to take anything less that XXXXX which price, because I have already promised you when you where in New-York. Otherwise I have to keep my original price of XXXXX in as much as the dollar has gone down about 6 or 7 % since I saw you last. It is certainly very unfortunate for me that the dollar has now such a low value. It would be impossible for us to sell any object of Art in America if the dollar continues its deprecation.”

Loo’s international operation also required him to take into consideration the fluctuation of the exchange rate in pricing his merchandises. In August 1921 Loo wrote to J.E. Lodge from France regarding the price of the stone shrine (MFA 22.380), “I do not think it (is?) nice of me to give you the marked price of every body and to avoid any discussion about discounts, I wish to quote you the lowest price and in francs at 175,000 so in case should the exchange get (better?) you would benefit on it.” (Fig.17)

Though Loo always emphasized that the price he quoted was the lowest possible one, he was willing to make a reduction under certain circumstances. Loo often gave discount to important buyers like John D. Rockefeller, Jr., and the MFA. Loo offered Rockefeller a 10 % discount in the transaction of a group of porcelains. In the offer of a bronze gui

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126 The price is confidential archival information. C. T. Loo to F. H. Taylor, March 17, 1934, WAMA.
127 C. T. Loo to J.E. Lodge, August 10, 1921, folder: Lai-Yuan Co., box: Unofficial Correspondence L, 1910-1922, AAOA-MFA.
128 C. T. Loo to JDR Jr., January 12, 1949, folder 1370, C. T. Loo 1916-1949, box 137, OMR-RAC.
to the MFA in 1941, Loo quoted “Special Museum Price” of $10,000 instead of the regular price of $12,000 to show his special favor to the museum.\textsuperscript{129}

In the bargaining process, Loo was often more willing to yield to the counteroffer of the prospective buyer when it was to be a cash payment. Shrewd collectors like Rockefeller knew well that dealers were often in need of cash.\textsuperscript{130} In the negotiation of six pieces of porcelain, Rockefeller tempted Loo with immediate cash. In response to Rockefeller’s counteroffer, Loo wrote, “…beside I need cash 1500 dollars today so I accept your kind offer”.\textsuperscript{131}

\textbf{Payment}

If no agreement was made between Loo and his clients in the negotiation, Loo would ask them to pack the object and send it back to him or the next prospective buyer. A record would be made on the inventory card after it was returned. The object would enter a new cycle of the promotional and distributional activities. If Loo and his client reached an agreement after the negotiation, Loo would send a revised offer letter to the client and waiting for the payment.

\textsuperscript{129} C. T. Loo to the MFA, March 3, 1941, folder C. T. Loo, box: I to L, 1936-1947, AAOA-MFA.
\textsuperscript{130} Joseph Duveen’s cash discount is 10% in his business with JDR Jr. Duveen wrote to JDR Jr., “In common with other business men today I am in need of a large sum of cash and, should you be willing to consider the purchase of the four busts as a cash transaction, I am prepared to reduce the price quoted to you by ten percent.” (J. Duveen to JDR Jr., January 6, 1932, folder 1325, Duveen Brothers-Dreyfus Collection, 1930-1951, box 133, OMR-RAC)
\textsuperscript{131} C. T. Loo to JDR Jr, Tuesday (February 5, 1935), folder 1370, C. T. Loo 1916-1949, box 137, OMR-RAC.
John D. Rockefeller, Jr. and the MFA usually made their payment for each purchase by cash or check. Grenville L. Winthrop had an account in Loo’s firm. He made a monthly deposit, which was put to his credit. Any purchase he made was recorded as balance.\(^{132}\)

In Loo’s business, the transaction of prominent objects often involved a large sum. To facilitate the sale, Loo was flexible in the method of payment. In the transaction of the relief panels of Tang horses, Loo reached an agreement with the UPM that “…the museum would purchase a Chinese bronze vessel for US $20,000 with an understanding to leave the two horses unsold, giving the museum an option to until 1 April 1921 of purchasing the two Sacred Chinese Horses…for the sum of US $150,000” (Zhou 2001, 44) (Fig. 20 a, b). This extended deadline for payment allowed the museum to raise funds for the purchase. According to Zhou Xiuqing, the purchase was completed in three payments in December 1920, and January and March 1921 (Zhou 2001, 44). Loo’s business often involved international monetary transfer. The WAM’s payment for the purchase of the Buddhist stele (WAM 1934.34), for example, was cabled from the U.S. to Loo’s credit at the Guaranty Trust Paris (Fig. 21).\(^{133}\)

In Loo’s dealing with Rockefeller and Winthrop, the final payments usually included the agreed price plus tax.\(^{134}\) The invoice Loo sent to Rockefeller showed the inclusion of the sale tax. “One porcelain statue of an African, wearing a short skirt in three colors.

\(^{132}\) For detail see Chapter Two, pp.91-2.
\(^{133}\) Benjamin H. Stone to C. T. Loo, September 27, 1934, WAMA.
\(^{134}\) Dealers could bypass the tax in their international operation. In the transaction of a pair of Kangxi porcelain *qilins* between Frank Partridge, Inc and JDR Jr, it was noted that “No tax to Partridge as they came from London shop (although accounting dept. has to pay tax direct to government here).” (Frank Partridge, Inc. to JDR Jr., December 12, 1949, binder (unnamed with JDR’s Chinese porcelain purchase vouchers), box 159, OMR-RAC)
Early K’ang Hsi $6000, 1% New York City Sale tax 60, $6060.”135 In Loo’s 1942 sale of a group of bronzes and jades to Winthrop, the final amount that Winthrop paid included 1% sales tax and 10% federal tax. He paid $1,720 for the item listed as “Jade spear head shape knife with bronze handle inlaid with turquoise (?) Shang $1,550”.136

After receiving the payment, Loo would send the client an invoice, which usually included a description of the object and its price, and sometimes information about the discount, tax, and the total sum that the client paid (Fig. 22). The sale would be recorded on the inventory card.

**Warranty**

Some invoices contain warranty of authenticity and age. In the invoice for two pairs of Kangxi porcelain pieces that Rockefeller purchased, Loo stated, “The pieces on the foregoing invoice are guaranteed to be genuine and of the period stated.”137 A similar warranty was issued to WAM concerning the bronze finial (WAM 1941.47) that Loo dated late Zhou period from the 5th to the 3rd century BCE. Loo wrote, “We guarantee the period of this object and we would gladly take it back whenever any one could have any doubt of the period, and can prove the contrary of my declaration.”138

135 C. T. Loo to JDR Jr, October 30, 1945, folder 106, C. T. Loo 1945-1951, box 11, OMR-RAC.
136 February 20, 1942, GD-41/10, purchase from C. T. Loo, Winthrop account book, HUAMA.
137 C. T. Loo to JDR Jr., February 5, 1935, folder 1370, C. T. Loo 1916-1949, box 137, OMR-RAC.
138 C. T. Loo to C. Sawyer, November 17, 1941, WAMA.
End and Beginning

After a deal was completed, Loo often used his client’s acquisition announcement in the press as his advertisement. After the acquisition of a Buddhist stele (WAM 1934.34), the WAM informed Loo, “We are very anxious to send out notices to the art magazines and the press as soon as possible.” The announcement of the MFA’s purchase of the stone lion (MFA 40.70) in the Art News gave Loo credit in the text underneath the photographic image of the lion: “Acquired by the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, from C. T. Loo & Co.”

Loo constantly promised his clients that he would use the fund from his sale to finance new acquisitions, which would be sent to the clients on approval. In 1924 Loo wrote to J.E. Lodge to thank him for sending the check for the purchase of a stone piece, “I was just in need of funds to pay the collection of bronzes which I am rather proud of having them and will take the pleasure of showing you when I come over.” Indeed, for Loo, a finalized transaction means the extension of his art emporium, and a start for a new round of buying, promotional, and selling activities.

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139 P. Cott to M. Riepe, April 11, 1934, WAMA.
141 Loo was probably referring to the bronze collection included in the 1924 catalogue (Tch’ou Tö-yi and Paul Pelliot 1924). C. T. Loo to J.E. Lodge, August 29, 1924, folder and box unidentified, AAOA-MFA.
CHAPTER 2: THE NETWORK

While Chapter One offers a flow chart of C. T. Loo’s typical transactions, this chapter looks at a cross section of Loo’s dealing in Chinese art. “Chinese art” is investigated here not only as a class of objects, but also as a discursive formation in a web of relations in America (Foucault 1972, Clunas 1994). This chapter examines the relationship between the art market, the museum world, and academia, which played a central role in the formation of Chinese art collections in America in the first half of the twentieth century.

In Loo’s time, the unprecedented speed, scale, and complexity of Chinese antiquities’ circulation gave rise to a dynamic network of dealers, collectors, curators, and scholars. It was a place where collaboration and competition coexisted, where profit, politics, and pleasure intertwined. This network, however, has been neglected by scholars largely due to its secretive nature and the limited sources of research materials.

This chapter employs mainly archival materials to reconstruct this obscure matrix through an investigation of C. T. Loo who, in close contact with the most preeminent dealers, collectors, museum professionals, and scholars, functioned as an active player and mediator in this network.

The first four sections examine Loo’s interaction with other dealers, collectors, curators, and scholars. The final part brings together the previous parts to foreground how “Chinese art” was framed by the art market-museum-academia network.

Dealer-Dealer

In the first half of the twentieth century, Chinese antiquities, especially early Chinese art, arrived in the American art market as a new category. Although trading in Chinese
objects started much earlier, from the 1910s onward there emerged a closely-knit, small but dynamic community of dealers specializing in Chinese antiquities in New York City. C. T. Loo was one of them.

**Cooperation**

Compared with dealers in Western art, especially in European art, dealers in Chinese art, occupied a modest, and highly specialized field in the American art market. According to statistical data about America’s art importation in 1924, the total volume for works of art over a hundred years old was $21,116,103. Works from Europe were $19,000,000, and works from China and Japan were about $500,000. The necessity to share the limited resources as well as to raise the profile of Chinese art brought these dealers together. Their close relationship was manifested in the vicinity of their establishments as well as their joint presence in the press and exhibitions. In the January 1939 issue of the *Parnassus*, “Oriental Art” was listed as a distinct category in the “Gallery Index” section (Fig. 23). Most Asian art galleries in the list were in the neighborhood of the Fifth Avenue, Madison Avenue, or between the 51st and 57th Streets in New York City. In the 1930s along the East 57th Street was a cluster of Chinese/Asian art dealers, including C. T. Loo, Tonying & Co., Parish Watson & Co., and Edward Wells. The co-presence and collaboration among Chinese art dealers is also

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143 “Increased Imports of Art Each Year,” *Art News*, November 8, 1924, 5
144 *Parnassus* was a journal published by College Art Association with the goal to promote on Asian art.
145 “Oriental art” in this dissertation is interchangeable with “Asian art” without particular reference to the notion of Orientalism defined by Edward Said.
146 All the Oriental art dealers listed in the advertisement handled Chinese art.
shown in “The Forum of Decorative Arts”, an advertisement section in the March 1937 issue of *Art News*. The advertisement contains images of four bronze vessels in the collection of C. T. Loo, Yamanaka, Bluett and Sons, and John Sparks respectively (Fig. 24).\(^{147}\) In addition to advertising their business together, dealers participated in the same exhibition. C. T. Loo and a galaxy of other dealers,\(^{148}\) for example, contributed to the 1929 loan exhibition of Chinese art at the Detroit Institute of Arts (March 1929b, 9). The joint presence of Chinese art dealers played a significant role in increasing the visibility of Chinese art and shaping the taste of Chinese art in America.

Dealers also collaborated through the exchange of their merchandise. Though C. T. Loo and many dealers often advertised their merchandise as being direct imported from China, it was common that objects circulated among dealers before they were sold to collectors or museums. During the 1930s and 1940s, C. T. Loo traded objects with many major dealers in Chinese art.\(^{149}\) The inlaid and jeweled bronze incense burner that Loo sold to the Freer Gallery (FGA 47.15), for instance, was from the dealer J.T. Tai’s collection.\(^{150}\) Yamanaka & Co. obtained the famous Lohan statue (MFA 15.255) from C. T. Loo (Fig. 25).\(^{151}\) In some cases, Loo bought back objects that he had previously sold to other dealers. In the transaction of a stone relief from the French dealer Charles Vignier, Charles L. Freer received a refund of $350 from Loo’s establishment, Laiyuan & Co.

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\(^{150}\) Negative 11-cnmb 467-472, FCA

\(^{151}\) For details of this transaction, see pp.87-8.
Freer noted that the piece was sold to Vignier from Laiyuan, and when Loo bought it back for Freer from Vignier, Loo refunded Freer, the profit that he supposedly had made in its previous transaction with Vignier.\textsuperscript{152}

Dealers helped each other in selling or buying. According to Loo, the sale of eight life-sized stone statues in the 1910s, for example, was assisted by two dealers, Charles Vignier and Demotte (Loo 1940a, Preface). Dealers could also take shares in buying an object. In the purchase of a Kangxi peachbloom amphora at Park-Bernet sale in 1946, Loo had one quarter share along with Pao from Tonying & Co., Mr. Chang and Mr. Yao.

Exhibition space rental constituted another form of cooperation among dealers. Loo’s collections were not always shown in his own galleries. In 1931, the \textit{Parnassus} review of Loo’s exhibition noted that each autumn Loo launched an important exhibition of Chinese art in Wildenstein galleries (Jayne and Fernald 1931, 25). Before Loo moved to 41 East 57th Street, the exhibition of Loo’s collection was held in the Gallery of Jacques Seligmann in New York in 1935.\textsuperscript{153} The exhibitions in such renowned galleries as Wildenstein & Co. added eminence to Loo’s collections on display.\textsuperscript{154}

Dealers benefited from information exchanges with other dealers. Experienced dealers like C. T. Loo and Yamanaka Sadajiro enjoyed a reputation as the leading experts in their

\textsuperscript{152} Freer stated, “Messrs Lai Yuan & Co. are refunding me $350 (crediting that sum to my acct) being the whole of their profit in the transaction—This action is voluntary on their part and is in accordance with practice—They imported the stone to France from China and when selling it to Vignier of Paris made their profit. Then they purchased it back from Vignier for my account and charge me only the cost of insurance and transportation.” (Freer’s purchase voucher, February 6, 1916, CLFP-FGA).

\textsuperscript{153} “Fine Exhibition of Chinese Arts Shown by Mr. Loo,” \textit{Art News}, Vol. XXXIII, No. 16, January 19, 1935, 3-4.

\textsuperscript{154} Wildenstein & Co. dealt in Western high-class works of art.
field. Loo was called by the press as “eminent expert”, “Orientalist”, and “archeologist”. The dealer could ask his fellow dealers to authenticate pieces in question. In 1915, after the dealer Edgar Gorer submitted a yellow porcelain vase to John D. Rockefeller, Jr., different opinions about its authenticity arose among New York dealers. Gorer then showed the vase to C. T. Loo and D. Ushikubo from Yamanaka & Co. to prove its genuineness. After receiving their verification, Gorer wrote to Rockefeller, “On Saturday, I consulted two Chinese dealers; namely, Mr. Loo and Mr. Kuan Fu-Ts’u, men of the very greatest experience in Old Chinese porcelains…”

**Competition**

In the antique business that relied heavily on secretive and exclusive operations, co-existence and closeness also meant competition among dealers for the limited sources of supply, clients, publicity, and profits. In Freer’s trip to China in 1909, “Chinese dealers flocked to his rooms in the Tartar City in response to his inquiries about early Chinese paintings.” (Lawton 1993, 83) In 1916, Charles L. Freer made six important purchases of Chinese painting from three Chinese dealers. Aware of Freer’s zeal for ancient Chinese paintings and the competition with other dealers, Loo published the *Descriptive* 

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155 The founder of the Yamanaka & Co., Yamanaka Sadajiro was called by Freer as ‘the most experienced critic of Japanese art in this country’ after Fenollosa” (Meech 1993, 133, originally from C.L. Freer to Halsey C. Ives, April 2, 1904, CLFP-FGA). “C. T. Loo Holds Fine Exhibition at Wildenstein’s,” *Art News*, November 7, 1931, 1, 2.

156 Kuan Fu-Ts’u refers to Loo’s partner, F.S. Kwen. E. Gorer to JDR Jr., March 8, 1915, folder 1319, Re. Yellow beaker, 1915-1916, box 133, OMR-RAC.

157 In January 1916 Freer Brought one hundred Chinese paintings for $6,5000 from Lee Van Ching, and thirteen paintings for $7,000 from K.T. Wong. In February 1916, twenty paintings for $19,000 from Lee Van Ching. In September, thirty-two paintings for $18,000 from K.T. Wong. In December, six paintings for $ 6000 and fifteen paintings at $21,000 from Pang Lai ch’en.
Catalogue of Ancient and Genuine Chinese Paintings in 1916 and offered the entire collection to Freer on approval.

When Loo established his firm in America in the mid-1910s, he was acutely aware of his status in comparison with more established dealers. Before 1929, Loo did not have much success in his business with John D. Rockefeller, Jr. In contrast, Duveen Brothers, Inc. and Parish-Watson & Co, Inc, were Rockefeller’s major suppliers of Chinese ceramics. Duveen Brothers’ sale of the Morgan collection to Rockefeller in 1915, for instance, were at the price of $1,657,234.50.158 In 1929, while C. T. Loo made one sale of a group of Ming ceramics to Rockefeller with a total value of $7,000,159 Parish-Watson & Co, Inc. made three sales of Ming and Qing ceramics with a total value of $269,000.160 It is no surprise that in his negotiation with Rockefeller Loo referred to the Duveen Brothers and Watson with both acrimony and envy, “…I must ask you generously to see if you could change your offer and please think that if this vase was owned either by Duveen Bros. or Mr. Watson they will never sell it unless they got the proper price.”161

Loo’s advertisement in the January 1939 issue of Parnassus was a visual statement of Loo’s ambition to outdo his rivals. Loo’s full-page advertisement with an impressive

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158 Joseph Duveen and Ben Duveen to JDR Jr., April 13, 1915, folder 1339, Duveen-Chinese Porcelains from Morgan Collection, 1915-1916, box 134, OMR-RAC.
159 C. T. Loo to JDR Jr., December 18, 1929, binder, unnamed with JDR’s Chinese porcelain purchase vouchers), box 159, OMR-RAC.
160 Voucher of Parish-Watson & Co. Inc to JDR, January 2/May 17/November 26, 1929, binder, unnamed with JDR’s Chinese porcelain purchase vouchers, box 159, OMR-RAC.
161 C. T. Loo to JDR, November 27, 1932, folder 1370, C. T. Loo 1916-1949, box 137, OMR-RAC.
image of a bronze mask was placed next to Duveen Brothers, Inc.’s half-page advertisement with no images (Fig. 26).\textsuperscript{162}

The rivalry between C. T. Loo & Co. and Yamanaka & Co. is hardly surprising.\textsuperscript{163} Yamanaka & Co.’s New York firm was established as early as 1894 by Yamanaka Sadajiro, one of the leading dealers in Chinese art. Although Loo arrived at the American art market almost 20 years later, two companies shared many similarities in terms of their stature, strategy, and clientele. Both were international establishments with offices in China, Europe and America. Both specialized in high-end Chinese sculptures, bronzes, jades, and ceramics. The rivalry between them was shown in a subtle manner in Loo’s offer of the Buddhist stele (MFA 23.120) to the MFA. In his letter to the MFA curator J.E. Lodge, Loo compared the stele he was offering for $25,000 with another stele (MFA 19.125) sold by Yamanaka & Co. to the MFA for $4,000 in 1919.\textsuperscript{164} Loo wrote to Lodge to justify the higher value of his stele, “Slab A seems very much the same as the Wetzel monument…this one has more curious designs.” (Fig. 27a,b)\textsuperscript{165}

The relationship between dealers could become complicated when objects with obscure or problematic life history circulated among them. When sensitive issues concerning restoration, provenance, and authenticity were raised, it could be extremely

\textsuperscript{162} *Parnassus*, January 1939, 1.
\textsuperscript{163} Considering Loo’s connection with the Guomindang government in China, the nationalistic sentiment prompted by the brutal military conflict between China and Japan in the 1930s and 1940s may also have had a bearing on the relationship between Loo and Yamanaka.
\textsuperscript{164} The Wetzel stele was purchased from Yamanaka for $4,000 on August 18, 1919 (Joseph Scheier-Dolberg, email message to author, October 11, 2007).
\textsuperscript{165} C. T. Loo to J.E. Lodge, August 23, 1922, folder: Lai-Yuan Co., box: Unofficial Correspondence L, 1910-1922, AAOA-MFA.
difficult to determine who should take responsibility. The Lohan incident that involved the MFA, C.T Loo & Co. and Yamanaka & Co. illustrates the delicate relationship between dealers (Fig. 28). After an investigation of a Lohan statue (MFA15.255) by cutting into the joint between head and neck, the MFA curator J.E. Lodge found that the head and body might not have been done at one time or by one artist (Fig. 7).\(^\text{166}\) He called D. J. R. Ushikubo, manager of the New York House of Yamanaka, from whom the museum acquired the statue. In order to prove that Yamanaka & Co. had nothing to do with any suspicious operation, Ushikubo wrote to Lodge to show that the statue was from C. T. Loo’s shop in Paris, “I enclose herewithin a letter from Loo & Cie, Paris, from which you will kindly understand that the figure was shipped to us direct from Paris.”\(^\text{167}\)

The museum could take advantage of the rivalry between dealers. The MFA curator Lodge urged Loo to quote the price for two stone reliefs, hinting at the potential competition from other dealers. Lodge wrote, “…under the circumstances, I think it is, perhaps, reasonable to tell you that the Museum, although genuinely interested in your sculptures, has become interested also in some Chinese wooden sculptures which arrived in New York before we were notified of the receipt of yours…They seem to be important objects and their presence in the market simultaneously with yours presents an

\(^{166}\) Lodge wrote, “…the head is made of a red clay, entirely different from the mixture of white and red clay of which the body appears to be formed, indicating that the head and body may not be contemporary.” (J.E. Lodge to the Director, March 27, 1916, folder and box unidentified, AAOA-MFA)

\(^{167}\) Mr. Ushikubo also informed Lodge that he had purchased the original stand for $1,000. (D. J. R. Ushikubo to J.E. Lodge, March 29, 1916, MFA, folder and box identified, AAOA-MFA) In November 1916, the stand was offered as a gift to the museum. Lodge accepted the gift from Yamanaka and returned the stand to C. T. Loo. For the detail of the provenance report of the Lohan, see p.112, note 245.
unfortunate complication for a Museum with so little money to spend as we have. These facts do not, however, diminish my interest in your slabs, though they do somewhat increase my anxiety to know the prices you may determine to ask.”

In the dealers’ world, knowledge about market conditions was commodity. In the small Chinese art community, one dealer’s activities often affected the entire market. It was, therefore, crucial for Loo to guard his business secrets and at the same time gather information about his rivals’ maneuvers. The negotiation around a porcelain vase between Loo and John D. Rockefeller, Jr. in 1918 offers a case in point. Questioning the authenticity of the vase that Loo offered, Rockefeller intended to seek advice from other dealers. In response, Loo expressed his preference for not having it shown to other dealers because its marketability would be reduced. Loo wrote, “I have no objection to having the vase submitted to any experts you wish, but the only thing is, whenever a dealer knows this vase has been offered to a collector they will lose their interest in securing it for themselves...” Loo was familiar with other dealer’s activities. In 1946 Loo, for example, declined the proposal to exchange his *claire de lune* water receptacle for the MFA’s peach bloom writer’s water pot on the basis that the shape of the latter was rather common and its value was very low. He used Yamanaka’s business as an example, “... I remember Yamanaka had once bought a whole lot of about 20-30 of this type and

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168 J.E. Lodge to C. T. Loo, August 13, 1919, folder: Lai-Yuan Co., box: Unofficial Correspondence L, 1910-1922, AAOA-MFA.
169 JDR Jr. to C. T. Loo, December 23, 1918, folder 1370, C. T. Loo 1916-1949, box 137, OMR-RAC.
170 C. T. Loo to JDR Jr., Dec. 24, 1918, folder 1370, C. T. Loo 1916-1949, box 137, OMR-RAC.
they gradually sold them and finally they were liquidated when all the stock of Yamanaka was sold in auction.”

**Dealer-Collector**

This section investigates C. T. Loo’s relationship with leading collectors of Chinese art in America. With their enormous amount of financial resources and powerful support system in the art world, magnate collectors like Charles L. Freer, Grenville L. Winthrop, John D. Rockefeller, Jr., Denman W. Ross, and Richard E. Fuller amassed a vast number of Chinese antiquities, which formed the core of major Chinese art collections in the U.S. Aware of the role of these elite private powers, Loo cultivated a close relationship with them so that he could carefully observe their tastes and pursue them on a regular basis.

Loo’s relationship with John D. Rockefeller, Jr. offers a good example. In their initial contact, Loo eagerly rendered his service without the goal of immediate monetary gain. Loo, for example, read and translated the characters on Rockefeller’s Chinese screen. Out of Rockefeller’s expectation, Loo prepared several exquisite booklets for the translation without charge. Loo wrote to Rockefeller, “...it was a very great pleasure to be able to help you to understand better the meaning of our art and also to ennable (sic.) your

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171 C. T. Loo to R. T. Paine, March 6, folder C. T. Loo, box: I to L, 1936-1947, AAOA-MFA.
172 My focus on major collectors here is partly due to the fact that it is difficult to secure research materials about less important collectors.
173 Charles L. Freer collection is at the Freer Gallery of Art, Grenville L. Winthrop collection at the Sackler Museum at Harvard University, John D. Rockefeller at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Denman Ross at the Museum of Fine Arts, Alfred Pillsbury at the Minneapolis Institute of Arts, and Richard Eugene Fuller collection at the Seattle Art Museum.
174 JDR Jr. to C. T. Loo, March 28, 1916, folder 1370, box 137, OMR-RAC.
friends to appreciate more the decorations of your beautiful screen”\textsuperscript{175} Loo contacted Mr. and Mrs. Rockefeller on a regular basis. The existing correspondence between them from 1930 to 1935 shows that the frequency of correspondence between C. T. Loo and the Rockefellers is at least 6 times per year.\textsuperscript{176} Loo also showed his sensitivity to collectors’ preferences. For instance, the offers that Rockefeller received from Loo were mostly of Qing and Ming ceramics. In the case of Winthrop, Loo focused on archaic jades, bronzes, and stone sculptures. The collection in the *Descriptive Catalogue of Ancient and Genuine Chinese Painting* was offered by Loo’s firm to Freer in 1916 as a response to his keen interest in ancient Chinese painting. The catalogue compiler F.S. Kwen stated, “The paintings … have been especially chosen for submission to Mr. Charles L. Freer and his fellow collectors in America in the hope that they will be kindly received and properly valued.”(Kwen 1916, An Appreciation) Loo also responded to special requests from his clients. In 1949, Loo sold Rockefeller a group of porcelains upon Rockefeller’s request for ashtrays for his apartment.\textsuperscript{177}

\textsuperscript{175} C. T. Loo to JDR Jr., March 25, 1916, folder 1370, box 137, OMR-RAC.

\textsuperscript{176} The statistics also include correspondence between secretaries of Loo and JDR Jr. on their behalf. The distribution is 8 times (1935), 7(1934), 4 (1933), 11 (1932), 2 (1931), and 6 (1930). Folder 1370, C. T. Loo 1916-1949, box 137, OMR-RAC.

\textsuperscript{177} JDR Jr. to C. T. Loo, Feb. 21, 1949, folder 106, C. T. Loo 1945-1951, box 11, OMR-RAC.
Credit/Deposit System

It is not uncommon that collectors help finance dealers’ business. Like Joseph Duveen, C. T. Loo had clients who were bankers or had banking influence. Loo established a credit relation with his committed customer Grenville L. Winthrop, who came from a family of bankers. Based on the information from Winthrop’s account book, regular remittance, often monthly, ranging from $1,000-to $7,000 was sent from Winthrop to Loo between 1931 and 1942. Loo thanked Winthrop after receiving the check, “Once more I wish to thank you for your kind remittance of $5,000, this seems like something from the government it is always so regular.” The volume and frequency of the transactions between Loo and Winthrop was remarkable: A monthly deposit of $5,000 was made from December 2, 1931 to November 1, 1935. From January 4, 1932 to December 1, 1932, Winthrop made a $60,000 deposit and spent $41,800 to purchase a group of important jades and sculptures.

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178 Loan arrangements were made between Freer and the Japanese dealer Matsuki Bunkyo. “…usually when Matsuki was preparing for his annual buying trip to Japan, Freer loaned him large amounts of money to enable him to buy stocks of objects.” (Lawton 1993, 101-2) In return for Freer’s financial support, Matsuki gave Freer the first choice of his finest objects.

179 According to Samuel N. Behrman, a considerable number of Joseph Duveen’s customers had banking influence. Ben Duveen acquired Morgan, Altman, P.A. B. Widener as both clients and financial advisors. Joseph Duveen established a credit system in which buyers would not make any cash down payment or be pressed for cash for their purchase (Behrman 1951, 124-6).

180 “Winthrop’s father was a private banker, his mother the daughter of a banker.” (Riopelle 2003, 9)

181 Grenville L. Winthrop’s account book, purchases from Loo, HUAMA.

182 C. T. Loo to G.L. Winthrop, May 3, 1932, HUAMA.

183 G. L. Winthrop’s account book, HUAMA.
The arrangement between Loo and Winthrop not only expedited the transactions, but also allowed Winthrop to buy a large number of high-value objects without immediate cash/check payment. In 1936 Winthrop, for example, made a total deposit of $38,000 to his account. In the same year he purchased from Loo a large group of objects with the value of more than $61,000, which far exceeded the amount he deposited that year. The regular deposit from Winthrop helped Loo finance his purchases of important objects when they were available in the market. Loo, for example, assembled for Winthrop a large collection of prominent jade objects excavated from Jincun, Henan, which was bought by Loo’s agent. Loo stated, “[In] 1928-1929 came the discovery of the famous Chin-ts’un tombs. Everything from Chin-ts’un was superb. At that time, Mr. G. L. Winthrop became interested in collecting jades and, thanks to an expert buyer that we had stationed in the village, we were able to secure nearly everything that came out from those tombs, and most of them are now in the Winthrop collection at the Fogg Museum, in Cambridge, Mass.” (Loo 1950, Preface) Information in Winthrop’s account book confirms Loo’s statement. During 1936 Winthrop acquired from Loo a large quantity of outstanding Jincun jades, including his purchase made on February 26, 1936, the jade dragon plaque (Sackler 1943.50. 468) (Fig. 29).

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184 Jincun, an archaeological site in Henan. The collection that Loo referred to is housed in the Sackler Museum, Harvard University. 
185 “Jade dragon plaque with a bird head, carved on both sides, yellowish patina—On edge are carved four characters indicating center [?] second. Tsui from Chin T’sun $1,500” (G. L. Winthrop’s account book, purchases from C. T. Loo, HUAMA).
This credit arrangement not only facilitated the large-scale transactions in the long-term business relationship between Loo and Winthrop, but also helped Loo cope with his financial problems.  

*Object Exchange*

Although average collectors did not collect primarily to sell, there was no guarantee that they would keep objects like museums’ permanent collections. Collectors could exchange objects with dealers as a way to improve their collection when finer things arrived in the future. If the quality and value of the object under consideration was satisfying, dealers were willing to take it from collectors. Loo, for example, stated exchange policy in his transactions with John D. Rockefeller, Jr., “It is understood that should you desire at any time within the next ten years to exchange the pieces on the foregoing invoice for porcelains or other works of art that I have for sale, I will make such exchange on the basis of the foregoing invoice prices.”

The following case illustrates the exchange process between Loo and Rockefeller. In response to Loo’s offer of a black Kangxi cylindrical-shaped beaker for $30,000 in 1932, Rockefeller proposed that since the price was rather high he would consider the purchase of the vase for part cash and in exchange of some duplicate pieces that he had.

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186 C. T. Loo to G.L. Winthrop, February 3, 1941, HUAMA. Collectors could help dealers in various ways. John D Rockefeller, Jr., for example, helped Yamanaka & Co. by his guarantee to defer part of the rent for three years. K. Tanaka wrote to JDR Jr. “…we do appreciate it in these most trying times and no doubt this will help us considerably. Of course, we shall do what we can to pay it up as soon as we are in a position financially.” (K. Tanaka to JDR Jr., May 17, 1932, folder 1446, Yamanaka 1909-1940, box 144, OMR-RAC)

Rockefeller wrote to Loo, “…I give you $15,000 in cash for your beaker and any three of the seven pieces of Chinese porcelain, one an articulated Ming piece, the other six very fine Khang-Hsi vases, which I now own.” Rockefeller further explained that he proposed this exchange because his collection had grown so large and he had so many duplicates that there was no adequate place to show them. After several rounds of negotiation, the transaction was completed with the agreement that Rockefeller would pay $20,000 in cash and give Loo a Ming reticulated vase in exchange for $4,750.

