

ASIAN GALLERY

*featuring the
Nancy J. Powell Collection*

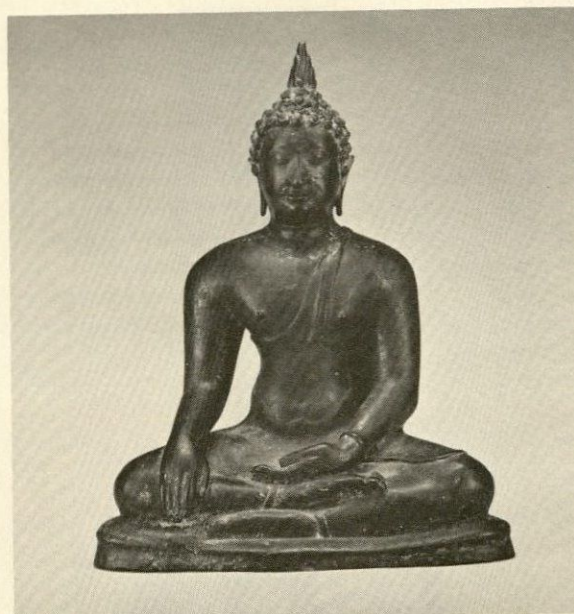


*East Asian standing Guanyin, date unknown, gilded bronze, h: 28",
Collection Nancy J. Powell.*

**UNIVERSITY ART MUSEUM
BINGHAMTON UNIVERSITY**



Chinese seated figure of Guanyin, late 18th-early 19th century, blanc de chine porcelain, h: 15 1/2", Collection Nancy J. Powell.



Thai seated Buddha, 13th-15th century, bronze, h: 11", Collection Nancy J. Powell.

Dragons chasing pearls, Daoist Immortals, Buddhist sages—these intriguing characters populate vases, sculptures, scrolls, textiles, and household furnishings in the splendid collection presented to the Binghamton University Art Museum by Nancy J. Powell. The Asian Gallery brings to Binghamton University's campus and community beautifully preserved objects from many Asian countries in a wide variety of techniques, for the education and enrichment of all the University's students and friends.

The Asian Gallery presents figures and subjects of the main Asian religions in many media. Buddha is represented in several metal works. The earliest sculpture, which is especially fine, is the bronze Buddha from Thailand, seated in meditation, with the right hand reaching down in the "calling

the earth to witness" pose. The broad shoulders, elongated features, and the flame finial are all representative of the Sukhothai period (13th-15th centuries).

The standing gilded bronze Bodhisattva figure, holding the lotus staff, represents the "savior" figure of Buddhist teaching. Guanyin, as he is known in China, came to be feminized in appearance during the Tang dynasty (618-907), and is today called the "Goddess of Mercy." Her serenity is captured in the Qing *blanc de chine* figure seated on the lotus stand and in the exquisite ivory carving of the figure seated on an elephant from the same period. The Japanese standing figure, called Kannon in that language, is made from the finely crackled stoneware known as Satsuma. The brocaded robe is richly colored and intricately patterned with flowers and the phoenix, the symbol for rebirth.

Chinese Daoism, advocating a life of naturalness,



Chinese seated Guanyin, 19th century (inscribed "Qianlong"), ivory, h: 21", Collection Nancy J. Powell.



Japanese standing Kannon, c.1870 (inscribed "Great Japan"). Satsuma pottery, h: 17 1/2", Collection Nancy J. Powell.

simplicity, and harmony, is represented in the exhibition by the figure of Wei-tuo, here carved in marble, depicted with a lute, and seated on the mythical beast called the kylin; by the yin-yang symbol of harmony and balance depicted on the eighteenth century scroll with the old couple consulting Daoist Immortals; and by the silk wall hanging embroidered with the "Hundred Antiquities," symbolizing long life and good fortune.

Hinduism is represented in the collection by the bronze statue of Shiva Nataraja, the Indian god Shiva in his guise as "Lord of the Cosmic Dance." The god, traditionally known as the "destroyer," also represents, in this image, rebirth and the triumph over evil and death, symbolized by the halo of fire which surrounds him and by the figure of the demon

being crushed under his foot.

The Asian Gallery contains objects primarily from the last great flowering of Chinese art under the Qing dynasty (1644-1912), which was founded by the Manchus, foreign rulers who conquered China in the mid-seventeenth century, and then held sway over a vast empire of satellite states. The imperial palaces of the Qing dynasty were luxurious beyond imagination. Most of the objects date from the mid-eighteenth century to the end of the dynasty in 1911. It was a period of great political and social upheaval in China and yet also a time in which aesthetic taste was considered essential to a person of education and culture.

The Asian Gallery presents examples of most media used in China. Advanced techniques and technologies, developed in China over centuries, helped to create objects of the finest materials and the most beautiful shapes and decoration. Cinnabar lacquer, a natural tree sap dyed a



Chinese seated Wei-tuo, late 18th century, marble, h: 16 3/4", Collection Nancy J. Powell.

Chinese temple jar with stand, late 18th-early 19th century, cinnabar lacquer, h: 17", Collection Nancy J. Powell.



vermilion red, applied to a form in dozens, sometimes hundreds of layers, dried, and then elaborately carved with figures and distinct types of flora; cloisonne enamels, with thin copper strips welded to the surface of an object in amazingly detailed patterns, then filled with enamels and fired, often many times, until the translucent colors completely covered the surface; ivory carvings of unparalleled dexterity, where a single cylindrical piece is transformed into a natural, quite different form, or becomes a chain of interconnecting rings, never to be separated; sparkling white *blanc de chine* porcelain, considered the most perfect ceramic by the Chinese, with its purified clay and shiny transparent glaze. All of these are representative of the materials, objects and taste of the late Qing period.

