

出國報告(出國類別:發表論文)

中國與美國美術館裡的中國藝術

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China and Chinese Art in American Museums

摘要

This is a report about my trip to Honolulu, Hawaii from April 1st-6th to present a paper at the 2011 Joint Conference of the Association for Asian Studies and the International Convention of Asia Scholars. Included in the addendum is a copy of the paper.

I—Purpose(目的)

On April 1, 2011, I presented a paper at the 2011 Joint Conference of the Association for Asian Studies (AAS) and the International Convention of Asia Scholars (ICAS), held in Honolulu, Hawaii. My paper, entitled “China and Chinese Art in American Museums at the Turn of the Twentieth-Century” was part of the panel on “Choosing Paintings for American Museums in the Early Twentieth Century.” The subject I presented was part of my on-going research project on Chinese art in American museums. The purpose of my participation in the panel was two-fold. It was to present a progress report of my research so far. It also enabled me to exchange ideas with other scholars working on the same subject matter. I believe I accomplished these goals. I found it very productive to have taken part in a panel with members working on related subject. We were able to exchange ideas at the initial stage of proposing the panel to the conference committee. And at the conference we all felt a sense of achievement in seeing how our ideas fitted so well into a coherent theme. Both the discussants expressed the significance of our subject. The positive response to our panel was demonstrated by a large audience and lively discussion at the end.

II—Process(過程)

Lara Netting, the organizer of the panel first approached me almost a year ago. At the time she was a fellow at the Asia Society Museum in New York City. (She will be at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City this coming fall.) She had also contacted Katharine Burnett of University of California, Davis and Ingrid Larsen, an independent scholar. All of us are working on aspects of Chinese art in American museums. After several emails, we came up with a proposal for our panel. As follows is the final description of our panel:

Choosing Chinese Paintings for American Museums in the Early Twentieth Century

This panel will examine Chinese painting acquisitions by American museums in the

opening decades of the twentieth century, showing how American political and economic activity, and travel in late Qing China created personal relationships that made the subsequent exchange of art both possible and attractive. The numerous paintings purchased by the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the University Museum in Philadelphia, and the Cleveland Museum of Art in the 1910s have been little studied, and this panel will demonstrate that museum officers sought traditional paintings from China as part of the same project that built and refined their Western collections. Contemporary Chinese art was, by contrast, ignored in the United States at this time. The participating historians and art historians will examine the dealers/collectors—the Americans Charles Freer and John Ferguson, Shanghai-based Pang Yuanji, and a number of their Chinese and Manchu associates—who were key players in an emerging international market for Chinese art. We will also look at the personal influence of Charles Freer, the preeminent early collector of Asian Art in the United States and consider the wide-rippling effects of the 1911 revolution, and the greater cultural upheaval of which it was part, on the exchange of art between China and the United States. Now in 2011, when traditional and contemporary Chinese art are widely appreciated, it is timely to revisit the first wave of American enthusiasm for Chinese painting, focusing new attention on seldom seen works, and the men who selected, marketed, and admired these paintings.

The descriptions of our individual papers are as follows.

1. *Agnes and the General: Correspondence between Agnes E. Meyer and Charles Lang Freer*, Ingrid Larsen, Independent Scholar

In December 1912, Charles Lang Freer was invited to the apartment of the New York financier Eugene Meyer, Jr. and his journalist wife Agnes to discuss plans for an American School of Archaeology in China. From 1912 until the Detroit collector's death in 1919, the Meyers were important partners supporting Freer's endeavors to build a significant collection of Chinese art and the first museum dedicated to Asian art in America. Charles Freer and Agnes Meyer kept up an avid correspondence between 1914 and 1919 when Freer acquired most of his Chinese art and prepared his collection for the Smithsonian. This paper will use the correspondence to shed light on a partnership that was central to the Freer Gallery of Art. Freer shared his access to dealers with connections to leading collections in China. He made acquisitions for the Meyers and advised them on purchases, prices, and caring for Chinese objects. In exchange, the Meyers put their considerable wealth toward acquiring an extraordinary collection of Chinese paintings, bronzes, jades, sculpture, ceramics and textiles—the bulk of which (roughly 135 objects) has been gifted to the Freer Gallery of Art. The correspondence also illuminates Freer's fundamental views about Chinese art and key players in the Chinese art world as he confided to Agnes about interactions with leading Chinese art experts, collectors, and dealers of their day. Freer and Agnes shared a reverence for early Chinese painting—the Meyer painting acquisitions confirm this—and were quite dismissive of those who valued other traditions.