**Brokerage**

The dealer’s contacts and market knowledge were commodities. Loo received commission for his role as middleman between private collectors or between other dealers and collectors. Loo, for instance, acted as broker for Pang Laichen and C.L. Freer in the transaction of Pang’s painting collection in 1915. A payment of $16,500 was made to Loo’s company, Leyer & Co, Shanghai for thirteen ancient Chinese paintings purchased by Mr. Freer in San Francisco, including the famous piece, *Tribute Horses* by

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188 JDR Jr. to C. T. Loo, Nov. 22, 1932, folder 1370, C. T. Loo 1916-1949, box 137, OMR-RAC.
189 Ibid.
190 C. T. Loo to JDR Jr., Dec. 16, 1932, folder 1370, C. T. Loo 1916-1949, box 137, OMR-RAC.
191 Brokerage differs from direct sale and exchange in that the object in question was not in the dealer’s possession during the transaction.
192 Dealers bought things from auctions for their clients and received commission for their brokerage. Frank Partridge, for example, received 5% commission from his brokerage for JDR Jr. in the transaction of a Song flowerpot at the Christies’ July 2nd, 1924 sale of the Benson Collection (Frank Partridge to JDR Jr., March 7, 1924, binder (unnamed with JDR’s Chinese porcelain purchase vouchers), box 159, OMR-RAC).
Han Gan for $4500. In the same year, “C. T. Loo, acting for Marcel Bing, arranged the sale of twelve outstanding Chinese antiquities (one Shang dynasty jade ge 戈 and eleven Shang and Zhou ritual bronzes) to Mr. Freer and the Meyers (F15.102, F15.103, F15.104, F15.105, F15.106, F15.107, F15.108, F61.20, F61.21, F61.32, F61.33, F68.29).” Loo’s brokerage between H. L. Hsieh and John D. Rockefeller Jr. gave us more detailed information about his role. In 1949 Loo notified Rockefeller of the availability of Hsieh’s collection. In terms of price and commission, Loo wrote to Rockefeller, “As I wish to make this sale as clearly as possible, so I am enclosing the receipt that I gave to Mr. Hsieh to show you the real price. If you wish to buy directly, you can very well send him the check so to avoid entries in our books…The price marked is the price he has actually paid because I know every piece from the origin. So he is not trying to sell more than what he has paid. If you buy from him at the price, he will lose 10% as commission to us.” Rockefeller informed Loo that he would be willing to pay $7,500 net for a square famille verte Kangxi vase, which was offered originally for $9,000. In response, Loo proposed to deduct his commission from the price because he had made an agreement with Mr. Hsieh that Hsieh would sell everything for the exact price he had paid less the 10% commission for Loo.

194 Thomas Lawton, email message to author, December 14, 2006.
195 C. T. Loo to JDR Jr., October 24, 1949, folder 106, C. T. Loo 1945-1951, box 11, OMR-RAC.
196 Janet M. Warfield to C. T. Loo, October 26, 1949, folder 106, C. T. Loo 1945-1951, box 11, OMR-RAC.
197 C. T. Loo to JDR Jr., October 28, 1949, folder 106, C. T. Loo 1945-1951, box 11, OMR-RAC Other dealers’ commission rate varied. In the transaction of the portrait of
**Loan**

Loo often had objects sent to collectors on approval. From the time of delivery to the time when the customer made the final purchase the object could be viewed as a loan. Loo also borrowed objects from collectors for his exhibitions. The *1950 Exhibition of Ancient Chinese jade* that Loo launched at the Norton Gallery of West Palm Beach included loans from collectors such as Mr. and Mrs. William Lee McKim, Mr. Alfred F. Pillsbury, Mrs. Irving Snyder, and Mrs. Edward Sonneschein (Loo 1950, Preface). The loan arrangement between Loo and the collectors was beneficial to both sides. The loans enriched Loo’s exhibitions, and the public display increased the prestige of the loans and their owners.

**Information Exchange**

Prominent dealers were able to offer education, consultation, authentication, appraisal and other services to collectors. Loo played an important role in educating American collectors. For example, George Washington by Gilbert Stuart, M. Knoedler & Company, Inc. received a 10% commission from JDR Jr. It has been mentioned that Knoedler’s regular commission was 20% on the selling price (Unidentified person to JDR, June 5, 1946, folder 99, Art Objects 1939-1961, box 11, OMR-RAC). French & Company’s commission rate was 15% in 1944. (Memo by Robert. W. Gumbel, October 26, 1944, folder 1428, French & Co. 1944-1953, box 142, OMR-RAC)

198 Dealers’ experience in installation, shipping, restoration allowed them to offer collectors miscellaneous service. Duveen Brothers Inc, for example, performed the following services for JDR Jr., “The hanging of the tapestries in his house; later rehanging them and adjusting them permanently. Making covers for some of the tapestry chairs and for some of the rugs in the tapestry room. Sewing pieces of canvas on the carpet in Mr. Rockefeller’s office under the two Isphahan rugs. Going to Pocantico to pack certain porcelains and bringing the same to Mr. Rockefeller’s house in New York and unpack them.” (A. Adams to Joseph Duveen, January 8, 1923, folder 1330, Duveen Brothers 1914-1952, box 133, OMR-RAC) Duveen Brothers Inc. also recommended a ceramic repairer to JDR Jr. (Janet M. Warfield to (?Sowers& Herrick), October 4, 1944, box 11, folder 99, OMR-RAC) JDR Jr. consulted Duveen brothers to authenticate the
collectors. In 1916, he wrote to Rockefeller to promote lacquers and sculptures, “...they are most interesting and decorative as well as artistic and as this is the first showing of really fine lacquers the price is very low...”. I should like very much to have you see them as they will surely not remain in our possession for long. I desire extremely that you become interested in fine Chinese sculpture as it had only a very short period and it is no longer allowed to leave China-so that I am anxious for you to see the best things which come to this country.” It is under Loo’s tutelage that Alfred Pillsbury started to collect ancient bronzes and jades. Pillsbury expressed his appreciation for Loo’s role in the formation of his ancient bronze collection, “I should like to pay tribute to C. T. Loo for his part in perpetuating that tradition in this country and for the interest and cooperation which have contributed so much to the building up of my collection.” (Pillsbury 1950, Foreword)

In 1916, Loo gave Freer a report about the market conditions in Europe, “As regard to the Chinese art, the market is very slow, but the prices are very high at the auctions. The (Kennedy?) sale of last month, brought some unprecedented (sic.) prices for certain things. Of course they are all porcelains, I don’t think there is (sic.) any early pieces to be found here.”

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199 Loo referred to lacquers.
201 C. T. Loo to C.L. Freer, July 16, 1916, CLFP-FGA.
Loo was aware that magnate collectors like C. L. Freer, J.D. Rockefeller, and G.L. Winthrop not only had substantial funds at their disposal, but also wielded enormous power as authorities and tastemakers in the United States. When Loo first arrived in America in the 1910s, Freer’s extensive knowledge about the market and museum collections, and his extended social network made him a perfect contact for Loo. Freer was not only Loo’s client but also his advisor. The 1916 *Descriptive Catalogue of Ancient and Genuine Chinese Paintings* acknowledged Freer’s great influence on collectors and students, “His wonderful insight has been an inspiration to many lovers of pictorial art in China as well as in the western world and his early recognition of the quality of ancient masterpieces has influenced collectors and students universally.” (Kwen 1916, An Appreciation) Loo’s reliance on Freer was expressed in his letter to Freer, “…your word is publicly known to be pure as gold and I hope you do believe I know it.” “…our future success which is certainly depending on you…” It is through Freer that Loo was connected to collectors such as J.P. Morgan and the Meyers. Loo thanked Freer for his assistance with the sale of a bronze to Morgan. He wrote to Freer, “I am glad to report to you that Mr. Morgan has finally bought the Bronze for which I feel very indebted to you as for many others, your kindness in making this transaction possible for were it not for your kind praises of it, I feel certain that Mr. Morgan would have never become interested in it.” In the 1916 transaction of a bronze object with Eugene Meyer, for whom Freer served as consultant, Loo asked Freer for advice concerning the price that Meyer offered. In response, Freer suggested that Loo accept Mr.  

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202 C. T. Loo to C.L. Freer, October 25, 1916, CLFP-FGA.
203 C. T. Loo to C. L. Freer, June 10, 1916, CLFP-FGA.
Meyer’s offer, “Regarding Mr. Meyer’s offer to you of 25000, for the bronze, I think it wise for you to accept the same. Mr. Meyer is (one?) of your best customers and I believe that in offering you 25000, he felt that he was giving you as much as he should, and in dealing with Mr. Meyer you will, I believe, find him always willing to pay what he believes to be a fair price for any object he admires, and while occasionally his figure may seem to you a little lower than you might be able to get elsewhere, you will, I believe, in the end profit most by meeting Mr. Meyer’s price whenever you can consistently do so. Furthermore, selling to Mr. Meyer to-day seems to me very much better than searching for some other customer later, especially when you consider the average uncertainties of business.”204

**Dealer-Museum**

The museum was another important client of Loo’s. He was in close contact with over fifteen American museums, and some of the most prominent objects that he handled have become museum holdings today. Loo was a well-recognized figure in the museum world, as indicated by his presence with other dignitaries as guests at the opening of the Nelson Gallery.205

The close relationship between Loo and museums was not coincidental. On the one hand, museums needed dealers. American museums’ interest in Chinese art surged in the first half of the twentieth century. From the mid-1920s onwards, the enthusiasm for Chinese art was signaled by the formation of important Chinese art collections as well as

204 C. T. Loo to C.L. Freer, June 15, 1916; C. L. Freer to C. T. Loo, June 16, 1916. CLFP-FGA.
the construction and reinstallment of galleries devoted to Chinese art. The availability, affordability, and quality of Chinese antiquities offered museums, especially those newly built ones, an excellent acquisition opportunity. Dealers, who were in direct contact with sources of supply, played a crucial role as mediators between the museum and the market. Dealers not only had select objects delivered to museums, but also provided them with information concerning the objects’ provenance, age, condition, and market value. In the first half of the twentieth century, it was not uncommon that some museums had no Asian or Chinese art specialists. The knowledge of the people from whom museum purchased objects, therefore, became important. Knowledgeable and powerful dealers like C. T. Loo were able to leave a strong imprint on the formation of museum collections. They performed services such as education, consultation, loan, and patronage.

On the other hand, Loo needed museums to buy and advertise his merchandise. Museums not only brought him stable and large profit but also enshrined the objects that he introduced because the museum display and publication added prominence and visibility to Loo’s collection. Considering museum display of his objects as a publicity gambit, Loo often offered museums a discount. In the transaction of the Lintel and

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206 In addition to direct purchases from dealers, the sources of the museum collection include donations and expeditions. For example, in 1923 Langdon Warner organized and headed the Fogg’s expedition to China, retrieving the late 7th century clay sculpture from Dunhuang and a group of wall-painting fragments from the same site.

207 Provenance, dating, and condition information from dealers might not always be accurate or reliable.

208 It seems to be a common practice for art dealers to offer museums a discount, which supposedly would make the price lower than what they quoted for private collectors. In C. T. Loo’s offer of three porcelains to JDR Jr., he mentioned that a special museum
Pediment of a Tomb (MFA 25.10-13, 25.190) (Fig. 12), Loo expressed his willingness to lower the price he originally quoted for the MFA, “…my compensation would be that I have the pleasure of placing some objects in your Honorable Museum which is always a good advertisement for me, so whatever you think reasonable for you and equitable to me, I will always try to accept and for this case…” Moreover, as a repository of artworks, a generator and disseminator of knowledge, the museum served as Loo’s information center and his gateway to other members in the art world.

Sale and Exchange

Loo’s success in selling his objects to museums has much to do with his knowledge of the mechanism within a museum as well as the dynamics among museums. Loo carefully studied museum collections and curators’ preferences to ensure that he could offer the right thing to the right person at the right time and in the right place. It is evident that Loo was familiar with museum collections. In 1917, Loo offered a stone statue to the MFA, referring to it as “a very fine specimen of sculpture, some thing (sic.)like the one, which has the head missing in your museum.” In the early 1920s, the sales of the stone votive stele (MFA 23.120) and shrine (MFA 22.380) to the MFA were made with Loo’s awareness of the curator Lodge’s interest in “any fine sculpture, especially with discount of 20% will be made on any object bought. (C. T. Loo to JDR Jr., April 10, 1930, folder 1370, C. T. Loo 1916-1949, box 137, OMR-RAC) Hirth offered a Coptic jar to JDR Jr. “Mr. Parsons has quoted you already the lowest possible Museum price of $2000-(Doll. Two thousand) for this very rare and beautiful object, while the price for a private collector should be $2500.” (Hirth to JDR Jr., June 6, 1930, folder 1441, box 144, OMR-RAC.)

209 C. T. Loo to J.E. Lodge, October. 27, 1924, folder and box unknown, AAOA-MFA.
210 C. T. Loo to J.E. Lodge, April 28, 1917, folder: Lai-Yuan Co., box: Unofficial Correspondence L, 1910-1922, AAOA-MFA.
inscriptions”(Fig 14, 17).\textsuperscript{211} In the 1930s and the 1940s, while many museums and collectors purchased a large number of bronzes from Loo, the MFA was less interested in bronzes (Fontein 1992, 13).\textsuperscript{212} The inventory card shows that in 1941 a bronze vessel gui was first offered to G.L. Winthrop, and then to the Freer Gallery before it was taken to the MFA on approval.\textsuperscript{213} This sequence suggests that Loo probably considered the MFA a less promising buyer compared with G. L. Winthrop and the Freer Gallery. Even Loo’s few offers of bronzes to the MFA did not have much success, as Tomita remarked, “…I may add that frankly we here are more particularly interested in fine Chinese paintings than in bronzes.”\textsuperscript{214} Detecting the MFA’s interest in painting, Loo offered the museum an entire painting collection he had acquired from the renowned Shanghai collector T. Y. Zhang.\textsuperscript{215}

Aware of the dynamics in the American museum world, Loo employed different strategies to deal with different types of museums. “Flagship” museums such as the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, the Freer Gallery of Art, and the University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology were among Loo’s most important clients because they not only acquired a large number of

\textsuperscript{211} C. T. Loo to J.E. Lodge, February 16, 1922, Lai-Yuan Co., box: Unofficial Correspondence L, 1910-1922, AAOA-MFA.
\textsuperscript{212} The Freer Gallery, A. Pillsbury and G. L. Winthrop were major buyers of Loo’s ancient bronzes.
\textsuperscript{213} “1941 Jan, 2nd sold to Winthrop for $10,500; 1941 Jan 6 returned from Mr. Winthrop; 1941 Jan 17 taken by Mr. Loo to Mr. Lodge $10,500…; 1941 Jan 20 returned from Freer; 1941 Feb 28 th taken by Mr. Loo to Boston $10,000” (Inventory card 87062, FCA). For details of the transaction of this bronze, see Chapter One, pp.72-3.
\textsuperscript{214} K. Tomita to C. T. Loo, May 10, 1947, April 20, 1936 to November 28, 1947, folder C. T. Loo, box: I to L, 1936-1947, AAOA-MFA.
\textsuperscript{215} C. T. Loo to K. Tomita, Nov. 24, 1947, folder C. T. Loo, box: I to L, 1936-1947, AAOA-MFA.
objects of the highest quality on a regular basis, but also provided guidance to newer or less prominent museums. In terms of category, Loo’s sales to leading museums concentrated on monumental stone sculptures, which were impressive in size, quality, and price. Loo’s introduction of the stone sculpture collection at the MFA and UPM offers two cases in point. Between the 1920s and the 1940s, the MFA purchased from Loo a group of important stone sculptures, including the Buddhist votive stele (MFA 23.120), the Buddhist shrine (MFA 22.380), the stone lion (MFA 40.70), and two Tang panels with palace ladies in relief (MFA 37.248, 37.249) (Fig. 17, 14, 7, 9). At the UPM, C. T. Loo’s name has been notoriously associated with two relief panels depicting the chargers of Taizong, the founding emperor of the Tang dynasty (Fig.20a,b). Being among the most important Chinese sculpture pieces outside of China, these two panels were sold to the museum in the late 1910s and the early 1920s for $125,000 (Zhou 2001, 44). The outstanding collections that Loo supplied to top museums provided models for museums of lesser stature. Stewart Culin, curator at the Brooklyn Museum, in his letter to the museum trustee, Frank L. Babbott, referred to the UPM’s monumental stone sculpture collection from Loo as a model for his museum’s future acquisition.216 In his letter to the Worcester Art Museum director concerning the bronze finial with a standing figure that the museum acquired from Loo (WAM 1941.47), Loo compared it with the famous bronze figure holding two birds that he sold to the MFA (MFA 31.976), “It should be classified in the same period and origine (sic) as the Standing Bronze Figure holding sticks topped with a jade bird, actually in the Museum of Fine Arts, in Boston.” (Fig.30) 217

216 S. Culin to Frank. L. Babbott, Jan 23, 1928, BMAA, See Chapter Five, p.204.
217 C. T. Loo to C. Sawyer, November 17, 1941, WAMA.
Loo knew very well that smaller museums like the Rhode Island School of Design Museum, where few or no Chinese art experts were available, relied on opinions from outside authorities. Loo wrote to Gordon B. Washburn at the RISD, quoting the MFA curator and leading Asian art expert K. Tomita’s opinion: “Mr. Tomita has been here and looked at a few of our fine gilt bronzes now on view and I will send you some photographs of what Mr. Tomita thought best for your museum.”218 Another strategy that Loo used in his dealing with less prominent museums was to promote objects in less known areas so that these museums could develop a specialization in their collections. In October 1948, the *Exhibition of East Asiatic Glass* was staged at the Toledo Museum of Art; Loo supplied a number of important specimens of Chinese glass.219 Some of Loo’s exhibits were acquired by the museum. The exhibition review noted that this exhibition stimulated quite an interest in the little explored field of glass-making in Eastern Asia (Blair 1948, 195-6).

Like museums, which took advantage of the dynamics among dealers, C. T. Loo capitalized on the competition in the museum world.220 In his offer of two lions to the MFA, Loo wrote to its director E. J. Holmes: “I wish to say that the Metropolitan Museum is interested in the two lions and in case you should wish to have an option on

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219 The Toledo Museum of Art, with its connection to the glass manufacturing business of its founder Edward Libbey, was building a glass collection from different eras and cultures (Toledo Museum of Art. http://www.toledomuseum.org/Info_history.htm).
them please kindly let me know.” Similarly, Loo responded to the RISD’s inquiry for a fresco in his 1949 exhibition of Song murals with a tantalizing note. He mentioned that there have been several demands for this piece, “…(we) have already sent out plates to some other museums so I dare not even reserve this fresco for you, although my personal idea is that this particular fresco will answer more the needs of the students of your school of designs than any other museum”. Loo’s ingenious use of the museum rivalry expedited the UPM’s decision to purchase the two stone relief panels (Fig. 20 a,b). Zhou Xiuqing observed, “When Gordon expressed difficulties in obtaining bank loans to secure the purchase, Loo immediately followed with a letter urging UPM to give ‘the less important one’ (the relief without the man) to a museum in Boston which had received a large bequest for collection purchase (letter dated 25 and 28 November 1918 from Loo to Gordon). This letter alerted the museum, and accordingly the Board of Managers made an immediate decision to authorize fund-raising of up to US $ 150,000 for the purchase of the two horses.” (Zhou 2001, 44)

While often on the demand end, the museum, in some cases, turned to the supply end in its contact with the dealer. The Art Institute of Chicago, for example, sold Loo a Kangxi vase in 1945. Exchanges were among the transactions that occurred between C.

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221 C. T. Loo to E. J. Holmes, December 19, 1928, folder: C. T. Loo, box: L to M, 1927-1930, AAOA-MFA.
222 C. T. Loo & Co. to RISD, March 11, 1949, folder 1945-1949, RISDA.
223 Recalling Joseph Duveen’s selling techniques, Loo’s response might also exert a psychological charm on his prospective clients. His initial decline might even enhance their desire to acquire the works they inquired. According to one of Duveen’s clients, Mrs. Hearst, “you couldn’t buy anything from Duveen! Everything was either in reserve for somebody else or he had promised it to his wife or for some reason he wasn’t ready to sell it yet.” (Behrman 1951, 96)
224 Gordon refers to George B. Gordon.
T. Loo and museums. In 1945, K. Tomita, informed Loo that he found in the museum’s collection about 20 pieces, which might be applied toward an exchange with Loo’s collection.

Loans

It was common that museums borrowed objects from dealers who amassed a large collection of antiquities. As the RISD was planning to have an exhibition of furniture, paintings, and ceramics of the Ming through the Qing Dynasties, Loo was asked to lend a number of the late paintings. In response, Loo boasted, “We can surely loan you anything you want…either paintings or porcelains or potteries and we can always gather a nice selection for you to examine before we send them over for your exhibition. As you know, we have many things in nearly all the fields in Chinese arts!” Loan arrangements between the dealer and the museum created a situation beneficial to both sides. The museum did not have to make an immediate decision to purchase the loans while having the benefit of displaying them in the museum. Loo’s collection of Ancient

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225 Another mode of transaction between dealers and museums is illustrated by the MFA’s acquisition of the Offering shrine with engraved figures and inscriptions (MFA 37.340) from Yamanaka & Co. partly in exchange and partly in cash. "Voted: To recommend to the Trustees that a Chinese stone sarcophagus, A.D. 527, offered by Yamanaka and Company, New York, for $20,000.00, be acquired by the exchange of a Chinese peach-bloom bottle (Reg. no 35.733, exchange value $10,000.00) and of three stone heads (Reg. Nos. 10.330, 10.322, 10.335, exchange value $300.00) and a cash payment of $9,700.00." (April 1, 1937, Collections Committee minutes, curatorial file, MFA, Joseph Scheier-Dolberg, email message to author, October 11, 2007)


227 G.B. Washburn to C. T. Loo, April 20, 1948, C. T. Loo & Co. folder 1945-1949, RISDA.

228 C. T. Loo to G.B. Washburn, April 27, 1948, C. T. Loo & Co. folder 1945-1949, RISDA.
Chinese Ritual Bronzes was launched in the Detroit Institute of Arts in 1940. In the same year, Loo participated in the Portland Art Museum’s exhibition of Chinese sculptures. Robert Tyler Davis, the museum’s director, selected ten sculptures from the collections of a group of New York dealers, including C. T. Loo & Co., Tonying & Co., Yamanaka & Co., and Dikran G. Kelekian, Inc. The display of the loans and the public attention that they generated helped museums to rally support from museum benefactors to acquire the objects. For dealers, to have their objects displayed in museums not only advertised their businesses, but also served as a springboard to potential sales. Loo’s loan strategy seemed quite successful. One of the white marble statues on view in the Portland Art Museum exhibition (Fig. 31), for example, was sent to the Museum on approval for $5,000 on May 27, 1940. The statue was subsequently acquired by the museum for $3,800 on October 7, 1940. In 1918, Loo lent the famous Tang horse relief panels (UPM C395, C396) to the University Museum of Pennsylvania (Zhou 2001, 44, quoted from April 19, 1918, UPM archive), and as Loo had expected, the museum eventually raised a large sum to make the payment.

In some cases, Loo included museum collections in his own exhibition. Loo’s 1936 exhibition inaugurating the new gallery showed the sandstone Bodhisattva recently acquired by R. E. Fuller for the Seattle Art Museum (Davidson 1936, 12).

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230 For details of the white marble statues, see Chapter Five, pp.211-2.
231 Inventory card 81483, FCA.
**Patronage and Friendship**

Loo’s business success for a large part depended on his cultivation of friendship with museums. Loo posed himself as not just a merchant but also a museum benefactor. In his initial contact with the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Loo used gifts to start his business relationship with the museum. From 1915 to 1917, he made at least six gift offers.\(^{232}\) Loo’s gifts to museums served as his advertisement. In 1916, C. T. Loo offered as a gift to the MFA a stand for the Lohan statue (MFA 15.255) with the condition that a permanent label in large visible type to be attached to the stand, “‘This base is a gift from Lai-Yuan & co. C. T. Loo, New York.’”\(^{233}\)

In addition to gifts, Loo offered monetary donations and other assistance to museums.\(^{234}\) His role was recognized by the Met director F.H. Taylor, who wrote to Loo, “‘My colleagues and I appreciate far more than I can say your constant friendship and interest in the Museum. I know that we may call upon you for help from time to time as we have so often done in the past.’”\(^{235}\)

It is true that museum purchases were made as the result of institutional decisions. It is also true that Loo’s personal relationship with curators and directors often played a significant role in his business. It is evident that over the years Loo became close friends with some of the leading American museum professionals. The Met curators and their

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234 C. T. Loo to F. H. Taylor, March 19, 1946, folder Loo, C.T., L. 871, MetA.
235 F. H. Taylor to C. T. Loo, March 20, 1946, Loo, C.T. L. 871, MetA.
wives, including Alan Priest and Mr. and Mrs. Theodore Hobby were guests at the cocktail farewell party for Loo’s daughter and her husband.\textsuperscript{236} The business correspondence between Tomita and Loo contains personal notes such as greetings to their family. In 1937 Loo wrote to Tomita to thank him for his assistance in the transaction of two stone doors, “I want specially to express to you my warm thanks for your kind purchase of the stone doors, I certainly appreciate your help in this matter and I wish to tell you how much I value your unfailing friendship.”\textsuperscript{237}

\textbf{Information Exchange}

With its research, conservation facilities and contacts in the art world, the museum served as an important source of information for Loo. Loo carefully studied museum collections and curators’ publications. Loo, for instance, visited the MFA to view the famous \textit{Nine Dragons} scroll by Chen Rong, and requested photographs of this painting.\textsuperscript{238} Loo expressed his desire to collect Tomita’s publication, “…I hope that, in future, you will let us have anything you are going to publish or have already published on Chinese art, which we always need for our library.”\textsuperscript{239}

The museum could offer Loo information about his objects’ age, authenticity, and condition. In 1947 Loo sent to the MFA three bronze objects, a \textit{ding}, a \textit{gu}, and a knife, on

\textsuperscript{236} C. T. Loo to F. H. Taylor, Jan 14, 1941, folder Loo, C.T. L. 871, MetA.
\textsuperscript{237} It possibly refers to MFA 37.248, 37. 249. For more information, see correspondence between C. T. Loo, Wheildon and the MFA, February 11, 28, 1937, folder C. T. Loo, box: I to L, 1936-1947, AAOA-MFA. C. T. Loo to K. Tomita, April 6, 1937, folder C. T. Loo, box: I to L, 1936-1947, AAOA-MFA.
\textsuperscript{238} F. S. Kershaw to C. T. Loo, January 18, 1917, folder: Lai-Yuan Co., box: Unofficial Correspondence L, 1910-1922, AAOA-MFA.
\textsuperscript{239} C. T. Loo to K. Tomita, May 7, 1947, Folder C. T. Loo, box: I to L, 1936-1947, AAOA-MFA.
approval. After the scientific examination carried out at the MFA, K. Tomita wrote to Loo, “I wish to say confidentially that I have found rather disturbing things. Naturally because of the nature of these objects, they were examined under ultra-violet ray to ascertain if there were any repairs. Much to our amazement the ku has been mended considerably at the flaring part toward the rim. This partial restoration is not apparent to the naked eye. What is puzzling us most is the fact that both of these bronzes have a strange blue tinge which apparently was produced by coating or dyeing with something like indigo in a very recent time, for the coloring is on the surface as a microscopic examination indicates. These points I am communicating very privately realizing that you are not aware of the repairs or the artificial coloring.” Loo replied, “The most important thing now is…that you will not mention this to any body and I hope also that you will clean the false coloring so to bring those bronzes to their original state and, in case they do not please you any more, please do not hesitate to return them to me and, if possible, give me some more information regarding them, which would be very useful to me.”

241 Ku is spelled gu. K. Tomita to C. T. Loo, March 4, 1947, folder C. T. Loo, box: I to L, 1936-1947, AAOA-MFA. K. Tomita used the repaired condition of the bronzes to negotiate with Loo over their prices. “In view of these reasons I venture to ask if you are willing to reduce the prices of these bronzes before I submit them for the committee’s consideration.” (K. Tomita to C. T. Loo, March 4, 1947 and C. T. Loo to K. Tomita, March 6, 1947, Folder C. T. Loo, box: I to L, 1936-1947, AAOA-MFA)
For Loo, the museum with its connection to patrons, collectors, and scholars was a place where information about his collection could be effectively disseminated. Loo notified the curator of the Freer Gallery Carl W. Bishop the publication of his 1941-2 sale catalogue. Loo wrote, “...if it is not too much to ask you, please kindly speak to any of your friends who are interested in Chinese Arts regarding this exceptional exhibition and sale.”\(^{243}\) Bishop responded, “...I find your catalogue most interesting, as well as splendidly gotten up. You may rest assured that I shall lose no opportunity of mentioning it to my friends.”\(^{244}\)

The museum considered the dealer an important source of information about the object’s provenance, condition, and age.\(^{245}\) It was a standard practice that Loo provided

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\(^{243}\) C. T. Loo to C.W. Bishop, October 25, 1941, F/S Field Expedition Records, 1914, 1923-42, Box 7 of 22, SI.

\(^{244}\) C.W. Bishop to C. T. Loo, November 7, 1941, F/S Field Expedition Records, 1914, 1923-42, Box 7 of 22, SI.

\(^{245}\) When questions arose concerning the age and condition of the MFA’s famous Lohan statue sold by the Yamanaka & Co., D. Ushikubo, the manager of the New York House of the company promised the curator Lodge that in his coming trip to China he would make every effort to investigate the history of the Lohan before it was brought to Europe, by whom or when it was restored. (J.E. Lodge to Director, March 30, 1916, Lodge official correspondence, folder, box: unknown, AAOA-MFA) A few months later, A letter of Ushikubo was sent to Lodge to explain the repair work done to the Lohan. “I tried to secure full information in regard to the Lohan figure of the Boston Museum. Fortunately, I have had an interview with Mr. Terazawa\(^{245}\) (Japanese) who brought the figure with a few Chinese partners from the temple.

The number of figures he brought out are three; one figure perfect, after a hard task, and the other two by breaking on account of their packing, etc.

It was almost impossible to carry lifesize figure in perfect condition such long journey and obliged to break the heads, bodys (sic.) and stands and carry back only the heads and bodys (sic.), leaving behind the stands at that time.

...By this statement it is certain that the repairings were made at Peking when the separate parts of the body arrived, and it is now clear that the head and body of the Lohan which is now in the possession of the Boston Museum are of the same age.” (Sirae to J.E.Lodge, September 6, 1916, folder and box unknown, AAOA-MFA) Though missing
condition and provenance information about the object he offered to the museum. Loo, for example, informed the MFA of the place of origin and condition of the Buddhist shrine (MFA 22.380), “Our Friend who bought this miniature Temple in China told me that the roof was in existence when they discovered the Temple but it was very much damaged and as there are only designs on the border of the roof, the people who found it, had left it there. It was found during the foundation of an additional Hall in the Kwan-ying Tan in Shu-Hsien 许州 Ho-nan.” (Fig. 17)²⁴⁶

Dealers also provided valuable market information to the museum. Interested in several objects in the French dealer Marcel Bing’s collection, Paul J. Sachs, a curator and professor at Harvard, asked Loo whether Bing’s firm would continue it business after Bing’s death.²⁴⁷ Loo informed Sachs that it was very likely that the business would be continued under Rene Hasse, Marcel Bing’s partner, or they liquidate the business under Hasse. Loo mentioned that he was waiting himself for information from Paris and would keep Sachs updated.²⁴⁸

from the existing archive at the MFA, a similar account of the history of Lohan must have been offered by C. T. Loo, whose Paris shop sold the Yamanaka the Lohan. In a letter, Francis Stewart Kershaw thanked Loo “…for the details concerning the original situation of the pottery Lo-han. It confirms the information contained in Perzynski’s account”(F. S. Kershaw to C. T. Loo, January18 1917, folder: Lai-Yuan Co., box: Unofficial Correspondence L, 1910-1922, AAOA-MFA).
²⁴⁶ C. T. Loo to J. E. Lodge, June, 13, 1921, folder: Lai-Yuan Co., box: Unofficial Correspondence L, 1910-1922, AAOA-MFA. Loo’s information was not always considered by museum curators as reliable or accurate. For example, after the purchase, K. Tomita raised his question about “…whether these four panels were originally put together in the way in which they now are.” When he tried to read the characters to determine its locality, he found that the four characters have been deliberately marred (K. Tomita to J.E. Lodge, April 26, 1922, box and folder unidentified, AAOA-MFA).
²⁴⁷ P.Sachs to C. T. Loo, November 5, 1920, folder, Loo T.C. Dealer, HUAMA.
²⁴⁸ C. T. Loo to P. Sachs, November 8, 1920, folder Loo T.C. Dealer, HUAMA.
For museums with less experience in collecting Chinese art, Loo played a significant role as their consultant and educator. In the transaction of the bronze finial (WAM 1941.47), Loo explained the category of Sino-Siberian Art to the Worcester Art Museum Director C. Sawyer, “This actual falconer was discovered in YU LING FU not far from the Ordos Region which the style confirms its locality of discovery. As we all know, the Ordos Region produced an important series of bronze plaques, finials, buckles etc that we used to call Scythian Art but now we call it Sino-Siberian Art.”249 Loo sent his associate to the Rhode Island School of Design Museum to examine a collection of jades and other items offered by Mrs. Sayles to the museum. After the examination, which seemed to yield the unsatisfactory quality of the objects under consideration, the RISD director G. Washburn wrote to Loo, “Frankie confirmed our worst fears about the materials, which I hope will not be accepted by the museum”.250

**Dealer-Scholar**251

What distinguished Loo from most of his fellow dealers was not only his superb salesmanship but also his scholarly approach to the business. Richard E. Fuller, Loo’s client and close friend, described Loo as a person with “scientific zeal”, who attracted “the utmost cooperation from the leading Western scholars” (Fuller 1958, 8).