Qing ceramics are often of striking appearance, and differ from earlier Chinese wares in the potters' daring search for new color possibilities. Production of overglaze enamel polychrome wares became the major activity of the

LECTURE SERIES

"Art, Craft and Class in Pre-Modern China and Japan"

John Chaffee, Professor, History Department

Tuesday, April 4, 1995, 7 pm

"Poetry and Painting: The Unity of Verbal and Visual Imagery in Chinese Art"

Zu-Yan Chen, Professor, Department of German, Russian, East Asian Languages

Tuesday, April 11, 1995, 7 pm

"Objects of Virtue: The Asian Collection of the University Art Museum of Binghamton"

Diane Graham, PhD candidate, Art History Department

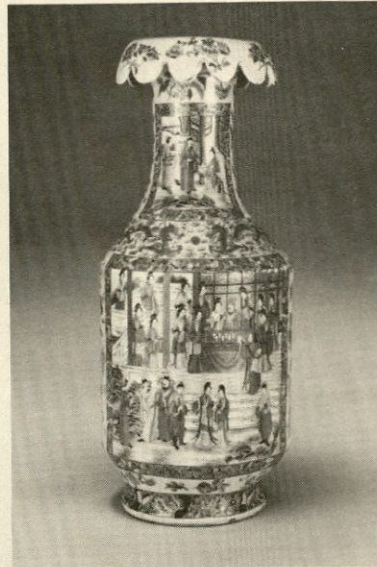
Tuesday, April 18, 1995, 7 pm

The lectures will be held in the University Art Museum, Fine Arts Building, followed by receptions in the Asian Gallery.



Chinese incense burner, 19th century, cloisonné, h: 16¾", Collection Nancy J. Powell.

Chinese vase, c.1840, famille rose porcelain, h: 24", Collection Nancy J. Powell.



imperial kilns at Jingdezhen. These ceramics were highly regarded by European collectors, and continue to be identified by the categories assigned to them by eighteenth-century French connoisseurs.

The four groups, examples of which can be viewed in the Asian Gallery, are identified by the predominating color of the overlay enamels. Perhaps most familiar is the *famille rose*, called "foreign color" by the Chinese because of its pink color, derived from a gold alloy, and introduced from Europe about 1720. Examples include a pair of rare scallop-edged vases dated to the mid-nineteenth century. The delicacy of the painting and the addition of gilt highlighting mark these pieces as the best of their type. Court scenes from a fourth-century literary work, *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, are depicted on their surface, surrounded by an all-over pattern known as the *mille fleurs* or "thousand flowers." The large cobalt-blue covered jar, dated to the Qianlong era, is decorated with leaf-shaped medallions which are filled with pink chrysanthemums.

Famille noire is represented by a fine pair of vases from the Kangxi era (1662-1722). The three colors of green, yellow, and manganese purple, outlined by the identifying glossy black, are more in keeping with the colors associated with the preceding Ming Dynasty (1368-1644). The translucent enamels giving the impression of watercolors are typical of this earlier period of the Qing Dynasty, as is the bird-and-flower motif employing trees, rocks, and animals. The other two categories, *famille verte* and *famille jaune*, are also represented in the collection.

Underglaze cobalt blue decorated wares were first made in China during the Yuan Dynasty (1280-1368). Blue and white ware continued to be popular both in China and abroad throughout both the Ming and the Qing Dynasties. It was a favorite export ware during the days of the great China clipper ships from Europe and the United States, and



Chinese vase, 18th century, (inscribed "Kangxi"), famille noire enamel on biscuit porcelain, h: 18", Collection Nancy J. Powell.



*Chinese platter, c.1840, Nanking export porcelain, 17 3/4" x 14 3/4",
Collection Nancy J. Powell.*

was often commissioned for table ware in the United States. An example of this in the collection is a platter decorated with a landscape scene and the Fitzhugh border pattern, named for the British owners of the original service.

The cultivation and weaving of silk has been known in China since at least the eleventh century BC. Like the knowledge of making porcelain, silk manufacturing was kept a secret by the Chinese as long as possible. The embroidered silk fabrics in the Museum's collection are of very fine quality. Many of these, along with other Chinese objects, were donated to the Museum in 1966 by Caroline M. Horne in memory of her husband, the Reverend Rodney Horne, who collected them in Shanghai in the 1930s. An eighteenth-century hanging shows a Lamaist monk, holding an ambrosia bottle with the elixir of life, as the intermediary between the Buddhas above and the worshippers below. The vibrant red lady's court robe of the Qing Dynasty is embroidered with orchids for longevity and made of lightweight silk gauze for summer use.

The construction of the Asian Gallery facility was made possible by a grant from the President's Innovation Fund and the generosity of the Binghamton University Foundation. The opening exhibition was organized by Lucie Nelson, curator of the University Art Museum, who wishes to thank her colleagues for their enthusiastic assistance, especially John Chaffee and Zu-Yan Chen from the Asian and Asian American Studies Program, and Diane Graham of the Department of Art History.



*Chinese lady's court robe, 19th century, embroidered silk, h: 53",
Collection Rodney Horne.*