2. *A Qing Official Turned Art Dealer: John Ferguson's Success as a Trader of*

John C. Ferguson (1866-1945), a Canadian-born American and a long-term resident of China, is well known as a collector and scholar of Chinese art. His role as a buyer of paintings for the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1912-13, the Cleveland Museum of Art in 1914-15, and the University Museum in Philadelphia in 1916 is less well understood. This paper will look at Ferguson as a dealer who helped established and still germinating museums to make their first significant acquisitions of Chinese paintings in the 1910s. Based on archival research in China and the United States, I will speak on some of the Chinese and Manchu collectors/dealers who offered paintings to Ferguson in Peking, and Ferguson's promotion and sale of these pieces in the United States. My paper will look at Ferguson's entry into the art trade shortly after 1911, when his Qing government employment was terminated, and will examine the success Ferguson enjoyed until the United States entered World War I in 1917. I will discuss *Home Again* by Qian Xuan at the Metropolitan, the anonymous *Ming Huang's Journey to Shu* at the University of Pennsylvania, and other lesser known works Ferguson brought to the United States. I aim to show that John Ferguson was first a dealer, and then a scholar and collector, and to contribute to a more detailed picture of Chinese art collecting in United States in the 1910s.

3. *The Missing Catalogue of Pang Yuanji: Pang and His Modern Art World*,
Katharine Burnett, University of California, Davis

Pang Yuanji (1864-1949) is well known for the important catalogues he compiled of his collections of ancient painting between 1909 and 1925, especially the *Xuzhai minghua lu*. Less recognized is his patronage of over 20 artists who lived and worked in his home. Less known still is the role Pang played in the contemporary art world as an artist. This paper aims to identify the relationships he established with artists of his day and to discover Pang's network of friendships and associations through this art. It attempts to understand the role Pang played in the contemporary art world, and speculates on why Pang apparently never catalogued the contemporary art in his collection.

4. *China and Chinese Art in American Museums at the Turn of the Twentieth-Century*, Jane C. Ju, National Chengchi University, Taipei

This paper aims to add a Chinese perspective to ongoing work on the histories of America's early interest in Chinese art. I will demonstrate how Chinese attitudes about themselves and their culture played an important role in the way they presented themselves to outsiders. This can be seen by what Nathan Dunn collected (or was able to collect) for his Chinese Museum, built in 1838. Likewise, the way the Chinese (or Qing government) displayed themselves in the nineteenth century world expositions correlates with how the West understood China, as illustrated by the kinds of Chinese art American collectors and museums acquired at this time. More important, I intend to show that, at the turn of the twentieth century, the transformation of collecting culture in China, from a gentleman-scholar model to the commercialization of collecting, had a great impact on the collectors in the United States and elsewhere. For example, Charles Lang Freer associated with many of the

later-Qing and early Republican period antiquarians like Duanfang. These Chinese collectors-dealers, who were often scholars turned entrepreneurs, were self-consciously constructing a history of art for their modern nation through their art enterprises, just as Freer was building his collection of Chinese art for the American nation.

We decided to invite Stephen Little, formerly of the Honolulu Academy of Arts and now with the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, and Cary Liu of Princeton University Art Museum to be the discussants for our panel. After the AAS accepted our proposal, we continued to be in contact. I believe this was one of the reasons why our panel was successful.

III—Evaluation(心得及建議)

The chair of our panel, Lara Netting, was very organized from the beginning until the end of the meeting. She kept communications opened enabling us to be aware of what we were doing. As pointed out earlier, we had a very focused and well-presented panel. The conference itself was huge and the scope of topics covered was very broad. I found other panels on art helpful to my research. I also had a chance to meet several old acquaintances and meet new friends in the field. Most interestingly, I was also able to hear papers on the China trade which had information pertinent to my research on the early American merchants who collected Chinese art.

Joint Conference of the
Association for Asian Studies &
International Convention of Asia Scholars

Celebrating 70 Years of Asian Studies



March 31–April 3, 2011, Honolulu, Hawaii



Association for Asian Studies



International Convention
of Asia Scholars

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標題: AAS/ICAS Conference - Important Conference Information

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2011 AAS/ICAS Joint Conference ~ Honolulu, Hawaii March 31-April 3, 2011

Thank you for registering to attend the AAS/ICAS Joint Conference. We're glad that you will be joining us for four days of sessions, keynote addresses, receptions and more!

PLEASE READ THE INFORMATION BELOW FOR IMPORTANT DETAILS

In preparation for your trip, please review this quick summary of pertinent information you might need to know before your arrival. Below you will find information about shuttle buses between the Convention Center and your hotel, registration hours and more!

CONFERENCE PROGRAM BOOKS

Conference program books were mailed to all registered attendees. **PLEASE REMEMBER TO BRING YOUR CONFERENCE PROGRAM BOOK WITH YOU TO HAWAII.** There is a limited supply available onsite and, ***if available***, will be redistributed for a fee.

CONFERENCE NAME BADGE

PLEASE REMEMBER TO BRING YOUR CONFERENCE NAME BADGE WITH YOU TO HAWAII.

If you have not received the Conference Name Badge by mail before your departure to Hawaii, please come to the registration counters located in the Convention Center for a re-print. We will re-print one (1) complimentary copy of your badge. Additional requests for reprints after the one complimentary copy will be charged a \$5 fee.

Badges must be worn for entrance into ALL Panel Sessions.