Loo himself was known as an art expert, publisher, and patron of scholars. In 1937 he published the *Index of the History of Chinese Arts: An Aide-Memoire for Beginners*, a summary of his three-decade experience in the field of Chinese art. The handbook

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249 C. T. Loo C. Sawyer to November 17, 1941, WAMA.
250 Frankie possibly referred to Loo’s associate Frank Caro. G. B. Washburn to C. T. Loo, October 31, 1946, folder C. T. Loo & Co., 1945-1949, RISDA.
251 Many scholars and writers were also museum curators.
outlined the characteristics and developmental stages of the major categories in Chinese art. Loo carefully collected study materials and put them in his library.\(^{252}\) Loo demonstrated his knowledge about style, medium, and period. For example, in his offer of several terracotta figures Loo explained to the RISD director L. E. Rowe, “The kneeling figure shows its feet in the back and wears a long large coat and has till some pigments of paints. They are, I think, of the Han period, not only from the style but especially by the dark clay. The one in the center has the typically fine features, slender body and sloping shoulders…The other one which is an actor with outstretched arms is of a later period as the clay is white. The same type of figure is illustrated in Hobson’s book ‘Chinese Pottery and Porcelain’…”\(^{253}\)

Loo was in close contact with a galaxy of preeminent scholars, including Paul Pelliot, Berthold Laufer, Alfred Salmony, Michael I. Rostovtzeff, Bernhard Karlgren, and Jean-Pierre Dubosc, with whom he launched some of the most important publication projects of his time in the field of Chinese art.\(^{254}\) Between 1915 and 1950, Loo was responsible

\(^{252}\) C. T. Loo to K. Tomita, May 7, 1947, folder C. T. Loo, box: 1 to L, 1936-1947, AAOA-MFA.
\(^{253}\) C. T. Loo to L.E. Rowe, February 11, 1925, folder, C. T. Loo & Co.1945-1949, RISDA.
\(^{254}\) Loo was not alone in his role in promoting publication and scholarship. Siegfried Bing, the foremost French dealer of Oriental art in the nineteenth century, started to publish the lavishly illustrated periodical *Le Japon artistique* in 1881 by using the most modern reproduction techniques to produce illustrations of the exquisite Japanese objects. The periodical merged as “one of the most visible and popular manifestations of Japonisme” (Weisburg 1990, 23) and played a crucial role in promoting Bing’s business. Ernest F. Fenollosa’s influential book *Epochs of Chinese and Japanese Art* was originally conceived as a course of twelve lectures and published in 1907 by the leading Oriental art dealer, the Yamanaka & Company. The renowned scholar Umehara Sueji’s *Toso seika* (1929) and *Obei shucho Shina kodo seika* (1933), a seven-volume study of ancient Chinese bronzes in European and American collections were also funded by Yamanaka
for publishing over twenty well-researched and lavishly illustrated catalogues for his collections. Most of these publications were carefully distributed among leading collectors, scholars, and curators of Chinese art. Loo, for instance, proudly announced to John D. Rockefeller, Jr. the publication of the *Descriptive Catalogue of Ancient and Genuine Chinese Paintings*, “The book is the best that was ever published on the Chinese paintings, so were the paintings described, they were collected and compiled by our Manager of our Shanghai house.” Loo to JDR Jr. October 21, 1916, folder 1370, C. T. Loo 1916-1949, box 137, OMR-RAC. This catalogue was impressive in its appearance and content. The large-size catalogue used brocade for its cover and high-quality glossy paper for the text and illustrations. It included black-and-white photographic reproductions for most paintings and a few colored illustrations. Compiled by the Chinese painting expert, F.S. Kwen, every entry contains a detailed bilingual description of the painting, as well as information about its attribution, dating, and provenance. Being a privately printed and limited edition, this catalogue itself was a rarity. In the 1920s, Loo employed the internationally renowned Sinologist Paul Pelliot to compile two catalogues: *Bronzes antiques de la Chine appartenant à C. T. Loo et cie* (Tch’ou Tö-yi and Pelliot 1924) and *Jades Archaiques de Chine: apartenant à M.C. T. Loo* (Pelliot 1925). In the 1930s and 1940s, the prominent scholar Alfred Salmony was responsible for three catalogues: *Sino-Siberian Art in the Collection of C. T. Loo* (Salmony 1933), *An Exhibition of Ancient Chinese Ritual Bronzes* (C. T. Loo & Company, 1940b), and *An Exhibition of Chinese (Lawton 1995). The dealer Joseph Duveen was also known as a publisher and patron for leading scholars, including Bernard Berenson.

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256 According to the catalogue, some paintings’ condition made it impossible to make presentable photographs.
Stone Sculptures (Salmony 1940). The scholarly and educational value of the Loo’s publication is well illustrated by the 1940 catalogue, An Exhibition of Ancient Chinese Ritual Bronzes. The entry for the wine vessel (Met 43.25.3 a,b), for example, includes its title, a description of its formal elements, information about its age, height, and publication history, as well as an annotated translation of the inscription (C. T. Loo & Company 1940b, no 22, Pl. IX) (Fig.32). Attached to the text entry is a rubbing of the inscription. The catalogue included a photographic image for it as well as a drawing of the decorative motifs on its surface. It is no surprise that K. Tomita spoke highly of the catalogue. He wrote to Loo, “An exhibition arranged by you is always a great event and the catalogue which accompanies it a source of deep gratification not only to collectors but also to students. The present catalogue is a worthy publication of treasures in the exhibition.”257 Loo responded to Tomita, “I certainly appreciate your remarks regarding this catalogue which, I think, has more information than all the others published for ordinary exhibition.”258

Loo also had leading scholars write articles about his exhibitions and collections. Loo’s exhibition reviews by Alfred Salmony, Roberts Laurance, Jayne Horace, and Martha Davidson appeared frequently in major art periodicals such as the Art News and Parnassus.

Loo not only supplied objects for scholars to study, but also helped them with publication. To assist the German scholarly Otto Fischer’s book on Chinese art, he

257 K. Tomita to C. T. Loo, October 30, 1940, folder C. T. Loo, box: I to L, 1936-1947, AAOA-MFA
258 C. T. Loo to K. Tomita, October 31, 1940, folder C. T. Loo, box: I to L, 1936-1947, AAOA-MFA.
requested through the MFA curator K. Tomita a set of photos of the stone sculptures that Loo sold to the museum. Loo also offered to pay for these photographs.259

C. T. Loo certainly offered an extraordinary example of the dealer’s role in advancing Chinese art scholarship. His “scientific zeal” alone, however, does not explain the strong scholarly orientation of his dealership. Loo knew very well the relationship between knowledge and an object’s aesthetic and economic value. In the 1941-2 catalogue of Exhibition of Chinese Arts, Loo stated that some fine objects might not appeal to the eye, but their value would be justified with the increase of our knowledge, “…certain objects which have a sound background, either because of their rarity, period, refinement, color or shape do not give an appealing effect and thus, though rare or unique, their importance is not always understood and their value approved or appreciated. Fortunately the understanding of a genuinely fine object always marches parallel with the gradual improvement of our knowledge, thus a fine work of art eventually will be understood, loved and treasured.” (Loo 1941, Introduction)

When Loo arrived in the United States in the mid 1910s, he was facing a largely uninitiated audience and a vast amount of little researched objects. A. Salmony observed that many objects in Loo’s Sino-Siberia art collection came with no record of their place of origin and provenance (Salmony 1933, 1). In this incipient stage of Chinese art study, education and research were of critical importance to Loo’s dealing. It is largely through publication that Loo’s collections became part of the canon in the academic discourse of Chinese art in America. Martha Davidson’s article in Art News, titled “Great Chinese

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Sculpture in America”, offers a good example. In the article, at least nine out of thirty-six illustrated objects were in or previously in Loo’s collection (Davidson 1939).\(^{260}\)

The delicate relationship between an object’s scholarly and commercial value is illustrated by the relationship between Loo, the MFA, and the prestigious sinologist, Paul Pelliot. After Loo made an offer of a Buddhist stele (MFA 23.120) to the MFA in 1922, he suggested the importance of the stele by informing J.E. Lodge that Pelliot had shown an interest in publishing it. Loo wrote, “Mr. Pelliot found this monument so interesting that he asked to publish it, probably in a special Edition of the Ars Asiatica…I think it is quite necessary to have your permission for it, so would you be so kind to let me know whether you find any inconvenience for Mr. Pelliot to publish the stele in case should you decide to acquire it for your Honorable Museum.”\(^{261}\) In Loo’s negotiation in 1924 with the MFA regarding the four painted tiles (MFA 25.10-13), when Lodge questioned the importance of the tiles, Loo again timely referred to Pelliot, “…who is very much interested in these paintings, that he wishes to publish if we have enough materials to do so”.\(^{262}\)

The Network

In the first half of the twentieth century, the incipient Chinese art scholarship, the large-scale circulation of Chinese antiquities, and a coterie of experts encouraged the formation of a complex and dynamic networks, in which all the players were

\(^{260}\) There might be more objects previously in Loo’s collection, which had been sold to collectors or museums by the time when the article was published.

\(^{261}\) C. T. Loo to J.E. Lodge, August 23, 1922 and October 21, 1922, folder: Lai-Yuan Co., box: Unofficial Correspondence L, 1910-1922, AAOA-MFA.

\(^{262}\) J.E. Lodge to C. T. Loo, October 16, 1924; C. T. Loo to J.E. Lodge, October 27, 1924, folder and box unknown, AAOA-MFA.
interconnected. One player needed not only to deal with other player individually, but also to take into consideration the dynamics between other players. Loo often worked with both collector and museum curators in one transaction with the awareness of the dynamics between the collector and the museum, and the blurred line between private collections and museum collections.263

On the one hand, the museum needed to cultivate its relation with its benefactors, who would acquire objects for the museum, or as future gifts. Magnate collectors such as Denman W. Ross and John D. Rockefeller, Jr. were museum benefactors. In the transaction of the stone shrine (MFA 22.380), Loo knew well the relationship between the curator Lodge and the museum trustee Ross. After receiving the offer of the stone shrine, Lodge suggested that Loo send a set of photographs to D.W. Ross. When Loo could not reach Ross, he turned to Lodge for help. Loo wrote to Lodge, “But as I will ship this miniature temple to the States in September or October, as will you kindly let me know whether you wish me to ship it directly to Boston in case that will enable you both to examine the stones at leisure.”264 In the transaction of a Chinese gilt bronze figure of Guanyin, Loo approached John D. Rockefeller, Jr., after he had failed to sell it to the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Loo quoted the price of $40,000 and delivered the message to Rockefeller, “If, however, Mr. Rockefeller wishes to present this to a

263 Benjamin March observed in his book China and Japan in Our Museums (1929) that about sixty percent of the objects passed from private hands to public institutions (March 1929a, 12).
264 J. E. Lodge to C. T. Loo, July 27, 1921; C. T. Loo to J.E. Lodge, August 10, 1921, folder: Lai-Yuan Co., box: Unofficial Correspondence L, 1910-1922, AAOA-MFA.
Museum (and by so doing gladden the hearts of several Directors whom we know) the price is $35000.”

On the other hand, collectors like Rockefeller and Alfred Pillsbury relied on opinions of scholars and curators in making their acquisition decisions. Collectors needed publications and museum displays to immortalize them. In his dealing, Loo would use scholars and curators to increase the prestige of his collections. Loo introduced the renowned Swedish scholar Bernhart Karlgren to Pillsbury to catalogue his bronze collection, which was largely formed by Loo (La Farge 1950, 58). When Rockefeller questioned Loo’s dealership, Loo provided a long list of museums curators/scholars as his referees.

“Dr. F.A. Whiting/Mr. J.A. MacLean Cleveland Museum of Art, Cleveland, Ohio.
Mr. Bosch Reitz/ Mr. Hobbi Metropolitan Museum of Art, N.Y.C.
Dr. G.B. Gordon, University Museum, Phila. Pa. to whom we sell every year several very important objects.
Mr. John Lodge, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Mass.
Dr. R.A. Holland , City Art Museum, St, Louis, Mo.
Mr. Paul Sachs, Fogg Museum, Cambridge, Mass….
Also Louvre in Paris whom I have dealt with for the past fifteen years, and the British Museum in London.”

Referred by Loo as “Hobbi” in the letter above, Theodore Hobby, curator at the Met, played a critical role in the formation of Rockefeller’s Chinese ceramic collection. Rockefeller’s reliance on Hobby is indicated in his letter to Hobby, “Because I have

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265 Marion Wheildon to JDR Jr., June 15, 1921, folder 1370, C. T. Loo 1916-1949, box 137, OMR-RAC.
266 C. T. Loo to JDR Jr., December 24, 1918, folder 1370, C. T. Loo 1916-1949, box 137, OMR-RAC.
from the outset had complete confidence in your knowledge, your judgment and your utter disinterestedness and because it has been such a delight always to work with you, I have been able to go forward in the development of this interesting and elevating hobby as would not have been possibly without you…I shall never cease to be grateful to you for the important part you have played in this development.”

C. T. Loo often approached Hobby with his objects first, knowing Rockefeller would receive a report from Hobby afterwards. In 1932, Hobby brought to Rockefeller’s attention of a porcelain vase from Loo, “You will be interested to know that I have received a letter from Mr. C. T. Loo in which he says: ‘I am glad to notify you that I have just discovered a fine black beaker with red peonies which I am feeling will meet the taste of Mr. Rockefeller, so I am bring it over and show it to you first.”

In 1931, Hobby informed Rockefeller that Loo wrote to him and S. C. Bosch Reitz, the former curator at the Met. Hobby quoted the letter from Bosch Reitz, who called Hobby’s attention to a Ming porcelain vase from Loo, “I just had a letter from Loo who asks me assistance, the usual thing, he wants to make a sale and over-rates my influence in the matter. As you know I generally get out of these affairs as best I can, but this time it is different because I know the pieces and because I think they would be an addition to Mr. Rockefeller’s collection.” In the letter, Bosch Reitz gave a description of the object and its provenance, “The pieces in question are beakers, enamel on yellow ground, marked

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267 JDR Jr. to T. Hobby, December 15, 1949, folder 104, box 11, OMR-RAC.
268 T. Hobby to JDR Jr, November 3, 1932, folder 1354:10 West 54 th Street: Theodore Hobby, 1914-1939, box 136, OMR-RAC.
Wan Li, and of the period, belonging to the set of three sold last year by Sparks to the British Museum. Of course they are very important being the only ones, besides the black incense burner in the Metropolitan Museum, of the Ming period which we know.” Bosch Reitz also pointed out that Loo did not mention some important information. “What Loo does not write, but what I know, having heard from London where they were offered to the British Museum, is that they have been broken and repaired, also that Sparks asked a big price, more than he got for the set of three.” (Fig. 33)270

Hobby in his letter offered further advice to Rockefeller, “I write to Mr. Loo to thank him for sending the photograph. Tell him you have seen it, that we consider it an interesting example of Ming porcelain, but we also note it has been very badly broken. The colors cannot be determined from a photograph…if he should bring it here at any time you will be glad to see it.”

In 1921 when Rockefeller received Loo’ offer of a Chinese gilt bronze statue at the price of $40,000 in 1921, Hobby suggested that Rockefeller make a counteroffer beginning with $25,000. Hobby wrote, “It stands to reason that he wants to make a large a profit on this piece as possible but the market for such things is dead and he may be very glad to get his money out of it.”272

The dynamism of this network was also manifested in places that required collaborative effort from all sides, such as large-scale exhibitions and organizations. The

270 Ibid.  
271 T. Hobby to JDR Jr, August 28, 1931, folder 1370, C. T. Loo 1916-1949, box 137, OMR-RAC.  
272 T. Hobby to JDR Jr., June 25, 1921, folder 1370, C. T. Loo 1916-1949, box 137, OMR-RAC.
1929 loan exhibition of Chinese art at the Detroit Institute of Arts, for example, included not only C. T. Loo and other dealers, but also museums, and private collectors (March 1929b, 9). The collaboration among the market, museum, and academia was manifested in organizations such as the Chinese Art Society of America. Established in 1943 in New York, the organization devoted itself “to the exposition of all Chinese art forms in exhibitions, lectures and publications and an enlarged program of scientific research”. The list of its officers and board of directors showed a mix of prominent curators, scholars, collectors, and dealers, including C. T. Loo as treasurer; Edgar Bromberger, collector; Horace H.F. Jayne, curator of Oriental Art in the Pennsylvania Museum; Theodore Y. Hobby, keeper of the Altman Collection at the Met; Alfred Salmony, curator/scholar; and Alice Getty, collector and scholar of Buddhist art.

The dynamism and mobility of this network was also reflected in the crossover of the players’ roles. As a large quantity of objects moved quickly through the exchange, display, and evaluation systems, the line between dealers, collectors, curators, and scholars became blurred. C. T. Loo, for example, acted as a dealer, collector, exhibition organizer, and scholar, all at once.

274 Ernest Fenollosa (Lawton 1993, 131-146) and John C. Ferguson (Lawton 1991, 65-104) had intensive involvement in the market, museum, and academia at the same time.
275 This phenomenon was prominent before the increased curatorial specialization since the 1950s (Pearlstein 1993, 9). Asian art experts Ernest Fenollosa (Lawton 1993, 131-46), John C. Ferguson (Lawton 1991, 65-104), and Ananda Coomaraswamy were active in the market, the museum world, and academia.
CHAPTER 3: WESTERNNESS AND CHINESENESS

“...any great art is not only beyond time but it is also not limited to place.” (A.B.L. 1947, 59)

While Chapters One and Two concern primarily the market, Chapters Three and Four concentrate on C. T. Loo’s negotiation of Chinese art knowledge in academic and museological discourse. Loo’s powerful and lasting imprint on the Chinese art world was due not only to his superb salesmanship, but also, to a large extent, to his ingenuity in manipulating and merchandising Chinese art knowledge in the U.S. As a dealer of ancient Chinese art in the modern West, C. T. Loo faced two major conceptual issues. One was how to bridge the spatial gap between China and the Euro-American world, and the other, how to overcome the temporal distance between ancient art and modern society. This section considers C. T. Loo as a “cultural broker”, who situationally capitalized on the boundaries between Chinese and Western, between ancient and modern. It is important to note that terms such as Chinese/Western, ancient/modern are not mutually exclusive, but interlocking and dynamic sets of analytical categories.

Chapter Three examines the ways in which Loo negotiated Chinese art’s identity in America from a spatial-cultural perspective. On the one hand, the immense geographical and cultural distance between China and America necessitated the need to incorporate Chinese art into Western art historical discourse in terms of origination, developmental pattern, and aesthetics. On the other, the emphasis on the native context and study methods was important to enhance its authenticity and exotic charm of Chinese art.
Through a contextualized reading of Loo’s publications and exhibition projects, this chapter views “Westernness” and “Chineseness” as two edges of his dealing. Loo’s manipulation of his collection’s identity was also reflected in his personal history. It is important to note that over-simplification or generalization cannot be avoided when one uses terms such as “Westernness” and “Chineseness”. My investigation of Loo’s dealing is not to essentialize the West or China, but to locate the cultural collective consciousness in a specific moment and in a specific time and place.

**Westernness**

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, ancient Chinese art arrived in America as a new category. In contrast to the influx of a large quantity of Chinese antiquities was the paucity of available information about Chinese art in the West. The central question in the reception of Chinese art in America was where to place Chinese art in the Eurocentric art historical map in terms of lineage and aesthetics. In C. T. Loo’s dealing, a new critical vocabulary needed to be invented to help Chinese art gain license in the West. This was not an easy task, considering the immense geographical and cultural distance between China and the Euro-American world. As Steven Conn observes, compared with Rome, Greece, Egypt, Sumer, which “had a direct genealogical relation to the civilization of Europe and the United States…Neither China nor Japan formed part of the Western lineage” (Conn 2000, 167). There were also marked differences between Chinese art and its Western counterpart in terms of medium, technique, category, and aesthetics.
Certain characteristics of Chinese art, however, allowed Loo to manipulate his collections conceptually to meet the basic criteria in the Euro-American evaluation systems. Compared with the so-called “primitive” traditions such as African or Oceanic art, Chinese art had a well-preserved written history, which could be conveniently translated and incorporated into a Western art historical framework. In addition, Chinese art, spanning over five thousand years and known for its diversity and breadth, enabled Loo to promote selectively those categories that appeared close to Western art in motif, medium, and aesthetics. Moreover, Chinese art, like many other artistic traditions, did not develop in a self-contained environment. There were cultures and civilizations that influenced and in turn were influenced by the development of Chinese art and culture. This cross-cultural aspect of Chinese art allowed Loo to market the possible links between China and the West. In 1925 the art critic Roger Fry observed the malleable state of Chinese art in the West, “…it would not be hard to find specimens that might puzzle a connoisseur as to whether they were really Chinese or not…At one point we find Chinese art merging insensibly into Scythian; at another Greco-Indian influence predominates. It would indeed be surprising if one could generalize readily about the art of so vast a territory, extending through such long periods of human history…”(Fry 1925, 1-2)

Although artistic contact is often a two-way street, in early-twentieth-century America it was common to assume that Chinese art was derivative, and less dynamic compared to
its Western counterparts. Important innovations in Chinese art were necessarily induced by outside forces that could be traced to the West. Chinese art was evaluated according to Western aesthetic standards and the evolitional pattern in Western art history. The following sections examine Loo’s construction of the Westernness of Chinese art in terms of origination, developmental pattern, aesthetics, and categorization.

**Origination Mystique**

One of the most debated questions in the study of Chinese art has been where did it come from? In Loo’s time, Western scholars generally held that certain peculiar features or drastic changes in Chinese art could not be explained by native sources. Michael Rostovtzeff in the catalogue *Inlaid Bronzes of the Han Dynasty in the Collection of C. T. Loo* observed, “We understand pretty well that the art of the Han period is more than a natural outgrowth of the art of the preceding period. It is evident that none of the peculiarities of the art of the Han period can be explained in this way.” (Rostovtzeff 1927, 3) In the similar line, Alfred Salmony in the catalogue *Sino-Siberian Art in the Collection of C. T. Loo* stated, “...certain objects which are not sufficiently explained by the artistic development of the Far East alone” (Salmony 1933, 1). In their search for the origin of

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276 Scholars like Anada Coomaraswamy challenged this Eurocentric ideology in the reception of Asian art (Coomaraswamy 1981).
277 The tendency of looking for outside influences on Chinese art was also manifested in the study of ancient pottery and bronzes. Referring to the Anderson finds in Gansu in the 1920s, Alfred Salmony noted, “It has been frequently suggested, and with good reason, that the painted pottery of China must in some way be connected with that of the Mediterranean coast or of southeastern Europe.” (Salmony 1933, 4) In the field of bronze, William Watson suggested, “The sudden appearance in China of accomplished metallurgy might indicate the main elements of Shang culture came to China from outside in an already developed form…”(Watson 1960, 11)
Chinese art, many Westerners looked westward, and ultimately found ancient Greece, the
fountainehead of Western civilization.

Loo was aware of the benefit of linking Chinese art to Greek art, the unquestioned
aesthetic paragon in America. Loo, for example, urged John D. Rockefeller, Jr. to see
“some 5th Century black stone sculpture which is equal to the best Greek arts in
expression and from an artistic point of view.” To connect Chinese art directly to
Greek art in origination, however, was not an easy task considering the enormous
gEOgraphical and cultural distance between these two traditions. Loo’s strategy was to
connect China to the West through intermediaries such as India and Siberia, as illustrated
by his dealing in Greco-Buddhist art and Sino-Siberia art.

Greco-Buddhist sculpture was a popular category in Loo’s collection. In Loo’s 1935
Exhibition of Chinese Bronze, Pottery and Porcelain, Greco-Buddhist art was noticed for
its Western lineage. The New York Times observed that the exhibition demonstrated the
not-so-well-known “widespread influence of Hellenic art in the Far East…Examples of
Greco-Buddhist art include some very interesting second-century friezes, in which the
figures, while forming part of a unified design, maintain also a peculiar independence.
The observer might find it profitable to compare these pieces with similar themes from
the antiquity of Greece and Rome.” The Greco-Buddhist sculptures at the exhibition
Loo organized at the Wildenstein Galleries in 1926 also provoked enthusiastic comments.

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278 The prominent American collector William W. Corcoran believed that “…American
art stemmed ultimately from the sculpture of fifth-century Greece” (Weston 2004, 19).
279 C. T. Loo to JDR Jr, March 3, 1916, folder 1370, C. T. Loo 1916-1949, box 137,
OMR-RAC.
An *Art News* review observed, “The most interesting objects in the collection to Oriental and Occidental alike are the Greco-Buddhist stone sculptures in which the art of the east and west are completely merged with a harmony which has never been duplicated in any other period.”\(^{281}\) The review further observed that the Gandhara area, where Greco-Buddhist art was produced, served as the bridge between China and Greece, “It was from this Bactrian source by way of Gandhara and Chinese Turkestan that China received the distant influence of Greece.”\(^{282}\)

The idea that South Asia, especially the Gandhara area, acted as the bridge between China and Greece was well illustrated by the chart by Okakura Kakuzo, the leading Asian art authority in America in the early twentieth century (Fig.34). In this chart Greece was placed firmly in the center and its influences spread by way of Bactria to Gandhara, where it infiltrated into Buddhist art in India, Chinese Turkistan, and finally China.\(^{283}\) In the 1920s the role of India as the bridge between China and Greece was known to art collectors such as Abby Aldrich Rockefeller, who wrote to her sister Lucy Aldrich, “You probably already have a lot of books on Indian art and know all about it, but it is a brand

\(^{281}\) *Art News*, January 2, 1926.
\(^{282}\) Ibid.
\(^{283}\) In Okakura’s chart, Asian art was evaluated by its affinities to Greek art. He maintained that the finest expressions of Indian art were not those in the native Indian art but those produced “…in Gandhara where the influence of the Bactrian Greeks survived.” Ananda Coomaraswamy, the prominent scholar and curator of Indian art, offered a different interpretation of Gandhara sculpture. In the essay entitled *The Influence of Greek on Indian Art*, Coomaraswamy noted that the influence of Greco-Roman art on Indian art has been misunderstood and exaggerated. He argued that it was the transforming power of Indian philosophy that gradually Indianised Greco-Roman art (Coomaraswamy 1981,91). Okakura Kakuzo. “The Development of the Department of Chinese and Japanese Art,” May 9, 1908.” Part II p. 2, folder: Okakura Kakuzo, 1908, Chinese and Japanese Department Business, box: Okakura Tenshin, Sorted Papers, AAOA-MFA.
new subject to me and very illuminating because of the influence it has exerted on Chinese art and also because of the influence that the Greeks and Persians have had upon India." The popularity of the idea of India as a mediating force between China and Greece was illustrated by the reception of the famous marble figure of a standing Bodhisattva of the later T’ang period displayed at the *International Exhibition of Chinese Art* in London in 1935-6 (Fig. 35). The renowned collector and expert of Chinese art David Percival commented on the Greece-India-China dynamic embodied in this sculpture, “This grand conception of the Chinese sculptor, full of grace and movement, owes much to the artistic heritage left by Greece and India to the Far East. It is from Greece that it derives the clinging folds of its drapery; it is India which has inspired the swaying poise of the body and its sensuous modelling. But it is the genius of China which has breathed into the figure its vitalizing spirit.” (Percival 1935,177)

Loo’s stress on China’s connections to India was part of the scenario. He stated, “India was the forefather of the votive art of Eastern Asia and had a great moral bearing on the whole Far East, particularly China.” (Loo 1942, Forward) In the *Index of the History of Chinese Arts: An Aide-Memoire for Beginners*, Loo maintained that Indian influence had an important role in the development of Chinese Buddhist sculpture. According to Loo, the best Chinese Buddhist sculptures produced in the sixth-century

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285 Loo also dealt in Indian art. In the 1920s and 1930s Indian art transaction gained a prominent position in Loo’s business. In 1935 Chinese items were shown with Hindu Sculpture sculptures at the Jacques Seligmann Galleries (*New York Times*, January 15, 1935).
“have an outstanding personality with a more pronounced Hindu influence in the
decoration and movement” (C. T. Loo 1937).

Like India, Siberia served as a link between Chinese and Greek art in Loo’s art
historical map. The collection of Sino-Siberian art (Ordos art), a large group of bronze
objects with animal motifs from North China, constituted a distinct category in Loo’s
collection (Fig. 36). In 1927 Loo’s collection of inlaid bronzes of the Han dynasty was
catalogued by Michael I. Rostovtzeff. Loo’s decision to employ Rostovtzeff, a non-
Chinese art specialist, to catalogue this collection was a curious one. Rostovtzeff
admitted in the catalogue that he had no expertise in Chinese art, “…I am not a specialist
in Chinese antiquities, Chinese history and Chinese language. I am therefore not able to
quote the Chinese written sources to explain the religious ideas of which the Chinese
objects are mostly an artistic expression. I cannot use the detailed knowledge of Chinese
archeologists as developed in their ancient and recent works.” (Rostovtzeff 1927, 7-8)

To hire Rostovtzeff to catalogue this collection was a deliberation. Rostovtzeff was a
prominent figure in the field of Classical art and archaeology with a specialization in
Roman and Hellenistic world, and cross-cultural contacts. In 1922, he published Iranians
and Greeks in South Russia, which concerned the Scythians and their interchange with
the Greeks. His prestige and scholarship made him a perfect candidate to incorporate
Loo’s collection into the discourse of Western art and archaeology in terms of origination
and methodology. In the catalogue of the Inlaid Bronzes of the Han Dynasty in the
Collection of C. T. Loo, Rostovtzeff stated, “In dealing with Chinese antiquities, I am
using the same methods which are familiar to me from my studies in the antiquities of the
Nearer East, Greece and Rome. I am constantly keeping in mind the rich repertory of monuments of Oriental, Greek and Roman art which used to form the chief subject of my studies for long years. And I use for analyzing the products of Chinese art the knowledge of Central Asiatic and to a certain extent of Indian antiquities which I have acquired in dealing with the monuments of Scythian and Sarmatian art: found in South Russia, in Siberia, in Turkestan, and in the Altai region.” (Rostovtzeff 1927, 7-8) Based on his scholarship on Greek influence on Iranian art, Rostovtzeff proposed a Greece-Siberia-China lineage. In the catalogue, he suggested that Hellenistic art might have an direct or indirect influence on Chinese art of the late Zhou and early Han dynasties through Siberia. He noted, “The finds of Kozlov in Mongolia have shown that Greek wares, especially Greek textiles, were imported in large masses into Mongolia and probably into China as early as the 1st century B. C.” (Rostovtzeff 1927, 4) He suggested that Iranian tribes, who brought with them Greek influence to South Russia, could have spread this influence to China through Sarmatian art (Rostovtzeff 1927, 5-6).

**Developmental Pattern, Categorization, and Aesthetics**

To further incorporate Chinese art into the Western art historical map, it is necessary to demonstrate that Chinese art not only originated from the West, but also followed Western art’s developmental pattern and met Western aesthetic criteria. This ideology was manifested in Loo’s dealing in Chinese sculpture.

Unlike painting, Chinese sculpture was an invention of the West. The mortuary figures (Met. 23.180.4-7), which were appreciated as fine examples of sculpture in the West, for example, were not originally items that the Chinese would collect because of their
negative association with their funerary context (Fig. 37). Osvald Siren noticed the
difference between the Western conception of sculptures and the Chinese notion of
shixiang, stone images that served a votive and commemorative rather than aesthetic
purpose. Siren observed, “Most of them, particularly among the religious monuments, are
hardly great sculptures from the traditional Western point of view; they are often lacking
in plastic beauty and technical refinement and appear somewhat coarse or uncouth in the
cold light of the exhibition halls. Very few of them are distinguished by such qualities of
form and technique that Western art-lovers are wont to expect in high class sculpture.”
(Siren 1936, 4) Under this circumstance, Loo needed to construct a progressive and
coherent history of Chinese sculpture and to invent an aesthetic vocabulary based on
Western paragons.