REGISTRATION

Location: Hawaii Convention Center – Level 3 Concourse
Registration Services are available during the following hours:

Wednesday, March 30	2:00pm – 5:00pm
Thursday, March 31	7:00am – 9:00pm
Friday, April 1	7:00am – 5:00pm
Saturday, April 2	7:00am – 6:30pm

SHUTTLE BUS INFORMATION

Shuttle buses will operate on a continuous loop between the Hawaii Convention Center and the following AAS/ICAS hotels: Hilton Hawaiian Village, Hawaii Prince & Sheraton Princess Kaiulani. *Please note: due to the convenient location of the Ala Moana Hotel, there will be no shuttle service to and from the Hawaii Convention Center.*

To/From Hawaii Convention Center from Conference Hotel

Thursday, March 31 - Sunday, April 3

6:30am-11:00pm	<i>every ten minutes</i>
8:30am-4:30pm	<i>every 30 minutes</i>
5:00pm-6:00pm	<i>every 10 minutes</i>
6:30pm-9:30pm	<i>every 30 minutes</i>
9:30pm-11:00pm	<i>every 10 minutes</i>

Sunday, April 3 – The Last Shuttle will leave the convention center at 5:30pm

Shuttle signs will be posted in the Convention Center and conference hotel lobbies. Please print this information to carry with you throughout the conference.

LATE BREAKING PANELS

The AAS has added 3 new late breaking panels to the official schedule. Please check our website regarding the topics and speakers, including a roundtable discussion on late breaking news in Japan entitled **“After 3/11: Japan in the Wake of Earthquake, Tsunami, and Nuclear Crisis”**

<http://www.asian-studies.org/Conference/Late-Breaking-News-Panels.htm>

CONCESSION STANDS

Make sure to pick up your breakfast and lunch from the concession stands inside of the convention center – serving both hot and cold meals and beverages. The concession stands are located on Level 3 of the Convention Center and in the Exhibit Hall.

FACEBOOK

Make sure to stay logged into the AAS Facebook page as we will be posting new announcements and events as they occur throughout the four days of the conference!

IMPORTANT PARTICIPANT INFORMATION

You are considered a **Participant** if you are serving as **Chair, Discussant and/or Paper Presenter** on a formal panel session. If you are not on a panel, you are a **General Attendee** and this information does not pertain to your attendance.

Participants, please read this information carefully.

ALL panel session rooms will be equipped with an LCD Projector and Screen (for PowerPoint Presentations, etc.), a podium and a microphone. You DO NOT need to request this equipment separately.

WE DO NOT PROVIDE COMPUTERS OR INTERNET ACCESS FOR PANEL SESSIONS.

All participants are responsible for supplying their own LAPTOP COMPUTERS for presentations. We do not provide laptop computers for any panel participants.

PC USERS: PC users will require a VGA cord connection to the LCD projector. **These cords will be provided by the on-site A/V company.** However, you may want to bring your own VGA cord, just in case of emergency. Please remember to bring your power supply cords with a US compatible 110volt power plug.

MAC USERS: Apple Macbook/Macbook Pro users must supply their own **VGA Adapters**. The specific adapters vary with the specific model of computers. **The Convention Center has a very limited inventory of these various adapters and cannot accommodate numerous requests. See sample model of MAC VGA adapter below.** The VGA adapter will connect to the VGA cords provided by the A/V Company.



We are excited for your participation and look forward to your contributing to the most successful conference in AAS/ICAS history.

See you in Hawaii.

Aloha!



**International Convention
of Asia Scholars**

Dear Participants:

Congratulations on having your organized panel, paper, or roundtable selected to the formal program for the Joint Conference of the Association for Asian Studies & the International Convention of Asia Scholars. Enclosed are materials for pre-registration and other pre-conference details. Please read the documents carefully.

1. **Your letter of invitation** from AAS Executive Director Michael Paschal, is provided on letterhead. If you need a personalized letter, please contact us as soon as possible. International visitors should allow at least 3 months for visa arrangements.
2. **Pre-registration** is necessary for your participation. All participants must register by December 2nd in order for your name to appear in the formal Conference Program. There are no refunds after this date. You may use the enclosed form to register by mail or you may register online at <http://www.asian-studies.org/Conference/Registration.htm>
3. **Panel Description for Panel Number** form indicates all pertinent information as it relates to your panel session. This sheet indicates your Panel #, Panel description, scheduled date and time of the panel. Room numbers will be assigned at a later date. We are unable to make time schedule changes at this point. **Please note your name** (this is the way it will appear on your name badge and in the formal program), your institution and the title of your paper. If you change the title of your paper or have other changes, please email all changes to rjones@asian-studies.org. Make sure to indicate your panel number on all correspondence. If there is an error, please correct it on the form and return it to our office prior to December 2. Changes to abstracts must be in by February 1. Original abstracts will be posted online unless we have received our requested changes by the deadline.
4. **Membership information** and materials are enclosed in the event that you are not a member or that your membership is about to expire. You may renew membership by mail or through our website: Note that members may pre-register at a discounted member rate.
5. **Hotel reservations** can be made through the link on our website. Please check AAS website for special negotiated rates.
6. **Policies and procedures** relating to panel sessions are on the reverse side of this sheet. Let us know if you have questions or concerns. You will receive your program in March. All programs are sent bulk mail unless extra postage is paid prior to mailing in January.

ALL PAPER PRESENTERS

- ◆ All panel participants (including chairs and discussants) are expected to pre-register before **December 2**. Only those pre-registered by the deadline will appear in the 2011 Program.
- ◆ Paper presenters should provide a copy of their paper to panel discussant and fellow panelists two weeks prior to the meeting. (Addresses are on the computer sheet).
- ◆ Paper presenters should arrive on time (or 10 minutes early if equipment has been requested). All sessions planning to use PowerPoint, should transfer all material to USB drive prior to the session for ease of transition between presentations. **(See enclosed information sheet regarding Audio/Visual equipment)**.
- ◆ Paper presenters should contact their panel chair regarding length of presentation and other details.

CHAIR

- ◆ Chair presides over the session.
- ◆ Chair informs presenters and discussant(s) regarding time allotments, and monitors same. All sessions are two hours.
- ◆ Chair sees that speaker area is vacated on time to keep program on schedule. **(There is only 15 minutes between sessions)**.
- ◆ Chair rules on matters as necessary (such as filming or taping during session).

DISCUSSANT

- ◆ Discussants should identify important issues or themes, stimulate and guide discussion from the audience and wrap up the session. Innovations to stimulate discussion are encouraged. Please respect Chair's stated time allotment.

**2011 JOINT CONFERENCE
of the
ASSOCIATION FOR ASIAN STUDIES &
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March 31 – April 3, 2011
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China and Chinese Art in American Museums at the Turn of the Twentieth Century

Jane C. Ju
Associate Professor
History Department
National Chengchi University

For presentation at the panel on
“Choosing Chinese Paintings for American Museums in the Early Twentieth Century”
The AAS-ICAS Joint Conference, March 31-April 3, 2011, Honolulu, Hawaii

(draft)

I. Introduction

This paper is a small part of an on-going research I am doing on the displays of Chinese art in American museums. My interest was instigated by reading in David Carrier’s book *Museum Skepticism: A History of the Display of Art in Public Galleries* (2006, p. 126), an observation he made that many universal museums display Chinese art (or other non-western art) in the basement or lower levels of museums. In the process of understanding the development of different modes of display of Chinese art in American museums, I realized that I have to first learn about the history of the collections. Since Benjamin March’s study of Chinese and Japanese art in American museums published in 1929, there had only been another book written by Warren Cohen in 1992 on East Asian art and American culture. Today much more is being done, and several of the scholars working on this topic are members of the panel. In fact, I am fortunate to have come to know them and their research through this venture and am thankful for the information they have provided me. As I contemplated on what to present for the panel, I realized that there is an aspect in the subject of collecting Chinese art by Americans that has not been duly researched: the role of the Chinese in the acquisition of these objects. The research on this subject is especially lacking for early American collections of Chinese art.¹ One exception is John R. Haddad’s very recent book *The Romance of China: Excursions to China in U.S. Culture, 1776-1876* (2008). He covered a wide range of topics but did not specifically talk about the relationship of collections and museum displays. His studies led me to Arif Dirlik’s important essay “Chinese History and the Question of Orientalism” (1996), which pointed out the importance of recognizing

¹ The British has done a lot on the studies of Chinese (or other non-western art) collections in their museums probably because of the legacy of imperialism in their history, which may have resulted in their historians’ need to reevaluate the meanings of these objects for their public today. Although I am indebted to their research, I will not be using their situations as comparisons since the American experience is different from the British.

that, in the East/West discourse, there was also the phenomenon of “self-orientalization” on the part of the Chinese in how they wanted the West to understand them. After looking at the materials and studies on the American collections of Chinese art, I discovered that the relationships between the American collectors and their Chinese agents vary, as should be expected. In this paper, I plan to look at three early examples of Chinese involvement with American collections of Chinese art—Nathan Dunn’s Chinese Museum; the Chinese participation in the 1876 Centennial International Exposition and the 1904 St. Louis Exposition. My purpose is not to present their individual histories, but to evaluate the Chinese involvement and how they have been perceived. At the same time, I also hope to demonstrate that the differences in the types of objects that were acquired in American collections cannot solely be explained by the Americans’ misunderstanding or understanding of China. The early American merchants and the later American aesthetes and scholars like Ernest Fenollosa, Charles Freer or Charles Ferguson all had associations with their Chinese counterparts when they acquired the objects² for their collections. I plan to illustrate that, from the 19th century to the 20th centuries, the nature of collecting and manners of display went through a transformation because the American collectors and their Chinese agents changed their attitudes about objects and museums and what they mean for understanding of art and culture.