Loo in his *Index of the History of Chinese Arts: An Aide-Memoire for Beginners*
outlined the development of Chinese sculpture as a progression following the Archaic-
Classical-Baroque model in Western art history.

“ WEI, end of 400 to 550 A.D. Very archaic style with elongated neck, drooping
shoulder and slender body (or heavier construction if from Yung Kang).
CHI, (Northern) 550-577 A.D. More ornamentation, short neck and heavy structure. Most
sculptures are from Shan-Si province.
SUI, 581-618 A.D. Here during this short period were produced some of the most refined
and elegant Buddhistic sculptures, which have an outstanding personality with a more
pronounced Hindu influence in the decoration and movement…
Tang 618-906 AD …Sculpture is in great favour with Lung Men the outstanding
monument, then gradually following the evolution it becomes too ornate and less
vigorous…
Five Dynasties 907-960 Buddhistic objects begin to be in decadence...Sculptures lose their beauty... the sculptures are in definite decadence and ended in the Song dynasties (960-1280).” (C. T. Loo 1937)

This evolutional pattern was reflected in Loo’s dealing. According to Loo, the finest examples of Chinese stone sculpture could be found from the sixth to the ninth century (Loo 1940, Preface). Pieces dated the Northern Wei dynasty (386–535 ACE), Sui dynasty (589–618 ACE), and Tang dynasty (618–907 ACE) constituted the core of Loo’s sculpture collection. They were promoted as representatives of archaic, transitional, and classical periods, corresponding to the stages in the development of ancient Greek art.

Wei pieces in Loo’s collection with their geometrical form and smiling faces were likened to Greek sculptures of the archaic period. Loo’s 1940 catalogue, *An Exhibition of Chinese Stone Sculptures*, described the smiles of Wei figures, “Smiling benevolence finds adequate expression in large squarish faces. The mouth follows a formula with small lips lifted upwards at the corners, with notches in the chin and eyes which close or gaze emptily to give a dreamy contemplative expression.” (C. T. Loo and Company 1940a, Wei) A Bodhisattva from Yungang cave temple, dating to the Wei dynasty and displayed at Loo’s 1936 exhibition, was compared to Greek and medieval art in the exhibition review, “Its archaic smile, slight swing of the body, and anatomical divergences are familiar to us from early Greece and mediaeval Europe of the twelfth century.” (Davidson 1936, 12) (Fig. 38) Loo turned the Wei sculptures’ affinity to Greek art, especially the “archaic smile” into a selling point. In 1922 Loo offered the MFA a Northern Wei statue of Maitreya with Aureola, dated 528 A.C.E. Loo’s description of the
piece was highly reminiscent of the archaic smile of a kouros, “The expression of the figure bears the most characteristique (sic) type of the Wei dynasty with an indescrible (sic) sweet smile of contemplation, of great dignity and purety (sic.) of mind.”

Sculpture in the Sui dynasty, moving toward naturalism and three-dimensionality, was seen as an important transition from archaic period to classical period. David Percival commented on the colossal Sui marble statue that Loo loaned to the International Exhibition of Chinese Art in London (Fig. 39), “…the archaic conventions of the Wei manner are being gradually abandoned and the modelling tends to become more naturalistic. The figure is slim and tall, the drapery is simplified, almost to the point of severity. The face has become smaller and more round, and a rapt child-like expression has replaced the enigmatic smile of the Yun-kang figure.” (Percival 1935, 176) Loo’s 1940 catalogue An Exhibition of Chinese Stone Sculptures observed the features of the Sui sculptures, “It has not yet fully discovered nature, but it has learned that such an organic form as a leg can be forcefully interpreted by such an architectural form as a column.” (C. T. Loo and Company 1940a)

In Loo’s art historical map, Tang sculpture, characterized by naturalism and three-dimensionality, represented the classical period of Chinese sculpture. Loo’s 1940 catalogue An Exhibition of Chinese Stone Sculptures stated, “In this evolution, T’ang sculpture is a logical summation. At the beginning of the period, an understanding of

286 C. T. Loo to J.E. Lodge, February 16, 1922, folder: Lai-Yuan Co., box: Unofficial Correspondence L, 1910-1922, AAOA-MFA.
nature was reached. This means that the artists had only to loosen up what was rigid before, to differentiate in surface treatment between flesh and fabric, to animate frozen faces.” (C. T. Loo and Company 1940a) (Fig. 40)

According to Loo, the artistic flowering in the Tang dynasty was followed by a decline in the late Tang and the Song dynasties. It was noted, “The well-balanced naturalism of early T’ang changed while the house still ruled. Bodies again became massive and lasting, but without losing the knowledge of proportions and textures. Late Tang sculpture may thus rightly be called the Chinese Baroque.” (C. T. Loo and Company 1940a)

In Loo’s dealing, it is also important to bring Chinese art close to its Western counterpart in terms of aesthetics and category. The description of a stone slab that Loo’s firm offered to Denman W. Ross, was an overt paraphrase of Western aesthetic criteria. Terms such as symmetry, balance, and harmony were used to make the piece appeal to Ross, the Harvard professor of art and architecture and the author of *A Theory of Pure Design: Harmony, Balance, Rhythm*. The offer letter from Loo’s firm stated, “The sculptor of this slab apparently aimed at symmetry altho (sic) the result as shown in the picture by no means possesses any scientific correspondence. However, one can plainly see the sculptor’s attempt at symmetry in the corresponding figures on the two sides with

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287 The 1940 catalogue *An Exhibition of Chinese Stone Sculptures* also noted the abstract and stylized quality even in Tang sculptures. It stated, “But this tendency towards naturalism should not be over-emphasized. The description of hair and fur is still done in parallel lines. Folds and borders of a garment undulate with the regularity of waves. When the elegance and beauty of natural forms was understood in China, ornaments followed the same trend and some minor parts of the figurative symbol were never deprived of their abstract treatment.” (C. T. Loo and Company 1940a)
Buddha as the central figure. The lateral figures are fairly well balanced. The surroundings show remarkable richness of the carved details, although (sic) they are not elaborated and delicately finished. The human figures possess remarkably suave lines that make the picture look calm and harmonious.”

In evaluating Chinese sculpture, terms such as naturalism and three dimensionality were employed. It is not surprising that Sui and Tang sculptures were heavily promoted by Loo. Between the 1910s and 1930s, C. T. Loo and other dealers introduced into Western art museums a group of Lohan statues, formerly dated to the Tang dynasty.289 The sensation that these statues created in the West could be partly explained by their striking realism and individuality (Fig. 18).290 The Westerners’ amazement was illustrated in the article Hunt for the Gods by the German adventurer Friedrich Perzynski, who first announced the discovery of these statues to the West. Perzynski described his response when he saw one of these statues one night when two dealers came to his house and opened the bundle they had brought, “‘The owners feasted their eyes upon my profound amazement as they showed it to me. I had never seen anything like it. At the time, we called him a Priest, for despite the traditional long ears, he possessed the striking pictorial quality of a portrait.’” (Smithies 2001, 52)

288 The author’s italicization. H.S. Pao to D. W. Ross, August 4, 1919, folder: Lai-Yuan Co., box: Unofficial Correspondence L, 1910-1922, AAOA-MFA.
289 They have recently been dated the eleventh century in the Liao dynasty. According to Richard Smithies, between 1913 to 1931, at least eight Lohan statues found their way to the museums in the West, including the MFA, the Nelson-Atkins Museum in Kansas City, Met, UPM, the British Museum, the Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto. The eighth Lohan was destroyed during World War II in Berlin (Smithies 2001).
290 They were the largest Chinese ceramic figures known to the West. They were also treasured for their age.
The Western aesthetics also affected Loo’s dealing in terms of medium and category. White marble sculptures, which recalled their Greek counterparts, constituted a distinct category in Loo’s inventory. The colossal Buddhist sculpture that Loo displayed in the *International Exhibition of Chinese Art* in London offers a good example (Fig. 39). In Loo’s business during the 1910s and 1920s, figure paintings, especially those made in a naturalistic style, were popular items. *The Five Old Men of Sui-yang*, an album of portraits of five high officials in the Northern Song dynasty offers a good example (Fig. 41). The meticulous rendering and lifelike quality of their faces must have held a special appeal to the Western viewer, as the catalogue text stated, “When men of the present time meet with genuine specimens of paintings by Sung artists they regard them as great treasures. Moreover, in these portraits the appearance and bearing of the Five Old Men of ancient times are preserved, and when we open the album and see the old men we cannot but have a feeling of reverence for them.” (Kwen 1916, Cat. no.60)

The interpretation of the painting *Shakyamuni Buddha Descending the Mountain* (*Buddha under the Mango Tree*) (MFA 56.256), the first piece in the Loo’s 1924 catalogue of *T’ang, Sung and Yüan Paintings Belonging to Various Chinese Collectors*, offers another example of how Loo marketed the aesthetic parallels between Chinese and Western art. The catalogue compiler Berthold Laufer elucidated the painting’s humanistic and aesthetic value by comparing it to Durer’s painting *Apostles*, “This is not the conventional, stereotyped Buddha…, but it is the great individual Buddha as a powerful

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292 The FGA has two leaves, (F.48.10, 48.11); the Met owns one; and the Yale University Museum’s Small Moore Collection holds two.
human personality… an eminently human and manly face that inspires profound sympathy, and with an expression of spiritual force and energy that in the history of art we meet again solely in Durer’s Apostles” (Laufer 1924,1) (Fig. 42 a,b).

Loo not only manipulated the meaning of the object but also physically altered it to meet Western aesthetic standards. The pair of Tang relief panels (MFA. 37. 249, 37.250) that Loo sold to the MFA, for instance, were mounted on black marble stands to imitate the way in which Western sculptures were usually installed (Fig. 43).293

Chineseness

On the eve of C. T. Loo’s retirement in 1950, Henry La Farge in an Art News article titled Mr. Loo and China Trade recognized Loo’s role as “an educator of a true Chinese taste” (La Farge 1950, 43) in the West. In 1948 Loo launched An Exhibition of Authenticated Chinese Paintings, which displayed the collection of the prestigious Chinese collector-connoisseur Zhang Congyu. In the exhibition catalogue Loo announced his goal “to start a new era in appreciating Chinese painting in the tradition of real Chinese connoisseurs” (Loo 1948). The key components of “Chineseness” was articulated in Loo’s statement in the catalogue, “This is the first time that a collection of this class of art ever came out which was gathered by a real connoisseur. It has been studied according to Chinese tradition, with full research in past publications and with the colophons and seals on each painting authenticated” (Loo, 1948). In Loo’s dealing,

293 The way of installation can be critical to the authenticity of an art object. Christopher Steiner has noted that African traders removed the stand previously mounted by the gallery owner because “The presence of the mount indicated that the object had already been ‘discovered’ by another collector. Its removal reaffirmed the image that traders collect art directly from village sources.” (Steiner1994, 140)
Chineseness meant that antiquities were studied with Chinese methods by Chinese scholars/connoisseurs, and collected according to Chinese taste by Chinese collectors.

It is important to note that Chineseness, like Westernness, was a marketable construct. While “Westernness” assimilated Chinese antiquities into the Western art discourse, “Chineseness” capitalized on the native context to evoke a sense of tradition, authenticity, authority, and quality. The following sections examine the way in which Loo constructed and merchandised Chineseness.

_Art History or Sinology?_

While many Westerners approached Chinese art from a Western point of view, John C. Ferguson, the renowned American scholar of Chinese art and culture argued that it was futile to use preconceived notions to evaluate Chinese art because it was based on a distinctly Chinese culture, which was fundamentally different from Western culture. He proposed that one needed to be immersed in Chinese culture, history, and literature in order to study Chinese art (Ferguson 1927, 3). The Chinese scholar Chiang Yee was aware of this obstacle in the appreciation of Chinese painting in the West, “…Western people have seldom tried to understand the true background of these pictures, and very rarely attempted to master their technique. Discriminating appreciators are correspondingly few. Perhaps your love of our forms and scenes in paint can never be as great as our own: our customs, our tastes, our psychology, our whole life are very different, and it is just these elements which are the most formidable barriers to understanding.” (Chiang 1960, 3) In his article entitled Sinology or Art History, John A. Pope, the American scholar and curator, distinguished two approaches to Chinese art in
the West: while Sinologists worked with text, art historians and connoisseurs concerned themselves primarily with aesthetic and formal elements. Pope criticized Western art historians for their application of rules of stylistic evolution in Western art history to study Chinese art, and their negligence of Chinese history, archaeology, epigraphy, and language (Pope 1947, 389).

Loo’s dealing reflected this methodological debate in the study of Chinese art. Loo’s use of Westernness/Chineseness had categorical implications. Chinese sculptures and ceramics were low-context objects, which depended less on native knowledge. They could be conveniently recontextualized in the West. In contrast, bronzes and paintings were high-context items with distinct forms, media, and formats. One needed to have a good understanding of Chinese history, language, and customs in order to appreciate them in the Chinese manner. Aware that the unique features of Chinese art presented enormous challenges to the Western audience in the first half of the twentieth century, Loo embarked on a series of projects to educate the Westerners about “Chinese taste”. It is important to note that while placing a great emphasis on Chinese contexts, Loo’s dealing in paintings and bronzes often struck a fine balance between Chinese and Western, Sinology and art history, context and form, text and image.

The Descriptive Catalogue of Ancient and Genuine Chinese Paintings published by Loo’s firm in 1916 was Loo’s first important project to introduce and promote Chinese-style connoisseurship in America. Designed to be sold as a lot to Charles L. Freer and his

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294 Benjamin March pointed out the problems in categorizing objects that were uniquely Chinese in America: whether to categorize Chinese bronzes as bronze or sculpture, and whether to categorize mortuary clay figures as ceramics or sculpture (March 1929a).
fellow collectors, sixty paintings/albums were assembled and catalogued by Loo’s partner F. S. Kwen, a Chinese painting expert. The catalogue’s emphasis on its Chineseness was a response to Freer’s growing interest in traditional connoisseurship in East Asia. At the end of the catalogue, Kwen included a section on the paintings’ ownership history to show that many works were previously in the collection of renowned collectors-connoisseurs such as Wan-yen King-hsien (Wanyan Jingxian), Weng T’ung-ho (Weng Tonghe) (Kwen 1916). In his correspondence with Freer, Kwen emphasized the paintings’ significance in China. “I have collected for you many ancient paintings from the South and the North of China…These sixty paintings are mostly our hereditary valuables, here and there recorded and very highly esteemed. The other pieces, too, have been more or less approved by well-known persons. All the sixty pieces are recognized to be incomparably fine in our country…” Kwen also recommended to Freer three painting treatises/catalogues by Chinese collectors and connoisseurs, Shi gu tang shu hua hui kao, Mo yuan hui guan, and Tie wang shan hu. Kwen wrote to Freer, “All these are very famous books, I hope you will keep them for reference; and it would not be a bad idea for you to get some of the experts in Chinese to translate them into English. Of the sixty paintings I have recommended you, you will find twelve mentioned in the first book and one each in the other two books. These books are very rich in their contents and are from the highest authorities on Chinese art within the last five hundred

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295 It is noteworthy that Freer’s interest in native tastes for art was shown in his second tour of Asia in 1907, when he met Hara Tomitaro (1868-1939), the Japanese banker, merchant and art collector in Yokohama, and studied Tomitaro’s collection (Lawton 1993).

296 F.S. Kwen to C.L Freer, August 30, 1916, CLFP-FGA.
years; but they are very hard to get”. Freer’s interest in Chinese connoisseurship was indicated by his purchase of these Chinese catalogues through Loo after viewing the 1916 painting catalogue.

The playing on Chineseness in this catalogue was also indicated by its content. Each entry included the descriptive text in Chinese (after the English text), information about the artists, inscriptions, seals, provenances, as well as reference to historical events and Chinese painting literature. The catalogue’s stress on Chineseness was well illustrated by its treatment of the inscription. In China connoisseurs placed a high value on inscriptions, which often contain observations on painting techniques, and important historical, biographical, and provenance information. It has been observed that Chinese “…frequently value the inscriptions on a painting as highly, or even more highly, than they do the painting itself… Inscriptions not only testify to authenticity of a painting, but also are rare examples of the calligraphy of famous scholars-many of the commentators being as well noted painters and connoisseur of art” (Hackney and Yau 1940, xi).

In Loo’s 1916 catalogue, the descriptive text for the Five Old Men of Sui-yang attached a great importance to the inscription. One third of the text discussed the inscription, which contained a wealth of information about the album’s circulation and reception history as well as its significance. The figures were identified by the inscription as five high officials in the Northern Song dynasty. Figures like Du Yan, Bi Shichang, and Zhu

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297 F.S. Kwen to C.L Freer, October 6, 1916, CLFP-FGA.
298 C.L. Freer to C. T. Loo, November 11, 1916, CLFP-FGA.
299 Information in the inscription also shows the album’s importance as the object for ancestral worship. This set of paintings was kept in the Bi Shichang’s descendents in the Song dynasty and later Zhu Guan’s descendents in the Yuan and Ming dynasties.
Guan were admired for their uprightness and longevity by their contemporaries and descendants. The inscription also provided important evidence to date the painting. Kwen observed, “The picture was painted by an artist of the Sung dynasty, for it is in the style of that period; and the inscriptions in prose and poetry, written on it are by men of the Sung 宋, Ming 明 and Ts’ing 清 dynasties. It should therefore be highly valued.” (Kwen 1916, Cat. no. 60)

The significance of the inscription, however, was lost in the West because many early Western scholars and collectors either neglected inscriptions or were unable to read them. While the naturalistic and life-like images in this album attracted American collectors, the section that bears inscription was not well received. According to Loo’s associate Chang-Foo Yau, when this album was brought to the United States for sale in the 1910s, no client was interested in the inscription section without images. It was sent back to Shanghai.

Compared to paintings, Chinese bronzes arrived in America as even more unfamiliar objects. According to Loo, the beginning of the Western collection of Chinese ancient bronzes was marked by his introduction of a bronze vessel yu to the Eumorfopoulos collection in 1910 (Loo 1940). The paucity of knowledge about Chinese bronzes in America was noted by the Art News review of Loo’s 1924 exhibition, “…criticism of it

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300 Here the “song ren” (people of the Song dynasty) in the Chinese version of Kwen’s text was translated as “an artist of the Sung dynasty” in the English version. The idea of “artist” was a Western concept.
today is practically out of the question except for a few experts who less and less frequently differ among themselves.”³⁰¹

The study of ancient bronzes was an important discipline in China. As the Chinese connoisseur/collector Duanfang noted in the preface to his bronze catalogue Tao zhai ji jin lu, bronzes were important historical records because they preserved early writings that rarely survived in other forms or media. He distinguished two approaches in the study of bronzes. One was to look at bronzes as dao (path, principle) because the study of bronzes, especially their inscriptions, leads to an understanding of history and rituals. The other approach was to treat bronzes as qi (objects), or wan wu (playthings) for the eye.

The 1924 catalogue Bronzes antiques de la Chine appartenant à C. T. Loo et cie not only marked the beginning of Loo’s introduction of Chinese-style bronzes scholarship to the West, but also reflected his subtle negotiation of Westernness/Chineseness, text/image, context/form in his dealing in ancient bronzes. On the one hand, the provenance of the collection as well as the background and method of the compilers of this catalogue played on Chinese contexts. The bronze collection included in the catalogue was reportedly from the family of the late Liu Kun-Yi, a former Viceroy in China.³⁰² The major text of the catalogue was written by the well-known Chinese bronze connoisseur Tch’ou Tö-yi, who had helped catalogue the Chinese collector Duanfang’s famous bronze collection. Tch’ou’s Chinese-style connoisseurship paid great attention to textual evidence from ancient literature, inscriptions, and the function of the bronzes. Take the first catalogue entry, for example, which is based on the historical text that

“…the Son of Heaven sacrificed to the Yellow Emperor in spring and then used an owl” from *Chou-li* (*Zhou li*) and *the Historical Memoirs of Ssu-ma Ch’ien* (*Shi ji by Si Maqian*). Tch’ou’s concluded, “This vessel must accordingly be a wine jar which was used in sacrificing to the Yellow Emperor.” (Tch’ou and Pelliot 1924, 9-10) The catalogue’s Chineseness was enhanced by the contribution of the prestigious Sinologist Paul Pelliot, who was known for his thorough understanding of Chinese language, history, and culture. He provided the introduction as well as comments on Tch’ou’s writing.\(^{303}\)

On the other hand, the catalogue stressed the bronzes’ formal and visual elements to make them appeal to the Western audience.\(^{304}\) The catalogue featured large-size, high-quality photographic reproductions, which replaced outline drawings in comparable Chinese native catalogues such as *Tao zhai ji jin lu* or *Xi qing gu jian* (Fig. 44).\(^{305}\) The publication, with high quality photographs, was particularly significant in Loo’s time.

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\(^{303}\) Though Pelliot and Tch’ou both concentrated on the Chinese contextual information, they differed in method. Pelliot in some cases disagreed with Tch’ou in dating the bronzes. Pelliot’s comment on Tch’ou’s writing was a response to Chinese traditional bronze scholarship, which relied heavily on textual evidence and neglected archaeological knowledge. The Burlington Magazine review of this catalogue commented on the scholarship of Tch’ou and Pelliot, “His somewhat naïve adoption of all manner of legendary attributions, while seeking to endow with picturesque associations the objects illustrated, shakes one’s faith in his archaeological acumen. So too, some of the dates assigned by him seem unduly speculative.” And “M. Pelliot has contented himself with a few notes, mainly comments on the most imaginative flights of the authors.” Review of *Bronzes antiques de la Chine appartenant à C. T. Loo et cie* by Tch’ou Tö-yi and Paul Pelliot, *The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs*, Vol. 49, No. 28 (August 1926): 101.

\(^{304}\) The catalogue was published in French and English.

\(^{305}\) *Tao zhai ji jin lu* is the catalogue of Duan Fang’s famous bronze collection.*Xi qing gu jia* is the catalogue of the Qing dynasty imperial collection compiled in the eighteenth century.
Pelliot observed in the introduction that Chinese catalogues offered valuable information from the philological and epigraphical point of view, but they lacked accurate reproductions of the object (Tch’ou and Pelliot 1924, Introduction). The emphasis on the form and image of the object was reflected in the organization of the catalogue. The two most noticeable places in the catalogue were occupied by objects with forms that were immediately recognizable to Western viewers. The owl-shaped vessel was placed in the first plate, and a statue of a human figure the last. The emphasis on the formal quality of these bronzes was also reflected in the descriptive text. While description in Chinese native catalogues often contains the dimensions, weight and a brief description of the object’s form mostly for identification purpose (Fig. 45), Loo’s 1924 catalogue merchandised their attractive appearance. The owl-shaped vessel, for example, was described with highly evocative words such as, “turquoise colour throughout” (Tch’ou and Pelliot 1924, 10), “The precious red stones are inlaid in the eyes…there is a life-like appearance…” (Tch’ou and Pelliot 1924, 9). The eye-catching quality of this vessel is evident in its appearance in the Art News report/advertisement for Loo bronze collection and exhibition (Fig. 16).308

The research materials created around 1939 for the wine vessel yu in the Franck Caro Archive offer another example of how Loo ingeniously combined Chinese and Western,

306 The Chinese Buddhist deity Guanyin.
307 The description for this bronze yu in the catalogue of the Qing dynasty imperial collection Xi qing gu jia reads, “(The image on the) right, the height (of the bronze) including the lid is 9 cun 2 fen, the depth is 5 cun 8 fen, the diameter (the shorter one) is 3 cun 5 fen, the diameter (the longer one) is 4 cun 6 fen. The fuwei is 1 chi 9 cun 6 fen. The weight is 115 liang. It has two ears and a handle.” (Lawton 1991, 14)
308 “Diplomat Buys an Ancient Chinese Bronze,” Art News, December 13, 1924, see Chapter One, p.57-8.
contextual and formal approaches in his dealing in ancient bronzes.\textsuperscript{309} In the folder, two types of materials complemented each other. The first type of materials focused on the vessel’s shape, decorative motif, symbolism. It included references to the scholarship of the leading Western experts, including Alan Priest, Bernhard Karlgren, Alfred Salmony, W.P. Yetts. There was not much information about its dating because the author noted that the decoration on the vessel did not fit into the typological system that Karlgren created.\textsuperscript{310} The second kind of materials exemplified Chinese methods, which emphasized the importance of inscription, historical relevance, and native literature. Each character in the inscriptions was transcribed and translated into modern Chinese and English (Fig. 46). The English translation of the entire inscription was annotated to illustrate its historical relevance, dating, and references.\textsuperscript{311} Based on the inscription, the vessel was dated to the reign of \textit{Zhou wu wang}, the King of \textit{Wu} in the Zhou dynasty (1134-1120 BCE) (Fig. 47). The provenance of the vessel was traced based on native evidence such as the record in \textit{Xi qing gu jian}, and two collector seals on the rubbing included in Lo Zhengyu’s publication \textit{San dai ji jin wen cun}.\textsuperscript{312} The materials inferred that the vessel passed from the imperial collection to the famous Chinese antiquarian Pan

\textsuperscript{309} The bronze vessel was inventoried in May 1939, and left by C. T. Loo on approval at A. Pillsbury in November 1939, and sold to him in May 1940 for $3,000 (Inventory card 86420, FCA; Yellow folder, 86420, the second drawer (without label) from the top on the far right, FCA).
\textsuperscript{311} In the 1930s and 1940s, the inscription on ancient assumed an added meaning because of the rising nationalism in China. See Chapter Four, pp.164-5.
\textsuperscript{312} A letter from an unidentified person to C. T. Loo, December 20, 1939, FCA.
Zuyin. The second type of materials also contained references to Chinese literature, including *Bo gu tu lu*, Wu Chi-chang’s *Jin wen shi zu pu*.

**Discovery Lore and Display Context**

The construction of the narrative that Loo’s objects had been directly secured in China was an important strategy to convey the message of their Chineseness, freshness, and authenticity, as indicated by the letterhead of Loo’s company, “Importation directe d’objets d’Art Anciens DE CHINE”, and the prominent position of “PEKING SHANGHAI” and the Chinese name of Lai-yuan & Co. in another letterhead (Fig. 48). The message that Loo was actually in China hunting treasures was clearly communicated by the postcard that he sent from Beijing to the Harvard professor Paul J. Sachs in 1917. The colored photographic image of “Country View with Pagoda in China” on the postcard is a visual statement Loo’s presence in China. Loo wrote to Sachs that he was traveling in China, and after he came back to the U.S he would like to show Sachs a few things he secured in China.

As Christopher Steiner notes, the quality and authenticity of an object is determined not only by its own properties, but also to a large extent by the characteristics of the person who sells it (Steiner 1991, 90). Loo’s construction of an adventurous persona and discovery tales was used to authenticate an object and to psychologically engage his

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313 C. T. Loo to J.E. Lodge, September 1, 1919, folder: Lai-Yuan Co., box: Unofficial Correspondence L, 1910-1922, AAOA-MFA.
314 C. T. Loo to J.E. Lodge, February 5, 1918, folder: Lai-Yuan Co., box: Unofficial Correspondence L, 1910-1922, AAOA-MFA.
315 C. T. Loo to P. Sachs, August 20, 1917, Folder Loo T.C. Dealer, HUAMA.
readers and prospective clients. In his retirement announcement in the 1950 issue of *Art News*, Loo stated that his dealership was “...a very interesting profession which has business combined with pleasure; Rarely one day has gone by without some excitement of securing or planning to secure certain objects” (Loo 1950, 3). Loo often presented him as an explorer-archaeologist-dealer in the press. La Farge noted in an *Art News* article, “In 1915 he bought from Loo a group of archaic bronzes, the first in America. They were dug up at night by farmers from the ground at An-yang—site of the capital of the Shang emperors (1766-1122 BC)—smuggled past the local authorities and taken to Peking, where they were acquired by Loo.” (La Farge 1950, 58) Loo advertised the famous Lohan statute (Met 21.76) in the *American Art News* as a hidden treasure. “This Lohan is the last one, considered to be complete, of the set that was discovered in the cave near Icheou in Chihli Province and has come from China during the last few years. This is the very same figure that was known to be hidden in some city in Chuhli Province.”

Discovery and provenance narratives were used as learned speculations to verify an object’s place of origin as well as its archeological and historical significance in its native context. The *New York Times* review of Loo’s 1935 exhibition at the Jacques Seligmann Galleries contained detailed archaeological information about Loo’s Juncun finds. It stated, “Bronzes were discovered in the seventh tomb in Chin Ts’un, near Loyang, Honan province, a discovery Mr. Loo mentions, that was commented upon by Bishop William

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316 It is noteworthy that Loo often told his discovery tales in a personal and intimate tone. These seemingly anecdotal and amusing tales were carefully constructed to engage prospective clients.
317 “He” refers to Charles Lang Freer.
318 Yizhou or Yixian in Hebei province.
Charles White in his book ‘Tombs of Old Loyang.’” (Jewell 1935) In 1921 Loo’s firm offered John D. Rockefeller Jr. a bronze statue with a detailed report on its place of origin, dating, condition and possible royal connection. “This remarkable gilt bronze statue of Avalokitesvara was discovered in 1918 by Mr. Che in a river near the Aipao village which was the ancient seat of the Tsien Ning Temple. The village is a suburb of Loyang, south of Mukden, Manchuria where was residing the Court of the Shin House, 589 to 618...From the size and great nobleness in the expression of this statue it might have been executed by order of the Emperor to the Tsien Ning Temple which was situated two or three miles from the river where this figure was recently discovered. Mr. Loo is of the opinion that the remarkable condition of this figure may be due to the fact that at the time of some conquest in China, in order to save this figure from being looted by the enemy, that it was carefully hidden in the bottom of the river to be unearthed again at the proper time.”

Discovery lore was also employed by Loo to avoid associations with questionable operations in his business. Loo often suggested that the objects he had acquired belonged to nobody. It was reported that an early Zhou bronze was “…accidentally discovered by a friend of Loo’s who was digging a well for a new house in the Chansa Province. It was the first archaic bronze vessel to be found and brought to Europe by Loo” (La Farge 1950, 57).

Loo also manipulated the use and display context of an object to communicate its Chineseness, exotic charm, and authenticity. The New York Times review of the 1947

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320 Marion Wheildon to JDR Jr. June 1, 1921, folder 1370, C. T. Loo 1916-1949, box 137, OMR-RAC.
Exhibition of Sung Wares, for example, included Loo’s account of the possible function of some exhibits, “A tall vase with a narrow opening was made for holding a single branch of apple blossoms, explained Mr. Loo, and a shallow bowl, its shape suggesting a flower, was used for bulbs.”321 Chineseness was used as a selling point in the 1941 catalogue of the exhibition at the Toledo Museum of Art. One piece, for instance, was described as, “A flexible gold wire, attached to the leaf and flower parts, causes them to quiver naturalistically as the wearer moves. Jewelry that quivers in this way is a typical Chinese idea. The style was very popular in China in ancient times, and still is.” (Loo 1941b, Cat. no. 115)

Loo often provided a seemingly authentic native setting for his objects on display. An *Art News* article commented on Loo’s 1916 exhibition, “These are exceptionally well displayed—the porcelains, potteries, and small bronzes in cabinets whose fronts are old lacquered screens, in themselves worthy of close study.”322 The installation view of the 1947 exhibition of Song ceramics at Loo’s gallery showed that in addition to the ceramics on display in the cases, there were two bird-and-flower paintings on two sides of the gallery wall and antique Chinese furniture (Fig. 49). Like props in a theatre, the paintings and furniture, though not made in the Song dynasty, served to create an illusion of an authentic Chinese room for the Song ceramics on display.323

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323 As Benjamin March observed, in the late 1920s there emerged a trend to contextualize East Asian works of art by placing them in a setting that evoked their original environment. March noted that the Pennsylvanian Museum and Dayton Art Institute had secured authentic Chinese interiors to be installed in their new buildings as settings for parts of their Oriental exhibitions (March 1929, 12). By 1932, the Brooklyn Museum had
It is important to note that “Westernness” and “Chineseness” were not contradictory concepts in Loo’s dealing. In many cases, Loo stressed both an object’s affinities to the West and its native context. This double emphasis can be explained in part by Loo’s intention to attract different groups of clients. On the one hand, an object’s Chineseness would appeal to knowledgeable collectors who looked for uniqueness, authenticity, and purity that were associated with “the native”. On the other, Chinese art’s connections to the West would be a hook for those collectors who were more experienced in Western art.

Loo’s seemingly paradoxical paring of Chineseness and Westernness can also be explained by the notion of “intimate distance” or “estranged intimacy” in Susan Stewart’s discussion of the exotic object. She observes, “…on the one hand, the object must be marked as exterior and foreign, on the other it must be marked as arising directly out of an immediate experience of its possessor” (Steward 1993, 147). Loo’s promotion of Greco-Buddhist art clearly illustrated this tantalizing distance. On the one hand, Greco-Buddhist art objects could be linked to their Greek ancestry. On the other hand, they were not quite Greek. Their Chineseness was important to prove their exotic charm and authenticity. The Northern Wei stele (MFA 23.120) that Loo sold to the MFA, for instance, was valued as the combination of Western and Chinese styles (Fig. 14). The art critic Martha Davidson in the *Art News* article, *Great Chinese Sculpture in America*, commented on this stele, “…one based on the hieratic religious art rooted in Greco-

completed several contextual exhibits, including “four re-created Chinese rooms from different periods” (Poster 2003, 15).