II. Nathan Dunn’s Chinese Museum

Although Nathan Dunn’s Chinese Museum no longer exists, and what has happened to the collection is unclear, I want to start my discussion with it for several reasons. First, I want to look at it as an example of America’s earliest institutional interest in Chinese art. To be sure, at the time of its opening in 1838, there were other collections of Chinese art, the most prominent of which were the collections of the East India Company and the Salem Museum, which have been reorganized into the present-day Peabody Essex Museum, in Salem, Massachusetts. Nonetheless, I want to use Dunn’s museum as a case study because it was specifically established with the purpose of educating the public about what the collection signifies, in this case, Chinese culture. E.C. Wines, the author of the catalogue for the museum pointed out that Dunn’s Chinese Museum differed from the collections of the East India Company and those in the Salem Museum in their being “curiosities from the Orient” and mostly from India, while Dunn’s was from China and “for instruction”

² I will be using the general word “object” to designate things acquired by the collectors, unless an object has been distinguished with other terms such as “art.” Susan Pearce explains the problem of proper usage of terms to describe museum material by pointing out the different possible names used: object, thing, specimen, artifact, and good(s).

about China (p.11). Second, although Dunn did not specify what kind of museum he built, we can surmise that he meant for it to be an encyclopedic museum of natural history, which, at the time, included art and crafts as well. Yet, there were negative reviews made questioning the values of the objects as art and these comments have continued to be used to evaluate American's view of Chinese art. As such, the museum is a good case study to exemplify the problems with the categorizations of objects in museums, an issue related to my research on Chinese art in American museums. Finally, the Dunn museum was the earliest collection of objects acquired directly from China proper for the purposes of display and education. Hence, an inquiry into how Dunn collected can illuminate our understanding of China and Chinese art in American museums.

The story of Nathan Dunn's Chinese Museum has been discussed by many. In brief, it was established by Dunn, a Philadelphia merchant, who ventured to China after a failed business. He spent 14 years away from the United States, with 8 uninterrupted years in Canton, China, building a successful business, earning enough to pay off his debts, retire as an enlightened gentleman of means and build his museum. The Chinese Museum, which opened at the end of 1838, in Philadelphia, closed after a short three years. The collection was moved to London in 1842 and was exhibited in a building at Hyde Park Corner. After Dunn's death in 1844, the collection toured the provinces with William B. Langdon. The collection was probably dispersed into different collections as there are no records of what happened to it. Two separate catalogues were written for the museum, one written for the Philadelphia museum by E.C. Wines, entitled *A Peep at China* and the other, *Ten Thousand Chinese Things* by William B. Langdon for the London exhibition. In his book on Chinese art in American culture, Warren Cohen used Dunn's museum to point out that 19th century Americans did not collect or exhibit fine arts, i.e. Chinese painting, because they were different from their notion of painting and were considered inferior (Cohen, p. 8). More recently, Steven Conn and John R. Haddad have looked at the Dunn museum more thoroughly and have come up with a more viable analysis of the significance of Dunn's Chinese Museum.³ Conn's article "Where is the East? Asian Objects in American Museums, from Nathan Dunn to Charles Freer" (2000), examined the dilemma of early American intellectuals in categorizing Chinese culture either as ethnographical objects or as art. Conn accurately observed that the unfavorable comments made by some of Dunn's contemporaries about the paintings in the collections were unfair. In fact, Dunn had not intended his museum to be an "art" museum as such. As pointed out by Conn,

³ In addition to Conn's and Haddad's studies, I know of two master's theses on Nathan Dunn. Unless otherwise annotated, I am using Haddad's research for personal information on Dunn.

Dunn's museum "was a synoptic, encyclopedic museum like Peale's; the Metropolitan and the Art Institute of Chicago belong to a later generation." Haddad reinforced this idea in his more extensive studies on Nathan Dunn. In his recent work *The Romance of China: Excursions to China in U.S. Culture, 1776-1876*, Haddad has a chapter on Nathan Dunn. Haddad's study is the more comprehensive, not only in the descriptive narrative of the story of Dunn and his museum, but also in his critical analysis of Dunn and his museum in the East/West discourse. Haddad's study not only put Dunn in context of American merchants in China in the 19th c., he also provided us with some insights into Dunn's Chinese contacts.

A. Dunn's Collection--an American or Chinese image of China?

Expanding on the studies done so far, I would now like to take another look at Dunn's Chinese Museum by investigating its Chinese connection, and probe into what image of China did Dunn display in his museum and why? First of all, there is enough evidence from Dunn's life to take, at face value, his high-minded intention of building cross-cultural understanding between the Americans and Chinese. Dunn was a Quaker. He did not participate in the opium trade. One of the reasons he brought his museum to London was his hope to educate the British about Chinese culture and to convince them to stop trading in opium. He was also respected by the local Chinese merchants. After his return to Philadelphia, Dunn paid the debt he owed and was active in philanthropic and educational work. The admission fee for the museum was given to charity. The sincerity of Dunn's intention can be further reinforced if we read the words in the catalogue written by Dunn's friend E.C. Wines, most likely with his approval:

To us it is a volume redolent of instruction; the best we have ever seen on the Celestial Empire. It is, in effect, China in miniature. It almost realizes, in reference to the manners and civilization of that remote, unique, and interesting people, the fable of the woods moving to the sound of the lyre of Orpheus.