324 This also explains the popularity of “colon”s, wooden figures of Africans in Western outfit in African art trade.
Indian models, the other based on the pictorial linear style rooted in the indigenous relief carvings of Han mortuary stones” (Davidson 1939, 74).

**C. T. Loo of Paris, Peking, or New York?**

To define C. T. Loo’s identity is a rather perplexing task. One finds a Chinese-looking gentleman wearing a Western-style suit, marrying a French woman, speaking fluent Chinese, French, and English, and conducting business in Paris, Peking, London, and New York. Loo’s identity often shifted according to the changing situation. Sometimes, he seemed neither quite Chinese, European, nor American either. Sometimes, he was all these at once. This section considers Loo as a cultural actor, who situationally performed “Frenchness/Europeanness”, “Chineseness”, and “Americanness” to his advantage. ³²⁵

**Frenchness/Europeanness**

In America, Loo was often labeled as “C. T. Loo of Paris”. Although a large part of Loo’s business was conducted in the United States after the mid-1910s, Loo identified himself mostly as a French/European dealer.³²⁶ Henry La Farge in his *Art News* article described Loo as, “…married to a Frenchwoman, Mr. Loo is completely Europeanized…”(La Farge 1950, 42) Loo’s friend and client Edward von der Heydt observed that Loo “…liked to dance in the European way. His daughters have been brought up as French girls and he spoke mostly French with them” (Heydt 1957, 186).

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³²⁵ Christopher Steiner notes that African traders shifted their “ethnic identity according to situational circumstance”(Steiner 1994, 89).

³²⁶ Paris was Loo’s home base to which he regularly returned.
Loo performed “Frenchness/Europeanness”, synonymous with art and refinement, in order to enhance his image as a cultivated dealer with exquisite taste. France played an importance role in shaping the Western perception of China and Chinese art from the seventeenth century onward. The interest in China constituted an important chapter in French art and intellectual history. Paris in the seventeenth century was one of the greatest markets for Chinese curios. Chinoiserie, the European appropriation and transformation of Chinese art originated from France. Chinese materials and motifs were combined into contemporary furniture making and other arts and crafts production. In the nineteenth century, France, as one of the world’s earliest and leading center of Chinese language and culture studies outside China, boasted a generation of brilliant scholars and fearless explorers including Edouard Chavannes, Paul Pelliot, and Victor Segalen.

Europeanness/Frenchness as the emblem for art and glamour in America was also manifested in the formation of a powerful community of European art dealers in New York in the late nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth centuries. The French art dealers Paul Durand-Ruel and Ambroise Vollard were spreading the gospel of Impressionism and modern art to the newly rich Americans. The British dealer Lord

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327 Dealers like Duveen Brothers Inc. and John Sparks also capitalized on Europeanness or Britishness in America. Ben Duveen wrote to JDR Jr, “I must frankly admit that I never realized it was your intention to acquire such high class pieces such as you have lately acquired. I would most assuredly have arranged to show you some of the great examples which we have in our European House…”(Ben Duveen to JDR Jr. February 28, 1914, folder 1330, Duveen Brothers 1914-1952, box 133, OMR- RAC) Similarly, John Sparks played up its “Britishness”. In the letter to JDR Jr. F. Abbot wrote, “I have just arrived from England, and have unpacked some very nice porcelains, amongst which are a very wonderful pair of large Famille Verte Vases in perfect condition which I should very much like you to have first look at. The only one of its kind I have ever seen in all my experience is at the British Museum not so fine in shape or colour.”(F. Abbott to JDR Jr. December 18, 1921, folder 1428, John Sparks 1920-1921, box 142, OMR-RAC)
Joseph Duveen was creating an art empire in America (Behrman 1952). In the nineteenth century, France was not only the uncontested hub of Western art, but also the leader in collecting and promoting Asian art in the West. In the last quarter of the nineteenth century, French dealers and collectors of Asian art, who had positioned themselves as experts in the United States, began to draw American visitors. In the early 1920s, there was “a grand exodus to New York from Paris of most of the prominent Paris art dealers—notably M. Jacques Seligmann, D.G. Kelekian, Daguerre, and Arnold Seligmann.” In the first half of the twentieth century, the most prominent New York-based dealers of Chinese or Asian art were of European origin, such as the British dealers John Sparks, Frank Partridge; the French dealer Edgar Worch; the German dealer Otto Burchard; and the Dutch dealer Jan Kleykamp. Loo identified himself as part of this glamorous community of European dealers. In 1935, an exhibition of Loo’s collection was launched at the Galleries of Jacques Seligmann & Co.

Although the United States emerged as the most important collector of Chinese art outside of China in the twentieth century, its history of collecting and studying Chinese art, compared to Europe, was brief. In 1929, Benjamin March observed that although Eastern Asian art collection in America “…excels those of Europe in total size and mass quality, American scholarship, with the exception of Doctor Laufer, Professor Fenollosa and Doctor John C. Ferguson, has made comparatively little contribution to the world’s

328 During 1887-1888 the renowned dealer Seigfried Bing, who played a major role in spreading the craze for Asian art in Europe, organized several sales of Chinese and Japanese objects in New York and Philadelphia (Weisberg 1990, 23).
knowledge of Chinese and Japanese art in the form of published works” (March 1929a, 10). March also noticed the scarcity of Asian art specialists in American museums.331

Loo turned “Europeanness/Frenchness” into a selling point. He employed preeminent scholars and museum professionals with European background, including Paul Pelliot, Alfred Salmony, and Michael Rostovtzeff to research and catalogue his collections. In the transaction of a pair of turquoise-colored porcelain parrots, Loo attempted to convince John D. Rockefeller, Jr, that the French taste was what justified the price he quoted ($1,500). Loo wrote to Rockefeller, “I am sure you have heard that during the Cecile Sorel sale in Paris, there was a pair of turquoise parrots, not quite identical as to color, which was sold for 106,000 francs, equal at that time to around $4,250. The French people always collect turquoise, and especially birds. The No. 14, if it is a perfect pair, even a little variants in color, would fetch today at $5000. So please do trust us that we were not asking higher than it should be.”332

**Chineseness**

Loo, a native from China, could be easily recognized as Chinese in the West. Heydt noted that for some time Loo owned a Chinese restaurant on the left bank of the Seine. Heydt amusingly mentioned, “He was, like all Chinese, a real connoisseur of food” (Heydt 1957, 186). Loo’s firm was advertised as “Lai-Yuan & Co. of Shanghai and Pekin”.333 Being Chinese, however, held both positive and negative implications for Loo.

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331 March observed that “only 8 museums employ curators specifically devoted to Oriental art” (March 1929a, 12-3).
332 C. T. Loo to JDR Jr, January 12, 1949, folder 106, C. T. Loo 1945-1951, box 11, OMR-RAC.
His identity as a dealer of Chinese origin was crucial to the authentication of the objects he handled. Loo often emphasized that as a Chinese he could obtain objects directly from China and that he was in a privileged position to understand Chinese history, culture, and aesthetics. It is no coincidence that Loo combined Europeanness and Chineseness, both of which were associated with culture, history, and refined taste. Heydt observed, “Being married to a charming French woman, Mr. Loo was better able to understand European taste in art and combine it with the Chinese appreciation of those things.” (Heydt 1957, 186) Heydt also noted that Loo’s gallery in Paris was “a mixture of Chinese and European style” (Heydt 1957, 186).

Loo’s identification as Chinese also allowed him to defend himself against those who accused him of depleting China’s national treasures. Loo claimed that as a Chinese he was not involved in illicit transactions. He suggested that the Chinese should blame some “foreigners”. He pointed out that the person who was responsible for the removal of the famous relief panels of the Taizong emperor’s chargers was “a foreign dealer” (Loo 1950, 3). He further argued that as a Chinese, he was promoting Chinese art and culture in other countries through his business.

While taking the advantage of being Chinese, Loo was acutely aware of the stigma attached to the Chinese population in America. In 1882 the Chinese Exclusion Act was passed to curb the inflow of Chinese cheap labor into America. Chinese were presented in nineteenth-century American visual culture as subjects for condescension in degrading stereotypes. Harper’s Weekly, for instance, portrayed the Chinese immigrants in New York as opium smokers, gamblers, and pagan worshippers (Tchen 2001, 240). The deep-
rooted racial prejudice against the Chinese was illustrated by the creation of the fictional figure Ah Sin, who feigns ignorance of card games and eventually beats an American cardsharper. In the caricature of Ah Sin created in the 1870s, despite his Western-style hat, such features as his flat and broad face, wide nose, slanting eyes, and pigtail unmistakably betray his Chinese identity (Fig. 50). His large and dark Chinese mantle, squinted eyes, and the text on the left corner, “What has Ah Sin got up his sleeves” all suggest a man full of dark tricks (Tchou 2001, 199, fig.25).

Loo’s wealth, power, cross-cultural dexterity, and the aura of art surrounding him certainly reversed this stereotype of the lowbrow and corrupted Chinese. In the Westerner’s eye, nonetheless, Loo could not rid himself of some innate marks of being Chinese. Henry La Farge in an *Art News* article observed that through Loo spoke French and English fluently, he “…generously interspersed with liquid ‘L’ sounds for ‘Rs,’ which the Chinese-born never completely divests himself” (La Farge 1950, 42). La Farge further noted that though Loo was completely Europeanized through his marriage to a French woman, he still retained “an Oriental fastidiousness of taste” (La Farge 1950, 42).

American collectors such as Charles L. Freer and John D. Rockefeller, Jr. viewed Loo largely as a crafty Chinese man. In 1916, knowing that Loo had a plaster cast made after a statue he had sold to the Meyers, Freer wrote to him, “…I hope that in the future you will avoid such experiences; all purchasers of art objects dislike the existence of replicas, and if your customers know of their existence it will surely injure your trade most seriously.”334 In 1916, Freer, suspicious of Loo’s dishonest conduct in the negotiation,

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334 C.L. Freer to C. T. Loo, March 17, 1916, CLFP-FGA.
terminated the transaction of the painting collection that Loo offered. In 1918, Rockefeller wrote to Loo, questioning the authenticity of a porcelain beaker from Loo, “I should not be willing to consider the purchase of this vase without feeling assured that in the opinion of (an?) expert it is genuine……Can you send me a photograph showing the condition of the beaker before it was repaired!”

It is noticeable that in front of American public, Loo carefully presented him as a Euro-American to avoid negative associations with the Chinese. He always appeared as a well-dressed and cultivated Western-style gentleman/dealer (Fig. 51). In America, Loo positioned himself not just as an American-style but a European-style dealer with a European taste to avoid racial stereotyping.

**Americanness**

While C. T. Loo often identified himself as “C. T. Loo of Paris” in the U.S., Loo’s firm was listed as “C. T. Loo of New York” in the *International Exhibition of Chinese Art* in London during 1935-1936. Being a dealer of New York was a statement of Loo’s stature in the international art world. In the twentieth century, the American collection of Chinese art had surpassed its European counterpart. America, as the wealthiest and largest art collecting nation, was home to Loo’s business.

Loo’s identity as an American dealer also had political implications, especially during the 1930s and 1940s when China and America formed a political alliance. The Republican government in China eagerly sought guidance and assistance from the U.S. in

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335 JDR Jr. to C. T. Loo, December 23, 1918, folder 1370, C. T. Loo 1916-1949, box 137, OMR-RAC.
336 See Chapter Five, pp. 218-25.
domestic and international affairs. Under this circumstance, Loo timely justified his dealing by identifying himself as a Chinese/American dealer, who cultivated the Chinese-American friendship by helping China protect, preserve, and appreciate its cultural heritage.  

Loo stated in the catalogue of the 1949 Song mural exhibition, which was on view in his New York gallery, “If there are some of compatriots who should feel that the removal of the frescos out of China, is a loss to our Country, I trust that they also should feel satisfied that those frescos will be safely and permanently preserved in a friendly Country.” (Loo 1949, Introduction) He further stated, “Our expectation is that this Exhibition may increase knowledge of the Great Past of China and by so doing promote understanding between our Countries.” (Loo 1949, Introduction)

Loo not only shifted his identity, but also presented himself as a world citizen, who handled timeless and universal artworks. His stance, however, masked his role as an exotic Chinese servant for his rich and powerful Euro-American clientele.

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337 See Chapter Four, pp.192-9.
338 In addition to Chinese art, Loo dealt in Tibetan, South, Southeast Asian art, as well as Mexican art.
CHAPTER 4: TIME AND TIMELESSNESS

While Chapter Three examines C. T. Loo’s manipulation of the spatial-cultural dimension in Chinese art, this chapter investigates how Loo positioned Chinese art from a temporal-cultural perspective. It is important to note that time and space in cultural spheres are intertwining notions. Cultural space has a temporal dimension; terms such as “Chinese” and “Western” are not only geographical concepts, but also temporal and qualitative distributions. In this light, the analysis of the relationship between “ancient-Chinese” and “modern-American” in this chapter is an expansion of Chapter Three. The central questions in this chapter are: What were the commercial, socio-political, and psychological motivations behind the exchange and reception of Chinese art in America? How did Loo manipulate the element of time in Chinese art in response to America’s aesthetic and socio-political needs and China’s rising nationalism?

Time

As the letterhead of C. T. Loo’s firm, “ART ANCIEN DE CHINE”, indicates, Loo identified himself primarily as a dealer of ancient Chinese art. Loo was recognized for his seminal role in popularizing early Chinese art at a time when the majority of collectors considered Chinese art as objects created in the Ming and Qing dynasties for export purposes. Loo’s friend and client, Richard E. Fuller observed, “With the beginning of archaeological excavations he was also the first to introduce archaic jades and bronzes,

339 Johannes Fabian defines the spatial dimension of Judeo-Christian time as “the Eastern Mediterranean, first, and the circum-Mediterranean with Rome as its hub, later” (Fabian 1983, 2).
340 C. T. Loo to J.E. Lodge, November 7, 1922, folder: Lai-Yuan Co., box: Unofficial Correspondence L, 1910-1922, AAOA-MFA.
as well as early Chinese sculpture, frescoes and paintings.” (Fuller 1958, 8) Loo was also noted for his knowledge about Chinese history. Loo’s client Edward von der Heydt wrote, “I was at once surprised to find not the usual dealer who just sells and buys works of art, but somebody with great taste in art and a real understanding of the old Chinese philosophy and the history of this wonderful country.” (Heydt 1957, 186)

The manipulation of the temporal element was crucial to Loo’s dealing. The inclusion of a chronology table in Loo’s sale/exhibition catalogues indicates Loo’s heavy reliance on the construction of a temporal-cultural framework in which Chinese art objects could be evaluated, studied, organized, and displayed. In Loo’s dealing, time in Chinese art was directed to the past as well as to the present and the future to adapt to the changing situations in America and China in first half of the twentieth century.341

**America’s Fascination with Chinese Antiquities**

America’s involvement with Chinese antiquities answered its deep socio-political and psychological needs. In Europe, collecting and displaying antiquities for centuries had been instrumental to the articulation of national identity and control over distant lands and peoples. The United States was no exception. Its ascension to the leading world power in the twentieth century went hand in hand with the formation of major American collections of antiquities from China and other ancient civilizations.342 America’s fascination with ancient Chinese art was part of its ideology of nationalism and cultural internationalism. Okakura Kakuzo, the early twentieth-century curator of Chinese and

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341 Johannes Fabian observed that in anthropological context, the Other was tied to the past.  
342 The Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston conducted expeditions to Egypt.
Japanese art at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, spoke of the importance of collecting Asian art to the building of the museum’s collection as the representative of a universal culture. In the letter to the Museum Committee, he stated, “There is a deep significance in the fact that the art of the Extreme-Orient should be so well represented in America: - the most western of western nations. It makes our Museum a potent factor in the scheme of universal culture, and entitles it to the attention not only of (Americans?) but also humanity at large.”

It is noteworthy that America’s interest in Chinese art was the result of America’s intensified political and finical involvement in China in the first half of the twentieth century (Iriye 1992). Art objects became souvenirs and emblems of its imperialist and capitalist presence in China. America’s aspiration for power, vastness and history was also reflected in its identification with the history and status of imperial China. For a nation with a comparatively brief history, China’s past and its antiquities constituted a source of awe and wonder. An *Art News* article, for instance, marveled at C. T. Loo’s collection of bronzes, potteries and paintings, “Many of these antedate Roman and Greek sculpture”. The collections of Chinese antiquities in American museums were viewed as a manifestation of “America’s traditional gesture of friendliness toward the oldest of living civilizations” (Carter 1929, vi). The romantic vision of China as an ancient and

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344 Craig Clunas argued that the collection of Chinese imperial art in British museums has to do with the Great Britain’s nostalgia for its status as an empire in the past (Clunas 2004, 468-9).
opulent empire struck a deep chord in the American public consciousness, as illustrated by Emma Louise Conantz’s Marco Polo-style account of Peking after her visit to the newly established Palace Museum in the 1920s, “Here, since the days of the Ming the Emperors lived; here they maintained all the splendor of an Oriental Court; here they decided the destinies of millions of people.” (Conantz 1923, 58) (Fig.52) America’s imperial complex was reflected in the media sensation created by Loo’s acquisition of a Qing dynasty vase with royal pedigree. A *New York Times* article announced, “A *famille verte* Kang-hsi hawthorn vase was bought by C. T. Loo for $3,100 at the American Art Association-Anderson Galleries, Inc, …It is said to have been given to the former King by the Emperor Kang-hsi and to have been taken out of Spain by Alfonso when he left for France.”

At a time when the United States took the initiative to distinguish itself from European powers in the international arena, collecting ancient Chinese art not only allowed America to articulate its imperialist and capitalist power, but also offered its collectors and museums an opportunity to compete with and outdo their European competitors. In the early twentieth century Okakura, for instance, urged the MFA to keep up with archaeological developments in Asia because, “England and Germany are making great efforts to explore and excavate in Asia…. unless we keep abreast of the vital movement

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347 Craig Clunas notes the similar dynamic between the British empire and its Western rivals. He observes that British identity differentiates “not only from the other of Asia but from more immediate colonial rivals such as France and latterly the United States” (Clunas 2004, 463).
connected with Eastern Art and archaeology we shall be left behind.” From the 1910s onwards, American museums eagerly articulated their rising status in comparison with their European counterparts. An *Art News* report proudly announced, “The Metropolitan Museum has ‘arrived’, as the French would say, or in other words, has reached the prominence as an art institution that the great art museum of Europe have long enjoyed”. The opening exhibition of the University Museum in 1916 was acclaimed as the greatest exhibition of Oriental art ever made in the United States or Europe. The competition between America and Europe continued in the 1930s. A *Parnassus* review stated that the 1938 bronze exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York was by no means inferior to the 1935-6 *International Exhibition of Chinese Art* in London, “It has been customary to mention the great display of bronzes in the exhibitions of Chinese art held at London during 1935 and 1936 as affording a unique opportunity to compare bronzes side by side. The Metropolitan Museum has at least equaled the bronze sections of the London Exhibitions and is the more remarkable in that it is composed solely of objects belonging to collections in the United States.” (Davidson 1938, 19)

Compared to America, Europe had a longer tradition of collecting Chinese art particularly Ming and Qing ceramics and decorative art objects. The detrimental impact of World War I on the European art market and the availability of early Chinese art

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offered America an excellent opportunity to compete with Europe in the collection of Chinese art. The formation of the Chinese collection in the Freer Gallery of Art offers a case in point. The first American national museum devoted to Asian art, the Freer Gallery was established according to the vision of its founder, Charles Lang Freer to create an American collection of Chinese art which would surpass its European counterparts. Collecting early Chinese art met his need. In 1916, C. T. Loo informed Freer of the scarcity of early Chinese art in London, “As regard to the Chinese art, the market is very slow, …Of course they are all porcelains, I don’t think there is any early pieces to be found here.”351 Freer responded, “As a rule, the English collectors do not purchase specimens earlier than the Ming period.”352 It is not surprising that from 1914 to 1918 Freer acquired a large collection of early Chinese antiquities dating prior to the Ming dynasty, which formed the core of the Freer collection. Freer’s ambition was realized when the Freer Gallery of Art opened to the public in 1923, as the collector and Freer’s close friend Agnes Meyer proudly announced, “…if European scholars must now come to America to see the finest example of Chinese painting, Chinese jades and bronzes, it was because of Freer.” (Conn 2001, 168; Meyer 1927, 76-8)

Loo’s dealing in ancient Chinese art capitalized on this U.S.-Europe dynamics. In response to the MFA curator Lodge’s inquiry about a gilt bronze statute of Guanyin, Loo wrote back, “I am sorry to say that at the present moment I am not (at?) liberty to (give?) the price as I have just given an option of this figure to some Museum here in Europe, but

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351 C. T. Loo to C. L. Freer, July 16, 1916, CLFP-FGA.
352 C.L. Freer to C. T. Loo, August 2, 1916, CLFP-FGA.
I will take pleasure of writing you as soon as I would be free of doing so.” Loo was known best for his introduction of an impressive group of early stone sculptures to major American museums. Loo described how American buyers opened their arms for the stone sculptures which could not be sold in Europe in the 1910s. Loo stated with reference to eight life-sized Chinese stone statues, “I showed them to all the dealers but not one wanted to buy and as I could not sell any early things…Photographs were presented all over Europe but all in vain” (Loo 1940, Preface). In the winter of 1914-5, Loo distributed a set of photographs of the statues in America and subsequently sold them to the University Museum at Philadelphia and other American collectors. Loo played a significant role in the formation of the Nelson Gallery’s Chinese sculpture collection. In the 1930s, the Art News acclaimed Nelson Gallery’s Chinese sculpture collection as “another sign of the growing appreciation in this country of Chinese sculpture which is so poorly represented in most of the European collections.”

Loo’s dealing in Chinese antiquities not only responded to America’s national and institutional aspirations, but also answered American collectors’ social and psychological needs. Loo carefully selected and promoted items with which American collectors could identify themselves or could use to increase their social prestige. Portraits of Chinese noblemen and high officials were popular items in Loo’s collection, including “The Five Old Men of Sui-yang”, depicting five high officials in the Northern Song dynasty (Fig.

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353 C. T. Loo to J.E. Lodge, March 7, 1921, folder: Lai-Yuan Co., box: Unofficial Correspondence L, 1910-1922, AAOA-MFA.
Loo also emphasized his collection’s illustrious ownership history. In his offer of a Kangxi vase to the American industrialist and billionaire John D. Rockefeller, Jr., Loo mentioned that it was from the collection of Ching Shio-san, a Manchu prince and the keeper of the Imperial Palace treasure.

Loo’s dealing also capitalized on the anti-modern, nostalgic sentiments that permeated the middle and upper classes in America in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries (Lears 1981, XV). As Holly Edwards notes, it was a period of psychological uncertainties and spiritual homelessness that resulted from rapid industrialization and urbanization, territorial expansion, economic upheaval, and war (Edwards 2000, 16). Disillusionment with corrupt modern society spurred an interest in the “long ago and far away”. It is no coincidence that collectors like John D. Rockefeller, Jr. were interested in both Chinese art and medieval art. Ancient Chinese art, when idealized and distanced from the chaotic modern China and West, promised a peaceful and spiritual world where Westerners could take a respite from their distress. An article in the New York Times, for example, commented on the 1931 exhibition of Loo’s collection, “Many of the large pieces of ancient sculpture look out with peculiarly serene faces toward the turmoil of the twentieth century.”

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355 Samuel N. Behrman notes that the renowned dealer Joseph Duveen employed the similar strategies to promote portraits of European nobility in America. The newly rich Americans in Duveen’s time, “could not become lords and ladies, they could buy the family portraits and other works of art that had belonged for centuries to lords and ladies, and this strengthened their feelings of identification and equality with British nobility and with the great rulers and merchant princes of the Renaissance” (Behrman 1951, 97).

356 C. T. Loo to JDR Jr., June 21, 1945, folder 106, C. T. Loo 1945-1951, box 11, OMR-RAC.

357 It is not a coincidence that JDR Jr. was drawn to both Chinese art and medieval art. Both fall into the category of the long ago and far away. Both promised an intense and intimate aesthetic and spiritual experience.
During World War II, the contrast between the turbulent modern West and the imaginary ancient China was presented in a dramatic way in the 1944 issue of the *Art News*. On the left was a compelling photograph from “Twelve Great Pictures of the War” depicting “a Navy Douglas ‘Dauntless’ banking into formation for the return to its base, floating somewhere in the Pacific.” (Commander Edward J. Steichen 1944-45, 110.) This forceful image was curiously juxtaposed with a page from the article on the history of *Chinoiserie* from the seventeenth to nineteenth century, a trend of decorative art based on the Westerners’ fantasy of China (Fig.53).

Loo was conscious of the appeal of the idealized notion of ancient Chinese art for C.L. Freer, who, as Agnes Meyer observes, “derived boundless happiness from his content with Oriental love and began to discover profound value for our turbulent era in the calm acceptance of the world which the Chinese sages possessed.” (Conn 2001, 168) In 1916 a group of paintings in the *Descriptive Catalogue of Ancient and Genuine Chinese Paintings*, were offered to Freer. This collection featured the peaceful and poetic expressions in Chinese art. Among fifty-seven entries in the catalogue, twenty were landscapes, and a significant number of landscapes were idyllic scenes. The painting, entitled *Composing Poetry beneath Pine Trees under a Cliff*, attributed to the Song painter Ma Hezhi, offers a case in point (Fig. 5). The descriptive text emphasized the

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358 *New York Times*, November 15, 1931.
359 As Julia Meech notes, similar situation can be found in the reception of Japan and Japanese art in the West, “Japan was perceived as a primitive country in which childlike people lived in perfect harmony with nature.” (Meech 1993, 141) “Those who found solace in the Orient and for whom it exerted a spiritual as well as a psychological attraction, include-to name only two of the most obvious-Vincent van Gogh and Frank Lloyd Wright.” (Meech 1993, 141)
360 Three albums were not included in this statistic.
peaceful surroundings and the poetic mood in the painting, “A great scholar, with his hands behind him, is standing on the terrace, and, while admiring the appearance of Spring, he seems to be composing a poem.” (Kwen 1916, Cat. no.25) Loo might have well expected that the mountain lodge and scholar/poet would strike a deep chord in Freer, who was described by Loo as “a pure and righteous learned philosopher of the 20th century in the new World” who lived in a “true Sung hermitage”.361

Loo’s dealing in ancient objects, especially jades and bronzes, two major categories in Loo’s collection, capitalized on the Westerner’s imagination of a remote, mysterious, and even magical past of China. The RISD director E. L. Rowe commented that Loo’s gift to the museum, a Neolithic pot, betrayed a sense of mystery. Rowe stated, “Neolithic pottery is always interesting,…offer evidence about peoples and civilization long since hid in the darkness of the remote past,…” (Rowe 1934, 26) The *Art News* review of Loo’s 1950 *Exhibition of Chinese Archaic Jades* noted, “From the shadowy beginning of China’s history come these astonishingly sophisticated jades of the Shang (1766-1122 B.C.) and Chou (1122-255 B.C.)…The properties of jade itself-its translucence, its extraordinary hardness and luster and even its resonance-made it symbolical of celestial and cosmic ideas which were perhaps the survival of some prehistoric cult of the sun, and to it for centuries were attributed magic virtues.”362 This mythical interpretation of Chinese archaic jade was particularly significant for Freer in a time of personal crises. In his later years, Freer acquired a large number of jades from C. T. Loo and other dealers

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361 C. T. Loo to C.L. Freer, October 19, 1916, CLF-FGA. Loo referred to Freer’s residence.
when he was acutely aware of mortality due to his prolonged illness and the deaths in the family (Pyne 1996, 77). Freer believed that ancient Chinese jade, a symbol of permanence and longevity, possessed magical healing properties, as his friend Agnes Meyer observed, “When desperately ill at the end of his life, ‘he would cling to certain pieces of jade with deep satisfaction and with an almost religious faith in its comforting and restorative powers.”’ (Pyne 1996, 88, quoted from Meyer 1970, 20) In this light, Freer’s fascination with Chinese archaic jades can be viewed as a metaphor for ancient Chinese art as a remedy for the diseased modern West.

Another strategy Loo employed was to merchandise the spiritual and ritualistic elements in Chinese art. The introduction to the catalogue of Loo’s 1940 exhibition of ancient ritual bronzes began with a highly evocative scene of worship in China, “Fragrant vapors rise, even in these days of turmoil, from countless altars in China.” (Plumer 1940)

It is noticeable that prominent American collectors such as Stewart Gardner, Abby

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363 Other sources of Freer’s archaic jade collection include K. T. Wong, Seaouku Yue of Poh Yuen Tsar, Tonying, and Yamanaka & Co. (C. L. Freer purchase voucher, CLFP-FGA).

364 According to Holly Edwards, Orientalism in America was motivated by similar dynamics: “Orientalism of this sort was therapy for an America in transit, for the country was fast becoming industrialized, urban, and very complicated.” (Edwards 2000, 23)

365 Art and beauty in the past were perceived as a spiritual force by John D. Rockefeller, Jr. He remarked at the dedication of the Cloisters devoted to the art and architecture of medieval Europe, “If what has been created here helps to interpret beauty as one of the great spiritual and inspirational forces of life, having the power to transform drab duty into radiant living; if those who come under the influence of this place go out to face life with new courage and restored faith because of the peace, the calm, the loveliness they have found here; if the many how thirst for beauty are refreshed and gladdened as they drink deeply from this well of beauty, those who have built here will not have built in vain.” (Altman 2006, 102, quoted from Tischer 1996, 2)
Aldrich Rockefeller, and Mr. and Mrs. Havemeyer\textsuperscript{366} were attracted to the notion of the “spiritual East”. All of them had a collection of Buddhist art carefully placed in a ritualistic setting (Fig. 54). David Rockefeller wrote in his memoir of his mother Abby Aldrich Rockefeller after her 1921 trip to Asia, “…Within a few years she had set aside special ‘Buddha’ rooms in our New York City and Mount Desert Island, Maine, homes to display these works of art. She kept these rooms dimly lit and burned incense in them to enhance the East Asian atmosphere.” (Rockefeller 2006, 38)

In market terms, Loo translated the cherished notion of age and history in America into qualities such as rarity and preciousness, which enhanced the commercial value of an object. A sale of Loo’s collection in the 1910s, for instance, was advertised as “Early Chinese Rarities.”\textsuperscript{367} In the offer of a pottery Lohan statue (Met 21.76), Loo emphasized its age to entertain the antiquarian taste of John D. Rockefeller, Jr. (Fig. 18) In the letter, Loo attempted to convince him that the Lohan statue was superior to Ming and Qing pieces, “It is of the 8th or 9th Century and is as remarkable in color and glaze as that of the Ming and Kangshai biscuit 3 color figures which you are so greatly interested in, only this one has instead of pure porcelain body, the stone buff paste, and the color has been

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\item[366] Julia Meech noted that the Havemeyers did not collect Western religious art, yet Buddhist paintings are prominent in their Asian collection. “There was the lure of the exotic, as well; a Buddhist deity was palpable evidence of the unknown, mysterious, and romantic Orient, which many nineteenth-century Westerners, disillusioned by the industrial revolution, found appealing.” (Meech 1993,140)
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stained by age and has very minute crackles. It is interesting because the expression is stronger than in the later pieces.»

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Archaeology and Rising Nationalism in China

While C. T. Loo was praised for his role in advancing “knowledge of China’s four-thousand-year-old civilization” in America (La Farge 1950, 58), he was condemned as a major culprit for the depletion of China’s art treasures. These conflicting views of Loo need to be examined in the context of the rising nationalism in China.

In the first half of twentieth century the swirl of civil and international upheavals in China stimulated an intense interest in its own history. Intellectuals like Liang Qichao were acutely aware of the importance of historical consciousness to the growth of China as a modern nation-state. Liang stated, “…history is the only one which has existed in China for a long time. History is the foundation of scholarship. It is also a mirror of people’s nature and the origin of patriotism. The rise of nationalism in Europe and the growth of modern European countries are owing in part to the study of history.” (Wang 2001,16-17, originally from Xin shixue, in sanzhong, 3) In the search for a unifying force for the nation, Chinese turned their eyes to their country’s distant past.