Some reader, perhaps, will regard such expressions as sheer hyperbole, a mere rhetorical flourish. We utter, however, a simple verity, which will be responded to by every person of taste and intelligence who visits and examines the Collection. (Wines, p. 13)

If we read further Wines' descriptions of the objects displayed, they were never condescending nor were they romanticized. For example on the subject of paintings, which received the most negative responses from viewers of the time, Wines acknowledged the "prevalent error respecting the inability of Chinese to produce perspective." But, he attempted to correct this misconception by explaining:

Though light and shade are certainly a good deal neglected here, and the perspective is not perfect, yet the picture is by no means deficient in this regard; and the drawings of individual objects are extremely accurate. (Wines, p. 22)

At the end of the catalogue, Wines spent a chapter discussing the government and people of China and, another, on trade with China. He made a point to explain the reason for China to close its ports to foreign trade was not the “illiberality of the Chinese.” Rather it was brought on by the European and American traders’ “illegal practices to which their cupidity prompts them.” (Wines, p. 102) From the context of his time, his observations were astute, just as Dunn’s collection was as close to what a “China in miniature” could be with the resources they had.

From the written descriptions in the catalogue and other contemporary writings gathered by Haddad, it seems that Dunn attempted to represent the everyday life in China. From Wines’ and other people’s description, a person enters the museum into a saloon with ceramic life-size figures of Chinese from different walks of life. For a glimpse of what these figurines were like, there is a similar type made around the same time in Canton that is now in the Rhode Island Historical Society. The visitor then moved on to exhibitions rooms with displays of objects in cases. Here I would like to expand on the fact that Dunn’s interest and ideas about museums and collecting probably reflected those from his particular era in American history. At the time of the opening of Dunn’s Chinese Museum, museums in the United States were natural history museums.⁴ Charles Wilson Peale, artist and naturalist was also a well-known proprietor of a museum in the late 18th century. Peale’s museum, the first museum of any importance in the United States, can be best explained by Peale in the painting he did of himself in his museum, which is now often associated with the concept of early American museums. As represented in the painting, we see Peale’s hierarchical world view: his portraits of prominent people placed on the top level, then stuffed and preserved birds and animals, finally displays of fossils remains. Peale’s interest in museums was a manifestation of the gentlemanly pursuit of knowledge that was deeply rooted in the Enlightenment ideas of the time. It is of significance that Dunn’s Chinese Museum was built as part of the Peale Museum Company, an enterprise of George Escol Sellers, Charles Wilson Peale’s grandson. By this time the elder Peale had died, his museum seems to have been divided amongst his sons. One of his sons, Rembrandt had moved it to Baltimore.⁵ Dunn is recorded to have worked with another of Charles Wilson Peale’s sons, Titian, on installing his Chinese

⁴ My information about Peale’s museum and early American museums are mostly from Steven Conn’s *Museums and American Intellectual Life, 1876-1926*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998.

⁵ The Peale Museum in Baltimore is still extant and is now a historical house.

exhibit in Philadelphia. Dunn's association with the Peale Museum Company in Philadelphia is an indication of his affinity with Charles Wilson Peale's ideas about museums. In fact, we know that one of Dunn's American friends in Canton, William Wood, a newspaperman and a naturalist, helped with the acquisition of natural specimens from China for his museum. Moreover, according to Haddad, after leaving China, Dunn lived a life of a gentleman, engaging in scientific pursuits and philanthropic causes.

So, to a certain extent, we can conclude that Dunn's Chinese Museum reflected an American interest and perspective. From records, it seems as if Dunn also relied on his Chinese agents to complete his collection. During the time when Nathan Dunn was in Canton, China was off limits to foreigners, a law that was enforced since the time of the Qianlong emperor in the 18th century. However, Dunn claimed to have had access to Chinese people and Chinese objects unparalleled for a Westerner. In the words of E.C. Wines, Dunn was never interested in illicit commerce and as a result was able to have the help of the Chinese:

This fact was well known to the officers of the government, and even to the Emperor himself, and created a strong prejudice in his favour. He always treated the dignitaries of the Crown and other gentlemen of distinction with the consideration due their rank and standing. This tended still further to secure their friendship and cooperation. It was by availing himself of facilities thus obtained, that he was enabled to complete his Collection, and the extensive and powerful influence he had secured in high places, enabled him, when ready to embark with his treasures, to overcome obstacle which would otherwise have been insurmountable. (Wines, p. 10-11)

Haddad's study confirmed Dunn's goodwill. He also described Dunn's activities in Canton. Haddad named two specific persons of status who may have helped Dunn. Houqua and Tingqua were both members of the *hong*, or compradore. These were Chinese merchants who were given the rights to conduct business with foreigners. Although little is known about the two men, we can surmise from our understanding of commerce in Canton at the time and from later business activities in city ports such as Shanghai, these men were often not simply businessmen. They often had social and political status.⁶ Therefore, we can assume that Dunn did acquire "treasures" with the help of the prominent Chinese. But, who made the decisions regarding

⁶ There is little information about Chinese merchants who facilitated business between foreigners and locals before the mid-19th century. They may parallel the scholar/dealers who rose in numbers by the late 19th century. These *shenshang* actively created a new art market in China and actively participated in a new collecting culture. In recent years more studies have been written about these later 19th century scholar/dealers. Some examples are Shana Julia Brown's "Pastimes: Scholars, Art Dealer, and the Making of Modern Chinese Historiography, 1870-1928," doctoral dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 2003, Lara Netting's "Acquiring Chinese Art and Culture: The collections and Scholarship of John C. Ferguson (1866-1945)," doctoral dissertation, Princeton University, 2009.

what to purchase and collect? In other words, did Dunn's Chinese Museum reflect an American view of China, or the perspective of the Chinese agents he used?