The picture of China’s ancient history, however, remained dim until the 1920s when archaeological explorations yielded a series of earth-shattering finds. In 1920 J. Gunnar Anderson located the prehistorical site in Zhou kou dian near Peking, and later he discovered painted pottery culture sites. In 1923 Bronze Age tombs were opened at

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368 The Lohan and other statues in the group from Yixian, Hebei, have been dated the eleventh century in the Liao dynasty. C. T. Loo to JDR Jr., April 27, 1916, folder 1370, C. T. Loo 1916-1949, box 137, OMR-RAC.
Xinzheng in Henan, and Liyucun in Shanxi. From the mid-1920s to the mid-1930s Chinese archeological projects under the support of the newly established Guomindang government made a series of important discoveries. The excavation of Anyang conducted by the Institute of History and Philology of the *Academia Sinica*, began in the fall of 1928. In the 1930s, the institute launched a series of excavations on the ruins of ancient dynasties. These archeological undertakings not only proved that China had a history extending to the second millennium B.C.E. but also had a world-wide impact on the general perception of China and its history (Wang 2001,127).

Emblematic of Chinese history and culture, the archaeological finds became instrumental in the promotion of nationalistic ideology. As Edward Wang notes, these findings “…were helpful in attesting to the sophistication of ancient Chinese culture…[and] also helped to renew China’s historical tradition and reinforce China’s historical identity” (Wang 2001, 24). In the international arena, Chinese archaeological objects were presented as evidence for China’s role as “the originator and early leader of world civilization” (Duara 1997, 1042; Zhang 1930, 81-6). The Chinese government’s display of archaeological objects at the *International Exhibition of Chinese Art* in London during 1935-1936 turned the exhibition into a stage to glorify the nation and its history. The significance of the archeological objects was articulated by the catalogue published by the Chinese organizer for the exhibition. “Recovered from Yinhsu, the site where the remains of the ancient capital of the Yin-shang Dynasty are located…They are selected with a view to show some of the main characteristics of the culture of this period (circa 1400-2000 B.C.), the earliest of reliable Chinese history.” (The Organizing Committee of
the Chinese Government vol. 4 1936, 120) The Chinese government’s nationalistic agenda was noticed by David Percival, British collector and the principal organizer of the exhibition. He observed that the Chinese exhibition “aspires to illustrate the culture of the oldest surviving civilization in the world from the dawn of its history to the year 1800…” (Percival 1935,171).369

The archaeological undertakings in China and China’s cultural diplomacy had a profound impact on Loo’s art dealing. The arrival of newly found Chinese antiquities in the American art market offered Loo new profit-making opportunities because a large quantity of antiquities could be bought in China at a comparatively low price, and after promotion, they could be sold in America at a much higher price.370 Newly found archaeological objects also expanded the range and scope of his business. Between the 1920s and the 1940s Loo acquired and sold a large number of objects reportedly unearthed from important archaeological sites. Alfred Salmony noted that Loo’s 1940 *Exhibition of Chinese Stone Sculptures* included early stone sculptures from Anyang, “A few years ago, no one would have expected to be able to start off with Shang” (Salmony 1940b, 9).

Time also served as an important organizing principle in Loo’s business. The construction of a coherent historical narrative was crucial to the presentation and

369 Basil Gray, one of the participants of the exhibition, however, was disappointed by the fact that the exhibition was turned into an international relation gambit. He observed that the original aim of revealing to the world for the first time the treasures of the imperial collections was overtaken by the political aim of advancing cultural relations with the Chinese Republic (Gray 1985-6, 31).

370 Loo made profit out of the difference between the price of an object he paid for in China and the price at which he sold the object in the American market, or the difference between prices that changed over time in the American market.
promotion of his collection. Loo’s dealing in ceramics offers a case in point. Loo noted that ceramics was a field in which a long and continuous line of objects could be assembled, displayed, and exchanged. He remarked, “...the ceramic ware has had an uninterrupted development of over 2000 years” (Loo 1940, Preface). In 1933, Loo donated to the RISD a Neolithic jar reportedly from the Anderson finds dated 3000-1500 BCE (RISD 33.003). Loo’s act was a market gambit, which turned the jar into a starter for a line of future sales. In the letter to the RISD director Earle Rowe, Loo encouraged him to form a “…chronological collection of Chinese pottery starting from this vase to the Ming period.” A few months later, Loo wrote to Rowe to offer a few pieces as additions to the chronological collection that Loo envisioned for the museum, “I hope that the Neolithic jar will be on view soon and as I suggested I hope you will allow me to select a little collection of potteries from Chow to VI Dyn. which is lacking in all Museums but to my personal opinion it is very important to have a chronological collection for the education of the students.”

Loo’s chronological organization and display was also intended to convey a sense of comprehensiveness, continuity, progress, and authority. Loo paid great attention to the issue of dating, which historicized an object, emphasized its age and rarity, and

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371 C. T. Loo to E. L. Rowe, November 18, 1932, C. T. Loo & Co. folder 1920-1944, RISDA. B. J. Gunnar Anderson, Swedish mining consultant to the Chinese government was known for a series of important archaeological discoveries in the 1920s. Anderson finds include the 1920 discovery of a Stone Age site near Yang-shao-tsun, the 1922 discovery of the Painted Pottery site at the cave of Sha-kuo-tun in Liaoning, and the 1923-4 discovery of painted pottery culture sites in Gansu.
372 C. T. Loo to E. Rowe, November 23, 1932, C. T. Loo & Co. folder 1920-1944, RISDA.
373 C. T. Loo to E. Rowe, February. 16, 1933, C. T. Loo & Co. folder 1920-1944, RISDA.
demonstrated his scientific attitude. In the catalogue *Exhibition of Chinese, Indian and Cambodian Art Formed by C. T. Loo*, Loo noted, “At the beginning, the dynastic periods are given in a table which may serve for reference in respect of attribution noted in the list…Every effort has been made to date the objects with care and conservatism.” (Loo 1931, 3-4) Loo’s exhibitions were often presented as Chinese art history in miniature. The review of Loo’s 1936 exhibition inaugurating his new galleries observed, “In the exhibition examples from the Han through the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries reiterate the artistic development of the ten centuries.” (Davidson 1936, 12) Loo’s 1940 *Exhibition of Chinese Stone Sculptures* was also noted for its comprehensiveness, art historical approach, and authority. Salmony, who compiled the 1940 exhibition catalogue, compared this exhibition to Osvald Siren’s authoritative work *Chinese Sculpture Chinese Sculpture from the Fifth to the Fourteenth Century* (1925), “The exhibition at the gallery of C. T. Loo and Company, New York is equally comprehensive by illustrating each creative stage of the evolution of Chinese stone sculpture by one or more important examples.” (Salmony 1940a, Introduction)

Considering Loo’s close connection to high officials in the Guomindang government in China, Loo’s display of Chinese antiquities can be seen as part of the Chinese nationalistic campaign to construct a grand and coherent narrative of China’s past. Loo often presented his collection as the spokesman of ancient Chinese civilization. In the 1931 catalogue for the *Exhibition of Chinese, Indian and Cambodian Art*, Loo stated, “The great span of years covered by our exhibits clearly manifests the fulfillment of our
desire to represent comprehensively the products of Chinese civilization.” (Loo 1931, 3-4) During 1935-6, Loo not only contributed important loans to the *International Exhibition of Chinese Art* but also launched a satellite show at John Sparks in London, which, in content and concept, mirrored the Chinese government’s archaeological collection in the *International Exhibition of Chinese Art*. Some items on display in Loo’s satellite exhibition were thus described: “…coming possibly rather within the category of archaeology than of fine art, but nevertheless of great interest, are some fragments of carved bones, dating from approximately 1500 B.C.”\(^375\)

The rising nationalism in China not only resulted in a surge of interest in the study and display of Chinese antiquities, but also in the Chinese government’s tightened control over the export of Chinese art. In 1929 Wu Chao-Chu from Chinese Legation Washington voiced his concern about the outflow of Chinese antiquities, “…the Chinese people are gratified that their art has in recent years received due recognition in Europe and America, even though, as you say, the zeal to collect has in some instances outrun discretion… The productions of genius are the common possession of mankind, and Nationalistic China has no intention of adopting a dog-in-the-manager policy. At the same time, it would be a reflection on the Chinese people if the collections of their art in foreign countries should excel those in their own possession.” (March 1929a, 28) He further announced, “The Legislative Council is …even now engaged in considering a law dealing with the export of archaeological and artistic objects, probably somewhat on the lines of similar laws in other countries.” (March 1929a, 28)

government not only continued to try to prevent its art treasure from being exported to foreign countries, but also bought back a historically significant bronze from America.\(^{376}\)

Under these circumstances, it is not surprising that Loo became the target of Chinese nationalistic fervor against the outflow of Chinese antiquities. Loo repeatedly mentioned both privately and in public that the Chinese government was tightening its control over exportation of its cultural patrimony, which led to the draining of his major source of supply.

**Timelessness**

“... there was no such thing as modern art, or ancient art, or art of the Middle Ages; that the youngest and liveliest art, today, was that of Egypt, China and Greece.” (Altman 2006, 73, originally from Crowninshield 1938, 85)

Ancient Chinese art, in C. T. Loo’s dealing, was directed both to the past and the present.\(^{377}\) Although Loo imbued a strong sense of history into his dealing, Chinese antiquities, paradoxically, became timeless in modern America. The *New York Times*

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\(^{376}\) “A Chinese Bronze Returns to China,” *Art News*, Vol. LXXXV, No.22, February 27, 1937, 12. The article noted that this bronze beaker *Chou Kung Tsun* was on display at the New York galleries of Tonying & Company in the spring of 1935. The bronze was historically significant “because of the inscription which it bears. This inscription relates that the Duke of Chou (one of the most important personages in Chinese history) ordered the bronze to be made to commemorate the victory of King Chao over Tsu Pei. Leading Chinese scholars have accepted a reading of the date on bronze as the tenth year of King Chao’s reign, corresponding in the orthodox chronology to 1043 B.C. This date not only is helpful to students of art who wish to work on the dating of Chinese bronzes, but also supplies the date for King Chao’s victory which, although one of the three most important event of the Chou dynasty, and remained obscured.”

\(^{377}\) The tendency of “modernizing” American Indian art and African art occurred in the 1930s and the 1940s long before the much critiqued 1984 exhibition, “Primitivism” in 20\(^{th}\) Century Art: Affinity of the Tribal and the Modern, at the Museum of Modern Art, New York.
review of Loo’s 1946 exhibition Figures in Chinese Art, for instance, noted both the timeless quality and the historical relevance of the art collection in the show,

“Timelessness and serenity in Chinese art are exemplified by a group of small figures on exhibition at the gallery of C. T. Loo. The figures—wood, stone, bronze, terra cotta and porcelain—range from late Han to late Ming, through the first 1600 years of the Christian era.”378 Though Chinese antiquities could be placed into a chronology, they became timeless when perceived in the modern West not only as an abstract and changeless tradition, but also as fixities in an idealized past distanced from a decayed and chaotic present. Loo’s dealing in Chinese art entertained the idea held by average Americans that China’s civilization had come down through the centuries with little change.379

According to Loo, the small standing bronze figure holding two posts with jade bird finials (MFA 31.976) in his collection “represents a fortune teller and that even today in city gates or market places similar fortune tellers with live birds are to be seen, another evidence of the extraordinary continuity of manners and customs in China.”(Jayne 1931, 25) (Fig.30). Chinese antiquities, when reoriented in the West to meet modern aesthetic standards and the needs of modern society, also became timeless.

This paradox of time and timelessness in the reception of Chinese art was built upon the tempo-spatio-cultural dichotomy of ancient-Chinese vs. modern-American. While Chinese antiquities stopped in their own past, modern America was entitled to consume

379 Even today, for the average Westerner, Chinese contemporary art is something new because their notion of Chinese art is largely defined by museum collections of classical art.
them for America’s present and future.\textsuperscript{[380]} The logic that China’s past was to be preserved, appreciated, and appropriated in modern America for America is evident in Eugene Meyer’s comment on the significance of Charles Lang Freer’s collection of Asian art and the building of the Freer Gallery under his patronage, “Our civilization will be the greater for its ability to know and understand other civilizations and other cultures. You are furnishing the Western world with the materials through which its first knowledge and understanding of the East can be obtained.”\textsuperscript{[381]} C. T. Loo catered to this ideology in his letter to John D. Rockefeller, Jr. in 1926. He referred to Rockefeller’s family collection of Chinese art, “…in preserving them for the posterity, you are doing a welfare for the world. I hope (that?) rare works will be precious kept in your great family for ten thousand years.”\textsuperscript{[382]}

\textit{Ancient Chinese Art and Modernist American Art}

By the late 1920s, Chinese art had been integrated in art historical discourse in American museums and academia. The rise of modernist aesthetics, the cosmopolitan taste, and consumer culture in the 1930s and 1940s, raised new questions for C. T. Loo: how to recontextualize ancient Chinese art to answer modern America’s new needs?

The \textit{New York Time} review of the 1949 exhibition of the Ming and Qing paintings organized by Loo’s son-in-law and business partner, Jean-Pierre Dubosc, observed, “A final note on the modernism of the work is contributed by M. Dubosc, who reports how

\textsuperscript{380} Parallels can be found in the reception of native American art in the U.S. (Rushing 1992).

\textsuperscript{381} E. Meyer to C.L. Freer, August 15, 1919, CLFP-FGA.

\textsuperscript{382} C. T. Loo to JDR Jr. March 5, 1926, folder 1370, C. T. Loo 1916-1949, box 137, OMR-RAC.
Vollard, after looking at the landscapes by Wang Yuan-chi remarked, ‘But I see Cezanne in them.’” (Devree 1949b). Vollard’s pairing of Chinese art of the Qing dynasty and Western Modernist art was based not only on their correspondence in form, but also on their shared newness. Old Chinese art, like modernist art, arrived in America art market as new categories. The constructed affinities between Chinese antiquities and Western Modernist art became a major selling point in Loo’s dealing in Chinese painting and ceramics in the 1930s and the 1940s.

While Buddhist sculpture had been conveniently assimilated into Western art discourse, Chinese painting, different considerably from Western painting in medium, technique, and aesthetics, remained one of the least understood categories of Chinese art in the West. An article published in 1910 viewed Eastern painting as inferior to Western painting on the basis that it did not follow the Western ideal of “scientific truth and faithful representation”. Eastern painting was dismissed for its poor formal qualities and lack of intellectual and emotional depth. The article observed, “Eastern line is the repetition of a formula, Western line is a report of reality”, and Oriental painting is “flat on the surface”. The Westerners’ preference for naturalistic representation resulted in the popularity of the Song paintings with

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383 It has been indicated that part of the paintings in the exhibition may come from Loo’s collection (G.B.Washburn to C. T. Loo, April 20, 1949, folder, C. T. Loo & Co.1945-1949, RISDA). Ambroise Vollard, the pioneer dealer, patron, and publisher, played a key role in promoting and shaping the careers of many of the leading artists during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

384 Edinburg, (October 1910): 469.
385 Edinburg, (October 1910): 476.
386 Edinburg, (October 1910): 469.
faithful and meticulous rendering of the subject matter, and the dismissal of the Ming and Qing paintings that often favored idiosyncratic and spontaneous expressions.

The surge of Modernist art movement in the West brought about a paradigm change in the reception of Chinese painting with respect to aesthetics and category. By the 1930s and 1940s, modernists in the West had rejected naturalism and representation in favor of abstraction and expression. In this context, the previous disregarded qualities of Chinese painting, such as its lack of representational precision and spatial depth, suddenly became virtues. The increasingly internationalized art scene in America also encouraged lively dialogues between Western modern art and art from other cultures and times. Chinese art was increasingly displayed and evaluated with modern art, as indicated by the title of the *New York Times* art review, “Old Orient, New West: Great Chinese Paintings-Academy-Picasso.” (Devree 1949b)

Loo’s dealing in Chinese art reflected and responded to this changing aesthetics. Before the 1930s Loo’s dealing focused on early paintings. Two important catalogues, the 1916 *Descriptive Catalogue of Ancient and Genuine Chinese Paintings*, and the 1924

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387 While the reception of Chinese art was affected by modern aesthetics, Modernist artists in the West were making a conscious effort to draw inspiration from the art of other cultures and times. As Jackson W. Rushing notes, it was a time when Jackson Pollock, Mark Rothko made paintings that “referred to atavistic myth, primordial origins, and primitive rituals and symbols” (Rushing 1995,121). Matisse in his visit to John D. Rockefeller, Jr.’s home likened Rockefeller’s collection of Qing porcelains to Modern art (Crowninshield 1938, 85).

388 The 1930s and 1940s witnessed a parade of exhibitions of American Indian, African art, and Oceanic art with a curatorial concept of drawing the affinities of the ancient and the modern in the U.S. The 1933 exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), “American Sources of Modern Art”, for example, showed an affinity between Modern art and that of the Aztec, Maya, and Inca. Among these shows, the 1941 exhibition at the MoMA, *Indian Art of the United States*, was one of the most impressive and successful.
T'ang, Sung and Yüan Paintings Belonging to Various Chinese Collectors featured exclusively works dated prior to the Ming dynasty. In the 1930s and 1940s, paintings of the later periods became the focus of Loo’s promotional activities. The spontaneous and expressive quality of the kind of paintings that Loo promoted for clients with a Modernist taste was illustrated by his 1938 catalogue Exhibition of Chinese 18th Century Paintings. The catalogue opens with an ink painting of a bird by Zhu Da, a late Ming early Qing painter known for his highly individualistic and free-hand brushwork (C. T. Loo and Company 1938, Cat. no.1) (Fig.55). The 1949 exhibition of a collection of Ming and Qing paintings organized by Jean-Pierre Dubosc was a landmark event in the reception of Chinese painting in America. The exhibition was received with much enthusiasm for its Modernist quality. The New York Time review stated, “M. Dubosc had undertaken to prove that the masters of the Ming and Ch’ing periods, usually dismissed rather cavalierly by Western art scholar, attained heights comparable to those reached by earlier masters… The later tendency toward abstract treatment of landscape is pronounced and profoundly effective. In the horizontal scrolls the beholder is opposite every point in the picture; but the absence of our Western convention of architectural perspective has not impeded the extraordinary movement through the paintings.” (Devree 1949a)

The well-received Song mural exhibition that Loo launched in 1949 also merchandised the Modern qualities of Chinese antiquities. The New York Times review observed, “Aside from the intrinsic interest of the exhibition of Chinese frescoes more than eight centuries old, at the gallery of C. T. Loo, the work shown proves of additional interest because of its essentially abstract nature.” (Devree 1949a) The Art Digest review also
pointed to the Modern quality of these ancient murals, “Free and ‘modern’ in spirit these ancient fragments are very close to contemporary Western work.” (Reed 1949, 16) The affinities between the ancient Chinese mural and modern American art were illustrated by the New York Times review, in which a flying figure from one of the frescoes was placed together with the work Beach Wood by the contemporary American artist William Brice (Fig.56). This juxtaposition was a visual statement that their shared linear and expressive quality allowed Chinese art to bridge the gap between “East and West Eight Centuries Apart” (Devree 1949a). The review commented on the frescos’ expressive lines and compared the mural to Japanese prints, which had a profound impact on the modern art movement: “The black outlines of the sketched draperies and forms and clouds are firm, subtle and resonant. Draperies are intricately depicted. In the driving outline of the clouds beyond a flying figure there is a kind of expressionism such as later artists and the Japanese color print makers used in their breaking waves, something that has come back again into art with the modern movement.” (Devree 1949a)

It is noteworthy that time and timelessness were not conflicting concepts in Loo’s dealing. His promotion of Song dynasty ceramics, for instance, emphasized both historical context and contemporary relevance. In the introduction to the 1947 catalogue, Exhibition of the Wares of the Sung Dynasty, Loo located Song ceramics in the history of Chinese ceramic art, “…the great creative period with unsurpassed achievements began only during the Northern SUNG Dynasty: 960-1127 AD and continued with the following Dynasties till the end of the 18th Century, then came the decadence” (Loo 1947, Introduction). Loo promoted Song porcelains not only for their age and rarity, but
also for their compatibility with Modernist aesthetics. The Art News report of Loo’s 1947 Song ceramic exhibition, for example, emphasized these ancient objects’ connection to contemporary Western viewers. It suggested that knowledge about its history and native context was not required to enjoy them: “An audience untutored in the niceties of terminology, in the marks which indicate authenticity and rarity, or in the glazes which identify the individual kilns can still get enormous pleasure from the eighty-odd superb examples of Sung stone porcelaneous vases which make the current exhibition at C. T. Loo & Company.” (A.B.L. 1947, 35) Aware of the sweeping Western Modern art currents, the report noticed the good timing of Loo’s exhibition, “There is no better time than now for the first expert exhibition of the ceramic ware of the Sung Dynasty. To a public schooled in abstraction, here is a craft-produced during China’s great cultural era of AD 960-1260—which is based primarily on shape and color and which bears close kinship to sculpture in all principles of plastic form.” (A.B.L. 1947, 35) The report also noted the compatibility of Chinese porcelains and Western Modern paintings, “…a New York collector had chosen Chinese porcelains along with the twentieth century paintings in his modern living room.” (A.B. L. 1947, 59) The affinities between Song ceramics and Modern art was suggested by two images that appeared in the 1947 issues of Art News: the intricate pattern of the crackled glaze and simple form of the ge ware in C. T. Loo’s advertisement in the May, 1947 issue of the Art News created rich resonance with the abstract fabric design on the cover of the March 1947 issue (Fig.57 a,b).

Loo’s strategy of modernizing Chinese antiquities was a market gambit to broaden the base of American collectors of Chinese art. The Art News review of Loo’s 1947 Song
ceramics exhibition noticed that the union of ancient and Modern aesthetics made Song ceramics appeal to a growing number of contemporary collectors of Western art, and the “modernization” of ancient Chinese art renewed the early interest in Chinese antiquities in America. The report observed, “Such harmony, at once classic in its poise and modern in its abstract aspect, is now beginning to attract new enthusiasts. Although the epoch of the great U.S. collectors of Oriental ceramics-the days of Freer and Altman-are gradually passing, more and more devotees of Western art are beginning to juxtapose objects such as these Sung porcelains with the art of other times and places.” (A.B.L. 1947, 35)

It is important to note that the contact between ancient Chinese art and Modern American art was a two-way street. While Modern Western aesthetics had a marked bearing on the reception of Chinese antiquities, Chinese art, in turn, influenced Modern art practices in the West. Chinese art was perceived as an inspiration for American contemporary designers and artists. The Art News review of the 1947 Song ceramic show, for example, noted, “Here over seven hundred years ago, function, form, and material are met in a unity which is the goal of contemporary designers.” (A.B.L. 1947, 35) The New York Times review of Loo’s 1947 Song mural exhibition, titled “Old-Abstract-New: Chinese Frescoes with Lesson for Today-Recent Work by Contemporaries”, stated, “The reflective figures and abstracted natural forms of these Sung paintings are surely provocative for the modern artist” (Devree 1949a).

Chinese art in America, however, was largely appreciated as a significant form, which was to be appropriated and transformed into American art with modern ideas. The American artist Beniamino Bufano’s encounter with Chinese art offered a good example.
Bufano traveled to Jingdezhen, the center for ceramic production in China, where he learned the processes of the Chinese glazes from local craftsmen. This China experience had a profound impact on his art making, as the *International Studio* review observed, “He was absorbed by the monumental calm, the unhurried certainty of an old, wise race.” (Ackerman 1925, 375) The review, however, stated that what inspired Bufano was primarily the decorative form of Chinese art. The review gave a description of the famous Lohan statues that C. T. Loo introduced to the Met to illustrate the characteristics of the Chinese art that inspired Bufano, “Seen in twilight against a glowing western sky so that only the outline was sharp cut against the light they would have monumental and expressive poise. Seen against a brocade curtain that confused the outline with its continuous pattern they would be lovely and still expressive designs of colors and applied patterns, even considered for the monument in the flat. Or seen in a sharply lighted photograph that minimized outline and patterns and neglected color they would be a fine articulation of massive segments defined by shadows and built into a coherent equilibrium. This equal importance of all three qualities of composition is characteristic of the great sculpture of the Orient.” (Ackerman 1925, 379) (Fig. 58a) The review saw Bufano’s work as “sculptural decoration” because he was inspired by the elements of outline, surface ornamentation, and mass that are embodied in Chinese sculptures (Ackerman 1925, 378) (Fig. 58b). The review claimed, “In the sculpture of Beniamino Bufano the forms of the Orient express Western ideas.” (Ackerman 1925, 375) In other

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389 The author referred to the famous Lohan statues as “…one of the great Bodhisattvas in glazed terra cotta made in the late Tang or early Sung period which were brought of China not so long ago and placed in various Western museums, two of the finest going to the Metropolitan” (Ackerman 1925, 379).
words, the American artist was going back to ancient Chinese art, but was making new American art by transforming it with Western modern concepts.

_Ancient Chinese Art into Modern American Home_

With the rise of the consumer culture, cosmopolitan taste, and advertising industry in the 1930s and 1940s, Chinese art infiltrated into American homes and popular consciousness in America. Loo’s dealing was part of this phenomenon.

There was the proliferation of visual and textual evidence of the American exposure to Chinese art in the 1930s and 1940s. Sales, exhibitions, publications of Chinese art were mushrooming. From January 1, 1930 to December 31, 1939, for example, the phrase “Chinese art” appeared in the *New York Times* 502 times compared to 306 in the 1920s and 147 in the 1910s.390

The 1930s and 1940s saw the domestication and popularization of Chinese antiquities with the spread of the taste for Chinese things from museums to homes of a growing number of collectors. By the mid-1940s, the era of collecting large-scale, first-rate Chinese art objects by ambitious collectors and museums was gone. Major Chinese sources for antiquities such as stone sculptures were drained due to rampant plunder and tightened Chinese government control. Less impressive and expensive, smaller-size Chinese art objects became a popular category consumed primarily by urban bourgeoisie as interior décor. It is no surprise that Loo stated in his 1941-42 clearing sale catalogue that although his gallery had been considered an exclusive place with high prices, it had a

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390http://proquest.umi.com/login?COPT=REJTPThY2QmU01EPTQmSU5UPTAmVkVSPTI=&clientId=3960.
large number of decorative objects that fitted smaller collectors’ budgets (Loo 1941, Introduction). The *Art News* report of Loo’s 1947 Song ceramic exhibition suggested that one no longer needed to be Chinese art expert to collect and appreciate things Chinese, nor needed one to visit a museum. Instead, Chinese art could be brought to one’s home for intimate enjoyment. The report commented on a collector’s display of Chinese ceramics, “Taken out of the forbidding glass cabinet, the porcelains have become part of the room.” (A.B.L. 1947, 36) The *New York Times* review of this exhibition noted the Chinese porcelains’ decorative value for modern homes, “Some of the bone-white plates and bowls, delicately incised with floral designs, would not be out of place on a smart dining table of today.”

Aware that the collection and display of Chinese antiquities were increasingly linked to fashion and social prestige in modern America, Loo cleverly turned the celebrity’s home into his show window. The *Art News* report of Loo’s 1947 song ceramic exhibition used the display of a porcelain statue of Guanyin in Mr. and Mrs. Ira Haupt’s luxurious and cosmopolitan New York apartment to promote the new fashion of decorating modern homes (Fig. 59). The report noted, “It (the Guanyin statue) stands on a Louis XVI marquetry commode, signed by the ebeniste I. G. Schlichtig, before a Louis XVI gilded mirror which show the back of the statue.” (A.B.L. 1947, 37)

**Salvage Paradigm**

Loo was and is a controversial figure. Richard E. Fuller, Loo’s long-time friend and client, spoke highly of Loo’s personality and his role in the formation of Chinese art

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collections in the United States. Fuller in Loo’s obituary stated, “His many friends will cherish his memory and generations to come should be most grateful to him for his initiative and good taste in taking advantage of unique and fleeting opportunities…In purchasing these treasures on the open market he channeled them into the great private and public collections of the West where they will be preserved for posterity.” (Fuller 1958, 8) In China, however, Loo was accused of being a culprit in the depletion of Chinese art treasures.

Loo was acutely aware of the charges against him for his role in the transference of Chinese cultural properties. In response, Loo stated in the 1940 catalogue, *An Exhibition of Chinese Stone Sculptures*, “I feel so ashamed to have been one of the sources by which these National treasures have been dispersed. Our only excuse is that none have ever been taken by us but all bought in the open market in competition with other buyers. China has lost its treasures but our only consolation is, as Art has no frontiers, these sculptures going forth into the world, admired by scholars as well as the public, may do more good for China than any living Ambassador. Through the Arts, China is probably best known to the outside world. Our monuments may be preserved even better in other countries than in China, because of constant changes and upheavals and so our lost treasures will be the real messengers to make the world realize out ancient civilization, and culture thus serving to create a love and better understanding of China and the Chinese people.” (Loo 1940, Preface)

In the statement above, Loo presented several arguments for his innocence. First, he had not participated in the actual removal of the art object or other illicit activities. On the
eve of his retirement Loo announced publicly, “I can say that not one single object has been removed by me from its original site. For example, the two Chargers of T’ang T’ai Tsung, now in Philadelphia, were originally removed from the Chao Ling (Mausoleum of the Emperor T’ai Tsung) by a foreign dealer. These bas-reliefs were stopped at the provincial border and taken back to Sian Fu, where, years after, we bought them from the then local authorities in power. Those sculptures were transported by the Army to Peking and the money was used to build schools.” (Loo 1950, 3) (Fig. 20 a, b)

Loo also argued that his business served philanthropic purposes. He remarked, “When I had surplus money I gave it to charities, to the neediest. I have even established, in 1938, an irrevocable perpetual trust, the income of which is to be used to send Chinese students to be educated in this Country in engineering and medicine.” (Loo 1950, 3) In the offer of a Kangxi porcelain figure of Guanyin to John D. Rockefeller, Jr., Loo pleaded his art-for-philanthropy cause,392 “This figure belonged to the Temple of Hu Deh San in Shansi Province. It was sold by the chief Monk and in exchange he built a new Kwan-Yin Hall in the Temple.”393

Another justification for his dealing is that his business was conducted according to market rules. Loo stated, “…whatever I have exported from my Country was purchased in the open market, in competition with others” (Loo 1950, 3).

More importantly, Loo labeled himself as an art lover, a preserver and promoter of Chinese art. He emphasized that the objects he secured were from neglected or ruined

392 Loo’s message was delivered to make this offer appeal to John D. Rockefeller, Jr., who was actively funding many international restoration and philanthropic projects.
393 C. T. Loo to JDR Jr, December 9, 1916, folder 1370, C. T. Loo 1916-1949, box 137, OMR-RAC.
sites, and since people in China were unable to preserve and appreciate Chinese antiques, he was saving them from oblivion or destruction by bringing them to the more appreciative Americans. Furthermore, he suggested that thanks to his dealing Chinese art would “go around the World as silent ambassadors, enabling other people to understand the great culture of the Chinese and love of China” (Loo 1950, 3).

Loo’s handling of a group of Song murals offers a case to test his argument (Fig.10). According to Loo, he had them removed from China to adorn his gallery in Paris in the early 1920s, “…because if they had stayed in that part of the country-which has been in fighting area since such a long time-the public may have missed the chance of knowing the existence of Chinese Buddhist frescos of that early period.” (Loo 1949, Introduction) More than two decades later, Loo decided to move these murals to the United States when he found that France, devastated by World War II, was no longer an appropriate place to hold these murals. Loo remarked, “During my annual visit to France in 1946, I was depressed to see how sad our Paris house looked and how useless it was to leave those beautiful frescos in that house.” (Loo 1949, Introduction) To justify his act to remove these murals and eventually bring them to the United States, Loo stated, “If there are some of (sic) compatriots who should feel that the removal of the frescos out of China, is a loss to our Country, I trust that they also should feel satisfied that those frescos will be safely and permanently preserved in a friendly Country.” (Loo 1949, Introduction) Loo furthered claimed that “Art should have no frontiers and should, on the contrary, be a source of enjoyment for people the world over.” (Loo 1949, Introduction)
A hardheaded bargainer, Loo often presented himself as a passionate art lover, and Chinese art as a timeless and universal expression of beauty. He stated, “My joy in business was principally to gather beautiful things because I always considered that money was only a means of exchange.” (Loo 1950, 3) Loo spoke of art as an abstract and universal concept that existed everywhere for everybody. Loo’s arguments concealed an art object’s anchorage in time, space and the power relations that framed its meanings and value. Loo’s handling of the Song mural and other objects, however, clearly demonstrated that art was defined by national, economic and political boundaries, and Chinese antiquities were reserved not for “people the world over” but for Americans only.

If Loo was not guilty, then who was to blame? Loo remarked, “I wish they would first blame the past ignorance of the inhabitants” (Loo 1950, 3). Loo also mentioned that some foreigners were behind the hideous activities. In addition, Loo hinted that the Chinese government was unable to protect its antiquities. He remarked, “It is to be hoped that they will gather the antique relics, widely scattered, to be properly protected.” (Loo 1949, Introduction)

Loo’s “salvage paradigm”, that Chinese culture was seen in negligence or peril and should be saved and preserved by people equipped with scientific knowledge and aesthetic sensibility, was shared by American curators and scholars.394 The review of C.