B. Significance of Nathan Dunn's Chinese Museum

The questions of "whose China?" was represented in Nathan Dunn's Chinese Museum, and "was it authentic?" would not have been asked had there not been a transformation in how scholars thought about museums, culture and art at the turn of the 20th century. For most of the 20th century, Dunn's Chinese Museum and other collections of Chinese art from his time period were not highly regarded in the hierarchy of museum collections. The collections were often considered as collectibles or curiosities. This attitude resulted with the establishment of art museums in the late 19th-early 20th century in major American cities, including the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, the Boston's Museum of Fine Art, the Chicago Institute of Art and the Philadelphia Museum of Art. At this time, curators began to place more importance on art objects such as antiquities and paintings, and had less interest in displaying or researching objects from the daily lives of the Chinese. Later during the mid-20th century, with the end of World War II and the rise of new nations and quest for distinctive nationalist identities, the scholarship in East/West cultural interactions tended to focus on how the cultural historians from the imperial West defined other cultures based on their values, Edward Said's *Orientalism* making the most impact. This perspective supported the belief that the collections of Chinese art acquired by early Americans, such as Dunn, were not authentic. Many considered the early collections not to represent Chinese culture because they were collected based on American tastes.⁷ However, by the end of the 20th century new studies have been done to reevaluate Said's "orientalism," on our understanding of East/West discourse. For example, Arif Dirlik wrote: "While orientalism has been very much implicated in power relations between Euro-America and Asia, the question of power nevertheless should be separated analytically from the construction of orientalism." (p. 98) To Dirlik, we should also recognize that there was "self-orientalization" on the part of the Chinese in how they wanted the West to understand them. Based on Dirlik's analysis, Dunn would be

⁷ There are many examples of museum curators' less than enthusiastic attitudes toward the early Chinese collections. One is Wen Fong's discussion of Asian art for the Metropolitan Museum. He stated that, before WWII, New Yorkers collected Chinese and Japanese art as a matter of general interest, but not as specialists. He also noted that, although the Metropolitan had "superb Chinese ceramics and decorative jades," the museum was relatively inactive in Asian art until the 1970s with the enlargement of the department and a mission to acquire Chinese paintings. The implication here is that the museum became serious about Chinese art only after its acquisitions of Sung and Yuan paintings in the 1970s. For more of this, see Thomas Hoving, *The Chase, The Capture: Collecting at the Metropolitan*, New York: The Metropolitan Museum, 1975.

the “orientalist” who was speaking for the Chinese. He would probably refer to the Chinese agents who worked for Dunn as “orientals” and describe the selection of objects as “self-orientalizing.”

Although the new diachronic approach has resulted in a more holistic understanding of the East/West discourse, I do not completely agree that the terms “orientalists” or “orientals” are appropriate to describe Dunn and his agents. Strictly speaking, Dunn and his agents were simply merchants who exchanged commodities or objects from the everyday life of the Chinese as part of their commercial transactions. They were not the “orientalists” or “orientals” who had ideological agendas on how to represent China. In other words, Dunn and the early American merchants and their Chinese counterparts were not interested in issues of art and national identities in the same way that we are today. These debates occurred later. As Conn discussed in his studies, the debate over the meaning of early American collection of Chinese objects as either fine arts or as anthropological or ethnological specimens was part of the debate over the classifications of objects, any objects, in American museums during most of the 19th century. In Conn’s book *Museums and American Intellectual Life, 1876-1926* (1988), he presented an insightful narrative of how art eventually gained its dominant position in American museum collections by the late 19th century. In his essay on East Asian art, mentioned earlier, Conn pointed out that according to Lawrence Levine, “the boundaries that delineate highbrow and lowbrow in American culture were fluid in the nineteenth century and only ossified in their current form at the turn of the twentieth century.”(Conn, 2000, p.162). In other words, the classifications of Chinese objects during the early history of American museums can be explained more in line with the early American collectors and curators’ attitudes about meanings of objects and less with “orientalist” attitudes about racial or national differences of the makers and owners of the objects. In fact, I believe it was only after the development of American experts of Chinese art, i.e. museum curators and art historians, that we can properly use Said’s term “orientalists.” Many of these early 20th century American “orientalists” considered much of early American collections of Chinese objects not to be art. If certain objects were bought as art, they were still not classified as truly Chinese because these objects were made for the American market and thus were categorized as “export wares.” Similarly, I believe the Chinese did not self-orientalize until the late 19th century after they were defeated in the Opium Wars and subjected to the unequal treaties. It was then that the Chinese became self-conscious about their identities vis-à-vis the world and felt the need to represent themselves with a certain image through their participation in world exhibitions, as will be discussed shortly. So, when recent scholars, like Haddad, who has accepted these early 19th century

collections to also represent Chinese points of view, but, nonetheless, continued to explain the Chinese agents to be self-orientalizing, they did so because they were looking at the objects as “art” or representations of culture. Again, at the time when Dunn was active, the Chinese agents who worked for him were thinking of these objects simply as commodities, be it that some were luxury goods or art. Since the American collectors and their Chinese agents were not mis-representing these objects to be something more than what they were meant to be, they were not orientalizing in the sense of Said’s “orientalism.” After all, the Americans looked at the world differently from the British.