394 The salvage rhetoric can be found in collecting native American art (Berlo 1992, 3) and in George Grey Barnard and JDR Jr’s collection of medieval art. William Welles Bosworth commented on the role of the French sculptor and collector George Grey Barnard, who collected European sculptures and brought them to the U.S., “There must be quantities of very fine works of Gothic Sculpture being sacrificed among the heaps of
T. Loo’s 1931 exhibition of Chinese art stated, “Although it gave us scant pleasure to see the figures of flying apasaras, or angels, that have been wrested from the walls of the Yun Kang cave temples, in a sense they are safer here and will be seen by a far greater number of appreciated eyes, so that we need not lament unduly.” (Jayne and Fernald 1931, 25) In the survey report of Chinese and Japanese collections in American museums, Benjamin March was aware of the accusations that America faced, “…the wealth of American museums and collectors is attracting significant pieces from private collections that ought to remain in China, and inspiring depredations that are resulting in the complete or partial destruction of important monuments in a time when the Chinese government is unable to control these predatory activities” (March 1929a, 34). March justified the American collection of Chinese antiquities from the perspective of America’s museums and America’s foreign relations. He argued that Chinese art objects were openly purchased in a market upon the agreement between the highest bidder and the seller who was in need of money. Since America was the wealthiest nation, it naturally attracted Chinese antiquities. Second, objects on the market accounted for only a small fraction of the total ruins all over Northern France and Belgium. I know of no one who would be so fitted by experience and judgment to cull these things together and preserve them for humanity as Mr. Bernard.” (William Welles Bosworth to JDR, Jr. April 19, 1916, box 32, OMR-RAC, copy of “Apartment Crowd Out Bit of France.”) In a similar line, the New York Post observed that the treasures which George Barnard collected in fifteen years were “from among the vineyards and the wine cellars of French peasants where since the French Revolution, they had propped up vines and barrels…” (“Apartment Crowd Out Bit of France,” New York Post, April 26, 1922) In a letter to JDR Jr. Barnard commented on JDR Jr.’s patronage of the Cloister. “Your plan to gather the long lost fragments of Christian Art and to place them in a home where they will be protected for centuries, moves me deeply.” (George Grey Barnard to JDR Jr., June 13, 1935, folder 329, George Grey Barnard, box 32, OMR-RAC)
loss or removal of Chinese antiquities. He observed that “…the worst destruction has been accomplished by Chinese irresponsibles” (March 1929a, 25) rather than dealers and their agents whose removals of objects have “commonly been conducted without wanton destruction and most frequently from deserted ruins” (March 1929a, 25). And most importantly, March argued that in contrast to the ignorant Chinese looter, the American collector “cherishes and reveres them as great works of art of universal moment” (March 1929a, 26). March further stated, “Far Eastern art in Western museums has had a large share in raising the West’s appreciation of Eastern cultural attainment” (March 1929a, 26), and “it is not improbable that the knowledge of a market largely created by Western collectors has saved many choice pieces from oblivion” (March 1929a, 25). Loo was in total agreement with March in stating, “Perhaps I may say here that we Chinese feel greatly indebted to Americans who have gathered our treasures into their collections. Not only are they preserving relics of the past for the aesthetic appreciation and scientific study of posterity, but by helping towards a fuller knowledge of Chinese art in the present they are bringing America into closer touch, sympathy and understanding with China.” (Loo 1931, 4)

It is not difficult to see that March’s argument was in line with Loo’s, as dealers and collectors/museums stood at the supply and demand ends in the market. Both presented a universal and timeless idea of Chinese art, and an appreciative American audience in contrast to the purported ignorant Chinese people. Both emphasized the working of market rules. What their arguments concealed is the capitalist and imperialist agenda behind the international circulation of Chinese antiquities. They shared the logic that
China was incapable of appreciating and protecting her own heritage, which made American intervention and patronage a necessity. Chinese antiquities needed to be discovered, preserved, and consumed by and for modern America.  

395 In the West, the attitude toward the removal of Chinese antiquities varied. Alfred Salmony noted, “However, when the serious collectors of the West-led by those of Great Britain-decided on the boycott of broken heads, a boycott somewhat relaxed nowadays, certain art dealers from Paris went out with special machines to cut the stone, and they hired soldiers to protect their activity of devastation.” (Salmony 1940b, 8)
CHAPTER 5: SPECTACLE

“I am glad to learn that you are here in the States again,--no doubt with many fine and rare objects to make Museums and collectors open their eyes.”

---Letter from K. Tomita to C. T. Loo, November 27, 1929

C. T. Loo was a well-recognized showman who exuded charm and power on his audience. Nothing can better illustrate Loo’s ability to capture his clients’ eye than an observation from John E. Lodge, the leading Asian art authority. With both admiration and acrimony, Lodge wrote, “I am glad to hear that Mr. Pickman is taking an interest in the Kuan-yin. As shown in Mr. Loo’s shop, the figure stood in a tall, narrow compartment of one of the large Chinese display cabinets which adorn Mr. Loo’s back office. The compartment was lined with a neutral colored velvet, I should say, and the lighting was electric. The general effect was good in the somewhat meretricious way which (the?) dealers seem to find exerts a potent charm upon the majority of their customers.”

Indeed, no word is better than “spectacle” to describe the kind of experiences that C. T. Loo created for his audience. Spectacle suggests a visually powerful experience, which is intended to convey a particular message to a particular audience in a particular time and place.

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396 K. Tomita to C. T. Loo, November 27, 1929, folder: C. T. Loo, box: L to M, 1927-1930, AAOA-MFA.
397 Dudley Leavitt Pickman was a benefactor of the MFA. J.E. Lodge to K. Tomita, Dec 30, 1921, folder: Lai-Yuan Co., box: Unofficial Correspondence L, 1910-1922, AAOA-MFA.
Visibility and power were the key elements in Loo’s staging of spectacles. Although Loo’s publications often contained detailed contextual information about the objects, the formal and visual elements dominated in the display. The *New York Times* review of the 1935 *Exhibition of C. T. Loo’s Collection of Chinese, Hindu and Cambodian Art* at the Jacques Seligmann Galleries, revealed a somewhat perplexing experience for visitors who were not well-versed in Chinese art due to the exhibition’s “undocumented manner of presentation” (Jewell 1935). The review, however, noted that the average visitors would still find beauty. It observed, “As it is, the plain citizen, though assisted by little placards, is likely to wander in some bewilderment through this wealth of objects. But he will find an abundance of beauty here.” (Jewell 1935)

Loo paid meticulous attention to the objects’ formal qualities and to the aesthetic principles of their display. Loo’s 1941-2 sale catalogue of the *Exhibition of Chinese Art*, for example, presented a group of carefully arranged Song and Yuan ceramics (Fig. 60). The placement of objects in each register was well balanced. Objects such as the circular dishes on the three bands from the top corresponded with each other in shape (C. T. Loo and Company 1941a, Cat.no. 582-600).

What made Loo’s display a spectacle was not only the properties and visual elements of the artworks, but also the people who sold, bought, studied, displayed, viewed it, as well as where and how it was viewed and displayed. The media sensations that John D. Rockefeller, Jr.’s art acquisition of a rare bronze from C. T. Loo offers a case in point. An article in the *New York Times* announced, “A gilded bronze Indo-Scythian statuette, purchased by John D. Rockefeller, Jr. from C. T. Loo, the Chinese archeologist, was
shown at the Academy of Inscriptions and Belles Letters in Paris today by a corresponding member, M. Rostovtseff (sic.). The specimen is extremely rare and represents a Nomadic rider mounted on a winged lion. It was probably an ornament on the cover of a libation vase.”398 What made this reported event a spectacle was not just the rare object, but also an important site of display, an important collector, an important scholar, and an important dealer.399

The following analysis of the spectacles that Loo created, and his presentational strategies will further illuminate the network of relations and the conceptual issues in the field of Chinese art in America. The central question in this chapter is: how was the display of Chinese art turned into a theatre for Loo’s crafting and performance of power and identity?400

The Grand and Grotesque

Loo was probably best known for his dealing in large-size stone sculptures in America.401 The Art Digest review of Loo’s 1940 Exhibition of Chinese Stone Sculptures observed, “The show is outstanding mainly for its demonstration of ancient China’s

399 The Academy of Inscriptions and Belles Letters (Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres) was a prestigious French learned society devoted to the study of antiquities, languages, and cultures.
400 Display space in this dissertation refers not only to museums, commercial galleries, but also to printed media, where Chinese objects and their images were circulated, presented, and viewed.
401 Similar strategies were employed by the art dealer Dikran G. Kelekian, who displayed the Lord Wimborne collection of sixteen Assyrian relief sculptures and two winged bulls in the UPM before they were sold to John D. Rockefeller Jr. for $300,000. (Dikran G. Kelekian to JDR Jr., February 3 and 8, 1928, folder 1360, Kelekian, 1913-1959, box 136, OMR-RAC)
monumentality—a quality not always achieved in the more familiar, more frequently exhibited jades, porcelains and other ‘delicacies’ among art forms. Loo’s collection and display of large-scale stone sculptures stood as a testimony to his financial power, business acumen, and political connections. Alfred Salmony observed that Loo’s 1940 exhibition of stone sculptures was probably the last of its kind because the Chinese government passed a law prohibiting the exportation of antiques over 15 years ago, which applied to large stone sculptures than other classes of ancient art. (Salmony 1940b, 8) The logic of C. T. Loo’s dealing in monumental sculpture was: the larger an object was the more difficult it was to get it out of China, the rarer it became. As a result, it could be sold at a higher price in the market, and the larger the object was, the wider his name would spread.

From the point of view of American collectors and museums, collecting and displaying the newly arrived monumental Chinese objects was a way to create a compelling visual statement of America’s aspiration for grandeur in the domestic and international cultural arenas. During the museum construction and expansion boom in the first half of the twentieth century, large and permanent objects helped museums to fill their new spaces, to impress the public, and to distinguish themselves in the museum world.

Loo was responsible for introducing a group of large-scale stone sculptures to the Met, UPM, MFA, and the Nelson Gallery. Loo’s gift to the Met, a stone hand of a Bodhisattva, dated to the seventh century (Met 30.81), illustrates his strategy of scale (Fig. 61). The New York Times report titled “Metropolitan Also Acquires a Rare Stone Hand of Colossal

\footnote{Art Digest, January 15, 1940, 31.}
Figure from T’ang Dynasty” observed, “The most notable accession since 1930 is a stone hand of a Buddhist figure of the Tang dynasty from one of the colossal figures in the cave temples of Lung Men…The hand, which is 20 ½ inches high has been presented by C. T. Loo…It gives the observer a clue to the majesty with which the whole figure was endowed. The series of rock-cut temples of Lung Men is still one of the great glories of China.”\(^{403}\) The attraction of large sculptures to American museums is evident in a letter by Stewart Culin, curator at the Brooklyn Museum. He wrote to the museum trustee, Frank L. Babbott after visiting the UPM, where two large relief panels of the Taizong’s chargers and other impressive stone sculptures from C. T. Loo were displayed (Fig. 63). Culin wrote, “Loo sold the University Museum the two Chinese stone horses that are such a distinguished feature of its exhibit. He sold it also the two great winged lions. As I have said I think we should now acquire large monumental objects for our Oriental department, concentrating upon a small number and securing only things of high importance and preferably those which are not perishable.”\(^{404}\)

The spectacle that Loo launched in the 1935-6 *International Exhibition of Chinese Art* in London offers another example of his play with scale. The exhibition itself constituted a spectacle in many ways. The exhibition at the Burlington house in the Royal Academy of Art brought together 3,080 artworks from some 250 collectors and institutions over the world. According to Basil Gray, one of the organizers of the exhibition, the show under the patronage of King George V and Queen Mary as well as the President of the Chinese

\(^{403}\) “Metropolitan Also Acquires a Rare Stone Hand of Colossal Figure from T’ang Dynasty,” *New York Times*, June 10, 1933.

\(^{404}\) S. Culin to F. L. Babbott, January 23, 1928, BMAA.
Republic, aimed not only to reveal to the world for the first time the treasures of the imperial collections, but also to advance Great Britain’s cultural relations with the Chinese Republic in the international political arena. This exhibition had a profound impact on the world of Chinese art. Gray noted, “…it must be conceded that the Chinese exhibition of 1935-36 was indeed a watershed in the general appreciation of the arts of China, and also a major stimulant to their studies, immediately in scholarly results…” (Gray 1985-6, 31)

Loo’s powerful presence as a New York dealer at the exhibition was a spectacle in itself. According to the catalogue, Loo lent forty-three exhibits, rivaling other major contributors such as the Louvre and the Musée Guimet. Among thousands of items in the crowded galleries, the marble figure of Buddha from Loo stood out. The key was its scale. It was the largest exhibit, nearly nineteen feet tall and weighing over three tons (Gray 1985-6, 13). The size and weight of the statue presented challenges to the installation (Fig.63). The photograph shows that the statue was “…provisionally set up in the back courtyard of the Academy before it was hoisted in its four sections and installed in the central octagon where it required support of stays beneath the floor” (Gray 1985-6, 13). Undoubtedly, the scale of the statue and its placement in the Central Hall where royal loans and sculptures were displayed, made it the center of attention in the exhibition. David Percival, the principal organizer of the exhibition, observed, “There is

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405 The Louvre and the Musée Guimet lent forty-two and twenty-one exhibits respectively. Another hidden spectacle in the exhibition was its inclusion of objects previously sold by Loo such as the UPM’s famous relief panel of the Taizong’s chargers.

406 According to the Art News, this figure weighs about twenty tons. (“Great Exhibition of Chinese Art Opens in London,” Art News, December 1935, 12)
again the colossal marble statue, lent by Mr. C. T. Loo, of a standing Maitreya, nineteen feet high, which dominates the exhibition from its commanding position in the Central Hall.” (Percival 1935, 176) The display of this colossal statue in the international pageantry of art and politics was a two-edged sword. It not only effectively advertised Loo’s business, but also served a nationalistic and political agenda, as suggested by the presentation of the statue later by the Chinese government to the British Museum to commemorate this exhibition (Gray 1985-6, 13) (Fig.64).

Volume, scope, quality, and medium also helped to convey the sense of grandeur. Impressed by the more than 1,000 pieces in all major media dated from the Shang to the Qing dynasties at Loo’s 1941-2 Exhibition of Chinese Arts, the New York Times acclaimed it as “the procession of the art of China through the ages”407. Loo’s exhibitions were known for their encyclopedic scope as well as the high quality of the objects on display. Loo noted in the 1941-2 sale catalogue, “I understand that our Gallery has been considered an exclusive place with high prices…I have always consistently tried to present each individual type of object at its best period and highest quality and to avoid objects that only have an effective appearance with uncertain authenticity.” (Loo 1941, Introduction)

Loo’s signature collection included not only large-scale stone sculptures but also a group of exquisite ancient bronzes and jades characterized by their superb draftsmanship, precious materials, and decorative splendor. A large group of antiquities dated to the period of Warring States well illustrated the features of the “Looesque”. An outstanding

example among them is the bronze mirror dated to the early fourth and late third century BCE from the Winthrop collection. It is decorated with glass beads, a jade disk, and a fluted jade ring (Sackler 1943.50.157) (Fig. 65). Equally impressive is the bronze vessel with silver inlay made in the same period in the collection of the Freer Gallery of Art (F. 15.103) (Fig. 66).

Another popular category in Loo’s collection is a group of exotic beasts in various media with grotesque bodies and ferocious expressions (Fig. 67). The Chinese sculpture authority Osvald Siren’s description of Loo’s chimera displayed in the International Exhibition of Chinese Art leaves no doubt of these beasts’ ability to evoke awe and wonder. Siren remarked, “The body has become slim, almost serpent-like, and the neck has swollen out enormously, yet it seems weighed down or compressed by the gigantic head with the broad muzzle and thick wavy skinflaps at the eyes and the ears. The crest over the head adds to the grotesque terribilità of the head. The sculptor has used every means to increase the impression of bestial fury, nervous tension and agility.” (Siren 1936, 21) The Art Digest review of Loo’s 1940 Exhibition of Chinese Stone Sculptures described a group of grotesque animals as examples of “carved drama”, which commanded the viewer’s attention. “One is a Chimera, very real notwithstanding, from the Wei period, and, from later dynasties, two ferocious heraldic demons, and a lion in high relief which is a companion piece to one that glares at visitors to the Kansas City’s Nelson Gallery.”

408 Art Digest, January 15, 1940, 31.
Loo understood well that the ambience and the physical characteristics of the display environment were also important components in the art spectacle. Loo’s expertise in staging exhibitions was demonstrated in his role as the installation materials supplier for the 1935-6 *International Exhibition of Chinese Art* in London.\(^\text{409}\) Loo’s galleries and exhibitions were known for their attractive museum-style display. In the 1947 exhibition *Wares of the Sung Dynasty* (Fig. 49), objects were carefully arranged in glass cases, which is strongly reminiscent of the gallery setting at the Freer Gallery of Art (Fig. 68). The review of the opening exhibition of Loo’s new galleries in 1936 paid special attention to the gallery installation, “It is a pleasant place and his carefully selected objects look far better in their new quarters than they ever did in their old home two flights up and to the rear on Fifth Avenue among the Forties” (Roberts 1936, 21)

According to the review, the exhibition was also impressive in its use of a special wall covering, which distinguished Loo’s gallery from other art galleries. It observed, “The galleries are lined with a rather coarse buff material. It is the same stuff which was used so well at the International Exhibition of Chinese Art in London to disguise the appalling walls of Burlington House and make them a little kinder to Chinese art. This wall covering is indeed a relief from the heavy velvets in which 57 th Street even now entombs its art.” (Roberts 1936, 21)

**The Feminine**

Many spectacles that Loo launched involved female-identified objects, female iconography, female collectors and artists. Loo’s staging of the feminized art spectacle

\(^{409}\) Loo provided materials to cover the gallery walls (Llewellyn 1935, V).
can be viewed as part of the tradition of representing the sensuous Oriental women, in which “…the Oriental became the feminized and exotic vessel for colonial energy” (Edwards 2000, 13). The meanings of the feminized spectacles that Loo launched, however, were more nuanced. The eroticism in the Chinese art spectacle was less blatant, and the participation of prestigious Chinese and American women often communicated messages of beauty, cultivation, and glamour. In the 1930s and 1940s, women and Chinese art spectacles became instrumental to war relief drives and China-US relations.

Women in Chinese Art

The Descriptive Catalogue of Ancient and Genuine Chinese Paintings published by Loo’s firm in 1916 capitalized on the Western viewer’s stereotypical view of sensuous and exotic Oriental women. The catalogue opened with a portrait of woman, The Wonderful Girl of Ho-kien (He jian), attributed to Lu Tanwei in the Jin dynasty (Fig. 69). Besides its attribution to a famous author and an early date, the painting stood out as the first color plate in this mostly black-and-white catalogue. The catalogue emphasized the feminine and decorative aspect of the woman Ho-kien (He jian) in the painting. About two thirds of the text was devoted to the description of her costume, hairdo, facial features, and attributes. The description presented a parade of opulent colors and precious materials: “In this painting the girl’s headdress has two tufts of hair, and two falling tresses, one on each side, tied with red bands. In the Wu-hsing section (Wu xing zhi) of the Tsin Records it is stated that in the Yuan-kang (yuan kang) reign of the Emperor Hwei (Hui di) 惠帝, women knotted their hair into falling tresses which they bound with silk. The temples were adorned with turquoise clasps resembling wheels. In
the Record of Ceremonies in the History of the Sui Dynasty (Sui shu) 隋书, jade-wheel clasps are mentioned. Her upper garment is a light blue colour with a dark blue border to the collar. The lower garment is a light red skirt.” (Kwen 1916, Cat. no. 1)

The description was followed by the curious tale of the money-counting magic performed by this women in the Shun-I Records (Shu yi ji) 述异记. “In her right hand she is holding a copper cash and also carrying a bamboo basket in which are books, while in the left hand she has five copper cash; and encircling her arm near the cuff is a rosary... (She) displayed great skill in counting copper cash; she would pick up one cash with her figures (sic. fingers) and then give the correct number in the whole lot” (Kwen 1916, Cat, no. 1). An understanding of the background of the intended audience of this catalogue reveals an added appeal of this miracle-working Chinese lady. This collection was assembled for Charles L. Freer, the retired railroad car manufacture magnate, and his fellow collectors (Kwen 1916, An Appreciation). For American industrialists like Freer, the allure of this Chinese lady lay not only in her sensuality and decorative splendor, but also in her symbolism of exoticism and wealth.

Taking this catalogue as a whole, although the number of paintings of women was seven out of the sixty entries,410 the importance of works with female subject matter was apparent. The first ten entries in the catalogue, for example, contain four portraits of

410 The statistics include 2 leaves in 2 albums (Kwen 1916, Cat. no 58, 59). The album is counted as one entry.
women. The emphasis on the female subjects was also evident in that half of the colored illustrations in the catalogue are devoted to the paintings of women.412

While the description of paintings of female subjects concerned mostly their body and ornaments, the text for the Five Old Men from Suiyang, portraits of five high officials of the Northern Song dynasty (Kwen 1916, Cat. no. 60) concentrated on their career and character. This contrasting mode of presenting female and male subjects reflected not only the identification of women as decorative objects in the male-centered society in China, but also their exoticization and commodification for viewers in America. The discussion of the size of the women’s feet in the catalogue entry for the painting “Three Beautiful Women” (Kwen 1916, Cat. no.4), for example, capitalized on the curiosity of the Westerners who identified Chinese women as an exotic subject with bound feet.

To the Western audience, Chinese figures in art apparently lacked the kind of sensuality one could find in the representation of nudes in the Western art tradition or in the works made in an Oriental manner. The art critic, Jane Gaston Malher, after viewing Loo’s 1946 Exhibition of Chinese Figures, observed, “How Chinese it is!’ For all are clothed.” (Mahler 1946, 42) The erotic message of Chinese figures in Loo’s collection, however, was delivered in a subtle way. The implied eroticism in the Minneapolis Institute of Arts acquisition of two bare-chest statues of Bodhisattva from Loo in 1941, for example, was given a tantalizing note in the New York Times report. Highly

411 Cat. no. 3 The Empress Wu and Travelling Equipage, Painted by Chang Suan Tang Dynasty, A.D. 618-906; No. 4 Three Beautiful Women Painted by Chou Fang Tang Dynasty, 618-906; No. 10 A Lover of Flowers Painted by Tu Siao Five Dynasties, A.D. 906-960, and. The other two colored illustrations were tiger and a landscape/genre painting.
412 Cat. no. 1, and 10.
reminiscent of Greek white marble sculptures (Fig. 70), the report stated, “(The two Bodhisattva figures)…are said to be rare because of the nature of the material, white marble being found only in Ting Chou, China, where they were excavated…Their faces are serene, with an upright, almost rigid, pose of forms. The chests are exposed, except for lotus-pendant-and-bead necklaces which hang low.” C. T. Loo’s 1941 sale catalogue Exhibition of Chinese Arts also attempted to emphasize their femininity in the description of their ornaments and body. “Two Marble Bodhisattvas. Two magnificently carved figures with well chiselled serene faces, their headdress is high and corresponds to the simple carving on the dress, their chests are bare and around the shoulder is a scarf tied at the waist line and ornaments of long necklaces hang to the knees” (C. T. Loo and Company 1941a, Cat. no. 942).

In contrast to the commercialized spectacle of women and art that Loo staged, the painting collection contributed by the Chinese government to the International Exhibition of Chinese Art in London during 1935-6 left very little room for the feminine. Out of 175 entries in the catalogue, only five featured female subjects. In contrast, there was a high concentration of works of male subjects, including portraits of emperors, scholars, sages, and deities, male-identified landscapes. The scarcity of female subjects in this exhibition suggested the Chinese government’s intention to defeminize China in international politics. Facing Japanese invasion and internal turmoil in the 1930s, the Chinese government was anxious to articulate China’s position as a masculine nation-state in the international arena. In this aggressive public sphere of politics and war, the

414 Landscapes with scenes of gentlemen’s gatherings or visits.
presentation of beautiful Chinese ladies had little to do with the grand nationalistic agenda of the Chinese government to promote a narrative of the nation’s history and culture as male-defined.

**Chinese Art for American Women**

It is evident that from the 1930s onwards female-identified objects for a clientele composed of upper-class American women became an important category in Loo’s business. In contrast to the monumental stone sculptures Loo reserved for museums, the type of objects Loo merchandised for women customers were often characterized by their comparatively small scale and highly decorative nature. The 1937 exhibition in Loo’s New York galleries and the 1941 exhibition of Loo’s collection at the Toledo Museum of Art, for example, featured exquisite miniature gold jewelry as the expression of exotic feminine beauty. The *Art News* review of Loo’s 1937 jewelry show noted, “They are adornments of supreme delicacy, consisting mainly of jewels for the Chinese woman’s elaborate hairdress, crown, rings, earrings, bracelets, and decorative appliqués. The more elaborate ornaments are inlaid with turquoise, pearls, crystals and various semi-precious stones. Filigree, granulation, repoussé and incision are combined to create adornments fanciful and exotic in form and pure in miniature perfection.” (Davidson 1937, 52)

The feminizing tendency in Loo’s dealing in the 1930s and 1940s was also manifested in the miniaturization and domestication of Chinese objects, which was the result of the accelerating process of urbanization and the broadening base of private collectors of Chinese art in the U.S. The review of the opening exhibition of C. T. Loo’s new galleries in 1936, for instance, noticed Loo’s response to the demand for small-scale items for
urban collectors’ home interiors, “It is interesting that all of Mr. Loo’s sculpture here is small sized. Apartment house dwellers have not space for anything else, and their lack of ceiling room is affecting the Chinese trade as much as it affecting English portrait market where many a full length gentleman has had his extremities removed so he might fit under a low ceiling.” (Roberts 1936, 21) This shift in the size and display context of Chinese art was imbued with gender implications. If the monumental objects acquired by American museums in the previous decades signified the public and masculine, the miniatures for individual collectors’ home decoration signified the private and feminine (Steward 1993). The 1946 exhibition of Figures in Chinese Art at Loo’s galleries, for instance, highlighted a group of small feminine statues; the height of the majority of the objects fell into the range of five to fifteen inches. Although the text indicated that a considerable portion of the exhibits were statues of males, all the plates were devoted to pieces representing women.\footnote{Based on the text, about half of the 44 catalogue entries can be identifiable as women.}

With the rise of prominence of Chinese art in the West in the 1930s and the 1940s, the acquisition and display of Chinese objects by elite American women in a domestic setting was increasingly associated with social prestige and fashion. The Art News report of Loo’s 1947 Song ceramic exhibition offers a case in point. As an advertisement for this exhibition, the report showed that Loo’s major clients were aristocratic, cosmopolitan American women. In the first case, Mrs. Byron C. Foy, wife of the vice-president of Chrysler Corporation, placed her Chinese porcelain collection in her French eighteenth-century room with a Renoir masterpiece (A.B. L. 1947, 36). In a rather dramatic
photograph, an 18-inch high celadon Guanyin statue was shown in Mr. and Mrs. Ira Haupt’s apartment in New York (Fig.59). The report highlighted Mrs. Haupt’s tasteful flower arrangement that accompanied the Guanyin statue, “Mrs. Haupt always keeps fresh sprays of the wild orchids which she and her banker-husband raise as a hobby, their pinkish-tan tones and jagged, asymmetric lines a complement to the pale greenish celadon glaze and intricate form of the statue.” (A.B.L. 1947, 38) In addition, the report’s statement that the statue was “probably for a private palace altar” (A.B.L. 1947, 37) suggests the spiritual aspect in Mrs. Haupt’s display of the statue of Guanyin, the Chinese Buddhist deity who was closely associated with female worshippers and patrons in China.

**Chinese Art Work by An American Woman**

Though C. T. Loo was known primarily as a dealer of ancient Chinese art, in the 1940s he promoted contemporary “Chinese art” works by Wilma Prezzi, an American female oil painter of Chinese antiquities. In the 1945 exhibition at the De Young Memorial Museum in San Francisco, some of the objects Wilma Prezzi painted came from Loo’s collection. In the 1947 exhibition of Prezzi’s oil paintings of ancient Chinese art in New York, Loo served as her painting model supplier and a member of the art and exhibits committee.

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416 The Guanyin statue is comparable to the one in Loo’s 1946 catalogue: K’wan-yin Celadon Sung 17 ¾ inches (C. T. Loo and Company 1946, Cat. no. 11, pl. III).
417 Guanyin is derived from the Avalokitasvara or Bodhisattva of Compassion. It has been noted that before and during the Tang dynasty, Guanyin was depicted as an Indian prince, whose masculinity was indicated by the moustache (Yu 1994, 151). After the Tang dynasty, the Guanyin became gradually feminized and indigenized, and assumed such roles as child-giving female deity.
Wilma Prezzi’s works and exhibitions under Loo’s patronage constituted a multi-layered spectacle. The *New York Times* report on the 1947 exhibition of Wilma Prezzi’s works was titled, “Canvases Depict Chinese Antiques: Woman to Present Paintings of Ancient Bronzes and Porcelain”, alluding that Chinese antiquities, paintings, and the woman were all players in this spectacle. The woman artist, her painting, and the objects represented in the painting were mutually enhancing in terms of value. The exhibition was remarkable not only for the wonderful paintings and the wonderful Chinese antiquities depicted, but also for the woman who created these works. Wilma Prezzi’s background made her a fitting artist to portray Chinese art objects. The *New York Times* report depicted her as a young, talented, and technically sophisticated artist with a background as a dress designer (Knox 1947). The report stressed her technical virtuosity: “To portray the luminous, iridescent quality of long-buried porcelain and the earth tones of other oxidized burial pieces, Miss Prezzi employs a technique that requires a great deal of underpainting, comparable to the technique used by the old masters.” (Knox 1947) On the one hand, her painting skills, combined with her experience in dress-making a field associated with feminine beauty and glamour, made her a perfect artist to express the beauty of the “ancient, fragile, priceless” objects that C. T. Loo and other interested owners lent to her (Knox 1947). Pearl Buck observed in Prezzi’s painting catalogue, “Her delicate yet strong technique has found its best expression in the still life of great Chinese art objects….She paints beautifully, too, so beautifully that her technique is worthy of her subject.” (Buck 1945, Introduction) On the other hand, her painting was evaluated based not only on her skills but also on the history and value of the objects she painted. As
Pearl Buck remarked, “…these paintings of old Chinese art objects can be trusted. The objects themselves have stood the test of time, have passed through many hands and been well loved. They can be lived with for centuries ahead, as they have been lived with, already in centuries past.” (Buck 1945, Introduction)

The correspondence among the woman artist’s body, the object, and the painting was visually articulated by the photograph in the New York Times report on Prezzi’s 1947 exhibition. The artist, palette in hand, posed next to an elaborately framed painting in her studio apartment (Fig.71). The image of the artist formed a parallel to that of the Tang tomb figurine in her painting. Their three quarter view, oval-shaped faces, fine costumes and the correspondence in hairstyle and arm position alluded to the interconnectedness between the female artist, the Chinese object and her painting.

For Loo, Prezzi’s paintings of Chinese antiquities were not only artworks themselves but also fanciful advertisements for his business. In this light, the exhibition of Wilma’s works became an exhibition within an exhibition. The 1945 catalogue of Wilma Prezzi’s painting exhibition, for instance, could be viewed as C. T. Loo’s sale catalogues of Chinese objects except that the objects were illustrated by oil paintings rather than photographs. The text in the catalogue was devoted to the description of the objects in the painting rather than the painting itself. The painting entitled Jade in the catalogue for her 1947 exhibition revealed the strong commercial motivation behind her work (Fig. 72). This painting depicted a contemporary Chinese-looking young woman handling her bracelet. Her downcast eyes immediately draw the viewer’s attention to her jewelry. This
tantalizing view of a fashionable Chinese woman adorned by Chinese antiquities must have sent a seductive note to prospective buyers.

Another well-hidden commercial aspect of Loo’s connection with Wilma Prezzi is that Loo was aware that she might acquire for herself the objects on loan from him. In February 1944, Loo lent her a bronze statue of a kneeling woman, quoting the price of $400.

_Art, Women, and Wars_

During the Sino-Japanese War and World War II, China was caught up in a swirl of national and international crises. C. T. Loo and his wife actively participated in a series of art programs for war relief and cultural diplomacy between China and the U.S. In 1947 for his service to the people of China Loo was awarded the special citations of the Order of the Brilliant Star by the Chinese Ambassador to the United States. Mrs. C. T. Loo worked for the organization, United China Relief.

Many charitable events in which C. T. Loo participated were politically charged spectacles that featured women and art. As emblems of beauty, peace, and philanthropy, women and Chinese art objects were used to cover or soften harsh political conflicts in the turbulent years in the Sino-American relations.

This femininized and politicized nature of the art spectacle was best illustrated by the 1939 exhibition, *Three Thousand Years of Chinese Jade*, in which Mr. and Mrs. Loo played an important part. The exhibits were loaned by collectors and museums

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418 Inventory card 2117, FCA.
419 Ibid.
throughout the U.S. to raise funds for civilian sufferers in China.\footnote{New York Times, January 1, 1939.} This exhibition was unusual in its high percentage of female sponsors; five committees responsible for various aspects of the exhibition were composed exclusively of women except the treasurer and secretary. The roster of sponsors included a galaxy of female dignitaries. Mme. Chiang Kai-shek, the wife of the Chinese Generalissimo, and Mme. Wellington Koo, the wife of the Chinese Ambassador to the United States, were honorary Chairwomen of the exhibition. Mrs. Theodore Roosevelt Jr. was on the executive committee. Mrs. William H. Moore and Mrs. C. T. Loo were on the exhibition committee.\footnote{Mrs. William H. Moore or Ada Small Moore was the widow of the industrialist who formed the important corporations that became part of United States Steel. http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9B06E0DA133BF932A15750C0A964948260} The exhibition was also distinguished by a high concentration of private female lenders/collectors (Arden Gallery 1939, 6).\footnote{The three contributing dealers were C. T. Loo, Tonying & Co. and Bahr. The exhibits also came from Dumbarton Oakes collection.} Only four male private lenders/collectors were listed. In contrast, there were ten women lenders/collectors who were listed independently under the title “Mrs.”, and two women were listed together with their husbands.

The paring of American high society women with Chinese jades is hardly surprising. Chinese jades could be easily identified by them as jewelry and home decoration items. The jade-woman duet in the course of the exhibition began with a fanciful event presenting American debutants in the junior committee. The New York Times announced, “A private opening on Jan. 10 will be featured by the serving of Chinese tea and
delicacies. A committee of debutantes in Chinese costumes will assist a group of Chinese women at the tea tables.\footnote{New York Times, January 1, 1939.} While the *Art Digest* and *Parnassus* reviews presented images of some of the exhibition highlights, such as the exquisite jade ring of the Warring States period from Loo (Fig. 73), the *New York Times* report on the show featured the photo of Miss Mary Beecher Budd, one of the charming debutantes in the exhibition preview event (Fig. 74). This substitution suggested that an American young aristocratic woman working for a good cause was as Chinese jade, a symbol of beauty, preciousness, and virtue.

It is appropriate to pair the debut of young American women with the first all-jade public display that comprehensively traced the development of this art category in China. The *Parnassus* review noted, “The objects almost without exception, have never been shown before."\footnote{Parnassus, January 1939, 21.} The preface in the exhibition catalogue sent a tantalizing message to the reader, “The charitable purpose helps to loosen the locks that protect the treasure of the most discriminating collectors.” (Salmony 1939, 13) The debut of charming American women along with rare Chinese jades invited the viewer to discover the hidden, fresh, and beautiful. Surrounded by Chinese art objects, the American women in Chinese costume were performing Chineseness, which was closely associated with beauty, prestige, fashion, and philanthropy in the public consciousness in the 1930s and 1940s.

The glamorous events featuring beautiful women and artworks, however, formed a dramatic contrast to the anti-Japanese agenda of this exhibition. Mrs. Theodore
Roosevelt, Jr., in the opening remark stated, “Applied to China, every affirmation becomes a nail in the coffin of Japanese aggression, and every dollar given helps Chinese secure its Bill of Rights.” (Mrs. Theodore Roosevelt, Jr.1939, 7) An understanding of the China-U.S. relations in the 1930s sheds light on the cultural diplomacy behind the exhibition. From 1931 onwards, China was facing Japan’s escalating encroachment. Given America’s primary interest in its relations with Europe and Japan, assisting China was not a priority in the American foreign policy. The United States, though sympathetic to China, was for the most part “the passive observer of China’s sorrow” (Cohen 2000, 125). China’s disappointment with America’s response was voiced by Zhang Jiluan in 1938 in Dagongbao, “We, of course, are expecting from America moral and substantial help… But we must pay attention to the fact that, in fact, America has really given much help to Japan, at least for its economic and material convenience.” (Luo 1990, 271) In this context, the jade exhibition sponsored by Mrs. Roosevelt and Mme. Chiang Kai-shek may have served as a statement of the U.S.’s moral and financial support for China. This political message was enhanced by the inclusion of the emblem of the traditional friendship between China and U.S., a jade teapot with cover and cup on oval tray which was presented to Mrs. Theodore Roosevelt, Sr. as a gift from the Empress Dowager of China (Arden Gallery 1939, Cat. nos. 267, 268).

C. T. Loo was evidently part of the cultural diplomatic programs between China and the U.S. in the 1930s and the 1940s, given his connection to top-level officials in the Guomindang government. In May 1943 Loo launched a fund-raising exhibition for Chinese war orphans in his galleries, featuring Chinese-style landscapes, portraits, and
flower paintings by Alison Stilwell (Fig. 75). The title of the *New York Times* report, “Stilwell Art Show: Work of General’s Daughter on Exhibition Here,”^425 indicated that the artist was identified by the press primarily as the daughter of Lieut. Gen. Joseph W. Stilwell, who played a critical role in China-US relations in the 1940s. The exhibition, therefore, needed be viewed against the backdrop of international politics during World War II. In the 1940s China was brought into America’s global strategy. According to the 1941 Atlantic Charter issued by Franklin D. Roosevelt and Winston Churchill, “By subscribing to them, China would join the Anglo-American democracies and make the war against Japan part of the global struggle for democracy.” (Iriye 1986, 528-9) It is in this context that General Stilwell was sent to China under the order of President Roosevelt to serve as commander of U.S. forces in China and as Chief-of-Staff to Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek.

The idyllic landscapes, beautiful flowers, and charming ladies in Alison Stilwell’s work formed a stark contrast with the brutal battleground where her father was fighting. The photographs in the *New York Times* showed the general leading 400 American, British, and Chinese officers and enlisted men out of Burma during his retreat from the Japanese in 1942, and the General Stilwell as the stern pursuer of the enemy in 1944 (Fig. 76).^426 The exhibition of works by Alison Stilwell at Loo’s gallery suggested not only the contrasting but also the complementary role of the father and daughter. Joseph Stilwell was portrayed in the American press as a hero who respected Chinese people and culture,

“(General Stilwell) had spent many years in China and knew how to speak Chinese in several dialects, knew and admired the Chinese people and their fighting qualities”\(^{427}\).

Like her father, Alison Stilwell demonstrated her true understanding of Chinese culture and tradition in her painting, as the *New York Times* review of her painting exhibition remarked, “...(Alison Stilwell) has been painting since childhood, started working with Chinese artists at the age of 15, and her seven years of painting effort have been rewarded by a remarkable degree of mastery, especially in the ink brush examples of the traditional bamboo and flower pieces.”\(^{428}\) The message conveyed by this father-daughter team was that if General Stilwell was the military and political leader who protected Chinese people and their land, his daughter was their cultural guardian. As the *New York Times* stated, “She has not only quite remarkably compassed the technique and outward forms but has entered into the spirit as well, in this charming decorative works.”\(^{429}\) Americans, like the Stilwells, were capable not only of safeguarding the Chinese people and their country through military intervention, but also of penetrating their spiritual essence in art in a pleasing manner.

The much sensationalized feud between Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek and General Stilwell, and the political conflict between China and the United States added another layer to this exhibition. While Stilwell portrayed Chiang Kai-shhek as a “stubborn,

\(^{427}\) Ibid. Alison Stilwell mentioned that “The fact that I was born in Peking and spent well over half of the first two decades of my life in China has given me a strong feeling of kinship with the people and culture of that country.” (Stilwell 1968, 13) She studied Chinese painting under Prince Pu Ru. She also noted that her father Joseph Stilwell was an art lover (Stilwell 1968, 18).


\(^{429}\) Ibid.
ignorant, prejudiced, conceited despot”, who was concerned more with his personal power than fighting the Japanese (Van de Ven 2003, 4; quoted from the Papers of George Catlett Marshall III, 157), Chiang criticized Stillwell for his arrogance and lack of fighting experience. In 1944 Stilwell was dramatically recalled from duties in China as “a case of clashing personalities”.430 Beneath the surface of their personal conflict was the deep-rooted tension and mistrust between US and China over the issues of leadership and aid (Cohen 2000, 127).

It is at this critical moment in Sino-American relations that Loo staged the exhibition of works by General Stilwell’s daughter. The political undertone of the exhibition was enhanced by its opening during Mme. Chiang Kai-shek’s visit to the U.S. In early 1943, Mme. Chiang arrived in the United States on a diplomatic mission to drum up moral, financial, and military support for the Chinese Nationalist government. The Wellesley-educated Mme. Chiang with her flashy good looks and fluent English lavished her charm on the American people. Her diplomatic role was illustrated by Wendell Willkie, the American politician who visited China, “…with wit and charm, a generous and understanding heart, a gracious and a beautiful manner and appearance, and a burning conviction… Madame would be a perfect ambassador…we would listen to her as to no one else.’” (Tuchman 1971, 334-5) The photo with Mme Chiang Kai-shek’s holding her husband and General Stilwell clearly illustrates her mediating role in the uneasy interpersonal and international relations (Fig. 77). Like a charming woman, Chinese art could be used as a political tool in the international arena, as C. T. Loo stated, Chinese

works of art “go around the World as silent ambassadors, enabling other people to understand the great culture of the Chinese and love of China” (Loo 1950, 3). In this light, the exhibition of Alison Stilwell’s Chinese paintings, like Mme. Chiang Kai-shek’s American tour, might have added a softening tone to the tense atmosphere between her father and Chiang Kai-shek, between the U.S. and China.

The spectacle of art and women that Loo staged was made into a malleable tool that served a variety of purposes, sometimes, all at once. The spectacle served to arouse the American viewers’ desire to possess the eroticized Chinese art commodities. In the masculine culture of warfare and politics, it was instrumental to US-China cultural diplomacy. The pleasurable and philanthropic sheen on the spectacle, however, did not alter the subordinate and feminized position of Chinese art and nation in the United States. As the U.S. rose in the twentieth century as the world’s leader, collecting Chinese art became part of its capitalist and cultural imperialist project; Chinese art was assembled and consumed by and for Americans. This ideology was illustrated by Eugene Meyer’s comment on Charles L. Freer’s role in building a Chinese art collection for the nation, “China seems to be picking the finest treasures to lay in your lap. She can do nothing better with them, for your collection, when it is ready to be viewed by the thousands who will come to enjoy it and to study, will do more to bring about a sympathetic understanding between the Occident and the Orient than any number of speeches of a political character.”

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431 E. Meyer to C.L. Freer, August 15, 1919, CLFP-FGA.
The Mobile and Metamorphic

The site where an object was displayed was also crucial to the construction of spectacle. Compared to a museum’s usual presentation of its permanent collection, C. T. Loo’s display was distinguished by its mobility largely due to the object’s frequent travel and its comparatively brief presence in Loo’s collection. Objects were shown in variety of locations and venues. Loo was actively involved in display activities not only in the U.S., but also in Europe. Objects were shown in his own galleries, including the public area, the backroom, and storage. When it was on loan or sold, the object entered auction houses, galleries, museums, or collectors’ homes and offices. When objects were mediated and reproduced, the circulation of images created new dimensions and channels of display. Loo ingeniously turned all these spaces into his own showrooms.

The timing and selection of site were crucial to Loo’s construction of spectacles. He often carefully selected occasions and locations to showcase his collection. For example, C. T. Loo not only had a strong presence in the 1935-6 International Exhibition of Chinese Art in London, but also organized a satellite sale/exhibition at John Sparks in London. The resonance in category and theme between these two shows was noted by the review, “an extensive and varied collection of fine products in bronze, pottery and porcelain, many of which vie in importance with those now at Burlington House”. In 432 Like Loo, the legendary art dealer Joseph Duveen transformed all the places he stayed in his itinerary into small-scale art galleries (Behrman 1951). 433 It was a common practice that dealers would launch satellite shows in conjunction with major exhibitions. 434 “Chinese Art in Mount Street,” Connoisseur, Vol. 97, No. 413 (January, 1936): 48.
this way, Loo turned this international pageant into an advertisement for his own exhibition/sale activities.

Loo was aware that prominent museums with their power and authority, were ideal stages that he could utilize to showcase his merchandises. Loo’s proposal to display a prominent collection of paintings at the MFA in 1947 offers a case in point. In response to Tomita’s wish to visit Loo’s gallery in New York, Loo suggested that he could, instead, visit Boston and bring those paintings to show in the museum because “…there are so many persons coming to our Gallery every day, and they will surely notice that I am showing you this collection (which I want to keep secret for the time being)…”\textsuperscript{435} There was probably another motivation behind Loo’s offer, as Loo mentioned, “…it would be more satisfactory if you could receive me either on Sunday the 14 or Monday the 15, and I would bring you the whole collection (about 20 paintings) and if you could have a gallery and hang the paintings on the wall together, then we can see them and in fact you could keep them a few days, as long as no other persons-outside the Museum-would see them.”\textsuperscript{436} When some twenty treasured Chinese paintings were all hung in the museum gallery, even it lasted only for a few days, it became an impressive special exhibition.

Loo’s intention to use museum space to immortalize his showmanship was illustrated by his gift of the large sixth-century stone head of a Bodhisattva to the Metropolitan

\textsuperscript{436} C. T. Loo to K. Tomita November 24, 1947, folder C. T. Loo, box: I to L, 1936-1947, AAOA-MFA.
Museum of Art toward the end of his career (Met 51.52) (Fig. 78). Loo stated in his offer, “If your committee deems it important enough to accept it, as gift, then I have a request to make that within the forthcoming twenty years, this head should be exhibited. If some day, in the future, for reasons unpredictable to-day, your Museum had to store this head away in a basement, then your Institution should, at that time, turn it over to some other Museum, where it would be shown to the Public.”

Loo was aware that the home and office of celebrities like John D. Rockefeller Jr. with their impressive display of art treasures, were art galleries and centers of public attention. The view of John D. Rockefeller, Jr.’s home shows that Chinese Ming and Qing porcelains were arranged in a luxurious setting in his family gallery (Fig. 79). Loo marveled at Rockefeller’s collection and the installation, “…it was certainly breathless to see the wonders of your collection, not only the exceptional quality and rarity of your collection but also the installation.”

Loo turned Rockefeller’s family gallery into his showroom by constantly having Chinese antiquities delivered to his home, and by bringing guests to visit his family

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437 See C. T. Loo and Company 1940, Cat, no. 27, pl. XX,
438 Extract from C. T. Loo’s letter to Francis Henry Taylor, February 7, 1951, folder Loo, C.T. L. 871, MetA.
439 Dealers capitalized on the media sensations that the celebrity’s art acquisitions created. *Art News*, for example, in the front page announced JDR Jr.’s recent acquisition of two of the most important sculptures from the famous Gustave Dreyfus collection for over $700,000 from Duveen Brothers. (“Two of Dreyfus Treasures go to J.D. Rockefeller, Jr.,” *Art News*, February 20, 1932) After the release of the information in the press, Duveen wrote to JDR Jr., “The New York Times, Herald Tribune, and numerous magazines phoned us for verification of the Art News’ statement…” (Joseph Duveen to JDR Jr, March 2, 1932, folder 1325, Duveen Brothers-Dreyfus Collection, 1930-1951, box 133, OMR-RAC).
440 C. T. Loo to JDR Jr. June 14, 1945, folder 106, C. T. Loo 1945-1951, box 11, OMR-RAC.
gallery. Loo knew that no advertisement could be as effective as placing his objects at Rockefeller’s home, which were visited by all kinds of celebrities, who could potentially become Loo’s clients. In 1929, Loo wrote to Rockefeller, “The honor of having placed some of my things in your famous collection is worth more to me than the material question, and the pleasure it will afford me to know that some of my objects are in your house has decided me to gladly accept your kind offer.” Loo’s intention was clearly indicated by the same letter in which Loo asked Rockefeller whether he could bring his buyer to visit his family gallery.

It is noteworthy that Loo’s exhibition events had an ephemeral nature, and their direct impact could only be felt by visitors. Loo’s exhibitions usually lasted for a brief period of time, ranging from a few days to a month. The number of visitors was also limited. The use of photography, printed media and other reproduction technology created lasting and pervasive display venues for Loo’s business. Thousands of well-organized negatives and photographs made mostly in the 1930s and 1940s in the Frank Caro Archive attest to Loo’s heavy reliance on the production and dissemination of images. In this way, Loo turned photographs, newspapers, magazines, catalogues, and books into his virtual galleries. The image of the kneeling bronze figure (Minn. 50.46.114), for example, appeared in a variety of media and places. It was photographed by Loo, and later published in the Bulletin of the Minneapolis Institute of Arts. The image of this statue was also included in *A Catalogue of the Chinese Bronzes in the Alfred F. Pillsbury*

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441 C. T. Loo to JDR Jr, December 18, 1929, folder 1370, C. T. Loo 1916-1949, box 137, OMR-RAC.
442 Ibid.
Collection (Karlgren 1952, 212-3, no. 96, pl. 110-1) and in Sueji Umehara’s Rakuyō Kinsō kobo shūei, a monograph on the archaeological finds in Jincun, Luoyang. The bronze figure was also interestingly represented in Wilma Prezzi’s oil painting and shown in her 1947 painting exhibition. The reproduction of her painting in the exhibition catalogue became the representation of a representation (Prezzi 1947, Cat. no.3, pl. 4) (Fig. 80). The beauty of Loo’s virtual galleries is that they lasted and multiplied. Half a century after Loo’s death, thousands of images that Loo produced in various places bear vivid testimony to his showmanship.

**The Dramatic**

The term “dramatic” signals the staged quality of Loo’s display. In this sense, Loo can be likened to a theatre director in charge of stagecraft. Like a play, Loo’s presentation has an illusory nature, which involved a great deal of manipulation. Some objects in Loo’s collection were carefully presented or installed in certain ways to make them appear more impressive. In response to the MFA curator K. Tomita’s inquiry about a stone head illustrated in the 1941 sale catalogue *Exhibition of Chinese Arts*, Loo wrote, “I am afraid this head will not be in the quality you expect to have; it seems that the photograph gives a better effect than the object itself, unless this head finds a proper lighting, so I hesitate to send it to you but if you insist to see it, we will send it to you as you request.”

443 The large-size image of the bronze mask that appeared in Loo’s advertisement in *Parnassus* would have made it hard to believe that the actual height of the mask is only 4 5/16

443 C. T. Loo to K. Tomita, November, 1941, folder C. T. Loo, box: I to L, 1936-1947, AAOA-MFA.
In 1917 Loo informed J.E. Lodge of the availability of two large stone heads about 33 inches high and 27 inches wide, “They look very grand as I have the marble stands made for them now. The total height is about 50 inches. They are really the largest heads that have ever come out from China.” Loo’s stagecraft was also demonstrated in his instruction to the RISD director G. Washburn on how to appropriately install a stone sculpture piece about eleven to twelve feet in height and weighing about 9 tons, reportedly coming from the vicinity of Yungang. Loo noted, “the photograph does not do justice to the beauty of this stella (sic) because it was taken too high. A figure of this size ought to be lift up at least four or five feet from the ground, then one can have a proper idea of its beauty”.

Loo’s dramaturgy was also manifested in his interpretative approach to grouping of objects in the display. The objects that came to Loo’s hand had been taken out of their original sites and contexts, or separated from other objects in their original group. In a sense, they were “dead”. Loo faced the task of how to “revive” and make sense of them. One effective way was to create new display contexts and new narratives by meaningful groupings. In Loo’s 1941-2 sale catalogue, a pair of terra cotta figures, dated to the Wei dynasty, were placed to flank a larger Tang terra cotta figure. This arrangement suggested that three figures with their postures and open arms were engaged in a lively dance (C. T. Loo and Company 1941a, Cat. no. 421-2) (Fig. 81). The constructed nature of Loo’s objects is evident in this display.

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445 C. T. Loo to J.E. Lodge, October 6, and12, 1917, folder: Lai-Yuan Co., box: Unofficial Correspondence L, 1910-1922, AAOA-MFA.
446 C. T. Loo to G. Washburn, March 9, 1949, C. T. Loo & Co. folder 1945-1949, RISDA.
spectacle was further illustrated by Wilma Prezzi’s paintings depicting Loo’s objects. Prezzi was recognized as a faithful presenter of Chinese antiquities because of her meticulous concern for surface, texture, and color, as Pearl Buck noted, “Here realism is wanted. The objects are themselves highest art, and must be faithfully presented.” (Buck 1945, Introduction) The sharp sense of reality and immediacy in her works, however, was deceiving. Through “her grouping of these objects” and “choice of backgrounds” (Buck 1945, Introduction), her painting becomes a theatre to stage new narratives of ancient Chinese objects. Wilma Prezzi’s meaningful regrouping of objects from different periods and places imbued the painting with a mysterious and ritualistic atmosphere. The New York Times review of the 1947 exhibition of her works noticed that the special arrangement of a group of bronzes of the Shang period from the Pillsbury collection in the Minneapolis Institute is “centered around an anthropomorphic figure kneeling in an attitude of worship” (Knox 1947) (Fig.80). The description of this painting in the catalogue of her painting exhibition, however, reveals the staged nature of this ritualistic scene (Prezzi 1947, Cat. no. 3, pl. 4). In this painting, Prezzi assembled various objects from different periods of time. The bronze wine beaker, for example, was dated to the Shang dynasty (fifteenth-twelfth century BCE), and the central bronze figure, fifth century BCE.

Loo’s promotion of Prezzi’s works was an ingenious market gambit. Her painting in oil, which fits comfortably into the Western categorization of art, appealed to a variety of audiences. They were collected by museums, galleries as well as private collectors. For buyers who did not collect Chinese art, it could offer a comparatively inexpensive
substitute for real objects, as Pearl Buck notes, “the pieces which Miss Prezzi paints are the few and the rare ones. They are in museums and private collections. Most of us cannot own them. But we can look at them on these canvases, and see them in their complete perfection” (Buck 1945, Introduction). For collectors of Chinese antiquities, her works were able to serve as an animated backdrop for the immobile objects. For Loo, Prezzi’s paintings of Chinese antiquities were not only merchandises themselves, but also fanciful advertisements for his antique business. In this light, Loo turned the display of Wilma’s paintings into an exhibition within an exhibition, a spectacle within a spectacle.

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447 There is a handwritten note on the cover of an copy of the 1945 painting catalogue of the exhibition at the M. H. DeYoung Memorial Museum in San Francisco, “Prices range from $900.00 to $1500.00”.
CONCLUSION: C. T. LOO, HERO OR VILLAIN?

C. T. Loo’s role in the circulation and reception of Chinese art was complex. In China Loo has been condemned for his depletion of Chinese art patrimony. In sharp contrast, Loo’s close friends and clients, Richard E. Fuller and Edward von der Heydt, viewed him as a cultural hero and a good person. Fuller stated, “His many friends will cherish his memory and generations to come should be most grateful to him for his initiative and good taste in taking advantage of unique and fleeting opportunities…In purchasing these treasures on the open market he channeled them into the great private and public collections of the West where they will be preserved for posterity.” (Fuller, 1958:8)

Heydt remarked, “C. T. Loo was a real connoisseur, a good man and a reliable friend. I knew him for more than 30 years, and I shall never forget him, nor shall I ever find his like again.” (Heydt 1957,186)

Through an examination of Loo’s business operations, his negotiation of Chinese art knowledge, and his display strategies, this dissertation concludes that on the one hand, C. T. Loo, as a network builder, cultural mediator, and showman, played a significant role in the collection, study, and display of Chinese art in America in the first half of the twentieth century. Loo’s operations were characterized by border-crossing and networking. Acting as a bridge between the East and the West, between ancient objects and modern society, between the market, the museum world, and academia, Loo capitalized on the boundaries between different territories, concepts, and roles, all in response to changing circumstances. As he brought Chinese objects through various social and cultural zones across Asia, Europe, and America, these objects metamorphosed
into merchandises, archaeological and anthropological artifacts, emblems of beauty and prestige, and tokens of history and nationalism. He constantly switched his identity between being a Chinese, French, and American, and shifted his roles as merchant, collector, connoisseur, publisher, exhibition organizer, and patron of art. In close contact with the most important art dealers, collectors, museum professionals, and scholars over the world, Loo was an active agent in the international network that shaped Chinese art in America in the first half of the twentieth century. In his dealing, different roles, forces, and concepts were employed as fluid and complementary categories to increase the value of an object and to broaden the base of collectors and scholars of Chinese art in America.

On the other hand, Loo’s dealing catered to America’s imperialist and capitalist ideologies. Though he often presented Chinese art as a timeless and universal concept in America, Chinese art was defined by the socio-political, economic, and cultural boundaries. Chinese art objects were collected to articulate America’s imperialist power in the international arena, to express its anti-modern sentiment, to increase the prestige of American museums and collectors, and to beautify the homes of the urban bourgeoisie. Loo’s operations were based on the logic that Chinese antiquities, which China was no longer able to preserve and appreciate, were to be collected and consumed by and for the rich and the powerful in modern America.

This dissertation, which delves into Loo’s career, holds broader theoretical and practical implications for curators, scholars, cultural policymakers, and the general public. The kaleidoscopic and dynamic nature of his world requires us to look beyond institutional, cultural, and disciplinary boundaries to create a new ground for the study of
Chinese art. This dissertation sheds light not only on the historical formation of Chinese art collections in America, but also on the circulation and reception of Chinese art objects. It is true that Loo, as a crucial agent in the international transfer of cultural properties, had created many complicated political, ethical, and legal issues. It is also true that research on him affords a significant opportunity to promote international cooperation and exchanges in the field Chinese art. I hope this dissertation will serve as a springboard to broaden our understanding of Chinese art globally.
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(\url{http://www.metmuseum.org/TOAH/images/hb/hb_17.170.1.jpg}).

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{shakyamuni_buddha_descending_the_mountain}
\caption{Shakyamuni Buddha descending the mountain (Buddha under the Mango Tree, Unidentified artist, Chinese, Formerly attributed to Chen Yongzhi (Chinese, early 11th century), Ming dynasty, about 16th century, Ink, color, and gold on paper, 210.5 x 71 cm (82 7/8 x 27 15/16 in.) Keith McLeod Fund MFA 56.256 (MFA, TMS).}
\end{figure}
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Figure 52. Throne Room-Forbidden City, Photography by Le Munyon (Conantz 1923, 60).

Figure 53a. “Mission Completed, A Navy Douglas ‘Dauntless’ banking into formation for the return to its base, floating somewhere in the Pacific.” (Commander Edward J. Steichen 1944-45, 110).
Figure 53b. First page of Hans Huth’s “Chinoiserie: A True and Faithful Account Exposition of the Many-field Influence of the East upon the West in the 17th, 18th, and 19th Centuries, Relating the Vagaries and Fashions of the ‘Chinese Taste’.” (Huth 1944-45, 111).
Figure 54. Buddha room in Mr. and Mrs. John D. Rockefeller’s home (Altman 2006, 79).

Figure 55. “Well earned repose, Painting on paper in black and white of a black bird standing on its right foot with its head hiding under its wing. By Pa-Ta-Shan-jen(nom de plune of Ch’u Tu). Early 17th century. Size without frame, h. 6 ins, w. 5 ½ ins.” (C. T. Loo and Company 1938, Cat.no.1).
Figure 56. “East and West Eight Centuries Apart: Flying figures, northern Sung fresco, about 1100 A.D., at the Loo Gallery. ‘Beached Wood,’ By William Brice in the one-man show at the Downtown Gallery.” (Devree, 1949)
Figure 57a. The ge dish (C. T. Loo’s advertisement, Art News, May 1947).

Figure 57b. “Cover: Four of the new fabrics make an overture to the latest of our ART INTO LIVING series-DAPERY FABRICS 1947, page 31: boldly abstracted figures by
Angelo Testa enliven Cohama’s spun rayon twill weave, $4.50 (upper left): Wool and cotton damask lends textural variation to Schumacher’s staccato version of a traditional plaid, $9.95 (upper right); small eagle silhouette in well-spaced repeats on cotton won second prize for Milton Weiner in the Brunschwig & Fils-Museum of Modern Art competition, $2.95 (lower left); link pattern in modern textured damask of slub (or rough) cotton and silk by Scalamandre, $15.75 (lower right).” (Art News. Vol. XLV, No. 13, March 1947, Cover and 5).

Figure 58a. Seated luohan, Liao dynasty (907–1125), ca. 1000, Yixian, Hebei Province, China, Earthenware with three-color (sancai) glaze; H. 41 1/4 in. (104.8 cm), Frederick C. Hewitt Fund, Met 21.76 (http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/ho/06/eac/hod_21.76.htm).
Figure 58b. Sculpture by Beniamino Bufano.

Figure 59. The Guanyin statue in Mr. and Mrs. Ira Haupt’s New York apartment (A.B.L.1947, 37).
Figure 60. A Group of Song and Yuan Ceramics in C. T. Loo 1941-2 Sale catalogue (C. T. Loo 1941-2, No. 588-600).

Figure 61. The Met gallery installation view with C. T. Loo’s gift of the stone hand on the left (Met. 30.81) (MM 19633, January 1949, MetA).
Figure 62. Charles Cutis Harrison Hall, UPM (Jayne 1941, 17).

Figure 63. The Amitabha Buddha statue in the International Exhibition of Chinese Art in London, 1935-6 (Gray 1985-6).
Figure 64. The Amitabha Buddha statue currently in the British Museum.

Figure 65. Bronze Mirror with Jade and Glass Décor, Reportedly from Jincun, Luoyang, Diameter 122 mm, weight 412 g., Sackler 1943.50.157, Bronze disk decorated with glass beads, and jade disks (Loehr 1975, 359, Cat.no. 524).
Figure 66. *Bronze Vessel (Bianhu)*, Eastern Zhou (770-221 B.C.E.), ca. 300-250 B.C.E., Bronze inlaid with silver (31.1 x 30.5 x 11.7 cm) 12 1/2 x 12 x 4 5/8 in. Gift of Charles Lang Freer, F1915.103 a-b.

Figure 67. “TWO WINGED CRYPHONS OR CHIMERAS. Exhibited in the Rockhill Nelson Museum, Kansas City, Messrs. C. T. Loo and Co., Paris” (Siren 1937-8, fig.13, pl.III).
Figure 68. Painting and ceramic gallery installation view, circa 1923, Galleries XVIII & XIX, FGA (“H 484 B Gallery XVIII looking north”, Accession 02-082, FGA, Photographs, 1916-1992, SI).
Figure 69. “The Wonderful Girl of Ho-kien 河间, Painted by Luh Tan-wei 陆探微, Tsin 晋 Dynasty, A.D. 265-419, Size: ---19 ¾ ins. by 37 ½ ins.” (Kwen 1916, Cat. no. 1).
Figure 70. Marble Bodhisattvas from Ting Chou, dated the end of 6th century ACE (C. T. Loo and Company 1941a, Cat. no. 942).
Figure 72. “Jade, Young woman wearing several pieces of jewel jade. Jeweled white jade box on table, 18th Century. Ivory figurine of Lohan and painting of 18th Century. White lacquer Ming table, 16th Century.” (Prezzi 1947, Cat. No. 15, pl. 7).
Figure 73. Open Work Pi of Gray Green Jade IV Century BC, lent by C. T. Loo to the current exhibition at the Arden Galleries (Parnassus, (January, 1939): 29; Arden Gallery 1939, Cat. no. 153).

Figure 74. Miss Mary Beecher Budd (New York Times, January 1, 1939).
Figure 75. Installation view of the 1943 Exhibition of Painting by Alison Stilwell at C. T. Loo Galleries (Negative, FCA).

Figure 76. General Stilwell (New York Times, October 13, 1946).
Figure 77. “Generalissimo and Madam Chiang Kai-shek with Stilwell at Maymyo, April 1942 (U.S. Army Photographs)” (Tuchman 1970, illustration between pp. 430-1).

Figure 78. “Head of a Bodhisattva, 6th century, Stone, Gift of C. T. Loo, 1951, 51.52” (Met 51.52) (Author’s photograph, 2006).
Figure 79. “Qing dynasty ceramics in the drawing room of the John D. Rockefeller, Jr. home at 10 West 54th Street, New York, NY, 1936” (Altman 2006, 70).

Figure 80. “Kneeling Bronze Statue, And ritual vessels, Shang and Chou Dynasties, The statue is probably an attendant. Similar statues known, were either bearers or holders of
gifts. Found in a Royal Tomb in Chin Tsun, near Loyan in Honan Province, 5th Century B.C.; Bronze Ting and cover, food vessels on three feet. Late Chou, 5th to 3rd Century B.C.; Bronze Ku, wine beaker. Shang Dynasty, 15th to 12th Century B.C.; Curled dragon, foot of a lamp. The coupe, usually fitted on the top of the head, has been lost. Han period: 206-220 A.D.” (Prezzi 1947, No.3, pl.4).

Figure 81. “Pair of Terra Cotta Dancing Boys, Wei, 386-581 A.D. Height 9 ¾ inches; Terra Cotta Actor, Tang 618-907 A.D. Height 14 ¼ inches” (C. T. Loo 1941-2, No. 421-422).
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