Most of us are accustomed to thinking about Chinese art as being objects represented in present-day art museums and in art history textbooks, i.e. archaeological objects, especially bronzes and jades; imperial ceramics, paintings and Buddhist sculptures. When we encounter descriptions of objects in Dunn’s Museum, or see the objects displayed in the present day Peabody Essex Museum in Salem, we usually consider them to be utilitarian objects, decorative or export wares, maybe even curiosities, but never as art. Yet, when similar objects are displayed in the neighboring Boston Museum of Fine Arts, they are art works. So, why is there a difference? In the opening line of his book *Art in China* (1997), Craig Clunas wrote: “Chinese art” is quite a recent invention, not much more than a hundred years old.”(p. 9) Here Clunas is expressing a fact that art, including Chinese art, is a constructed idea which has been inculcated in our minds through different means. One of these methods is through museum displays as pointed out with the example of the differences between how objects are understood in the Peabody Essex and the Boston Museum of Fine Arts. If we go back to the Chinese objects collected by Nathan Dunn and the American merchants, we need to recognize that these objects may have been ranked or classified differently from how we understand them today. Craig Clunas wrote his seminal book, *Superfluous Things: Material Culture and Social Status in Early Modern China* (1991) to respond to problems he encountered with the classifications of objects while he was working at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London.⁸ The museum is historically concerned with the study of art and design. Many of the Chinese objects in the Victoria and Albert Museum were not “art” when they were made, but are now displayed as “art” because they have been deemed to embody a conscious aesthetic program. To resolve these contradictions, Clunas went back to history and wrote about how “things” were perceived in Ming China. He found that, even in the Ming, the criteria of “things” were constantly shifting depending on consumer tastes and fashion. In the same way, the meanings of the

⁸ Read Craig Clunas’ “The Art of Social Climbing in Sixteenth-Century China,” in *The Burlington Magazine*, Vol. 133, No. 1059, June, 1991, pp. 368-375.

objects acquired by Dunn and the early American traders were also as fluid.

How should we now then understand Nathan Dunn's Chinese Museum and other Chinese objects collected at this time? First, instead of arguing whether or not these objects are art works, the question to ponder is "when have the objects been called art, by whom and why, or why not?" As such, the objects collected by Dunn and his compatriots should be looked upon as simply being part of the material culture of early 19th century China, objects which were made, consumed and collected by the Chinese and then acquired and displayed by the Westerners, some as art; others, as everyday goods. If displayed in the right context, the objects will enable us to see more vividly the China as perceived by the 19th century American merchants and their Chinese counterparts. Therefore, a gathering of information on the social history of these objects is the more important. As Michael Baxandall pointed out in his essay "Exhibiting Intention: Some Preconditions of the Visual Display of Culturally Purposeful Objects," (1990), we can only truly comprehend the meaning of objects in museums if we include into the exhibition certain aspects of the maker of the artifact, its exhibitor and, finally, its viewer. Here I would add that information about collectors, such as Dunn, will also enable us to appreciate the divergent values and meanings of Chinese objects in early American collections.

II. Chinese Participation in World Expositions

The importance of world expositions in their divergent roles in modern history has been well-studied. Research on the role of world expositions and modern museums has seen an increase with the cultural historians' recent interests in museums. I would now like to look more closely at Chinese participation in world expositions because many early Chinese collections in the West were built from objects acquired at world expositions. In the United States, the establishment of the Philadelphia Museum of Art was written in as part of the plans of the 1876 Centennial International Exposition in Philadelphia.⁹ Another example is the Field Museum of Natural History in Chicago. Its history is closely related to the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition held in Chicago. (Conn, 2000, p. 166) A secondary reason for my interest is because it was through their participation in world expositions that the Chinese first presented themselves to the modern world. The Chinese participation in fairs and expositions, and later establishments of museums has also led Chinese historians to look into the relationship of world expositions and Chinese modernity.¹⁰ In recent years, art historians of Chinese art have studied what

⁹ See "Museum Founding Documents" in the Philadelphia Museum of Art Archives.

¹⁰ For one example, see Shao Qin's book *Cultrring Modernity, The Nantong Model, 1890-1930*, Stanford University, 2004. Many more studies on the subject are research articles, in Chinese and

expositions have revealed about the Chinese concept of art and culture. Since 2002 when China was accepted as the host of the 2010 World Exposition in Shanghai, the number of books on the history of Chinese participation in world expositions has increased greatly and continues to be written. However, much of these are compilations of documents and lack critical analysis. Again, my purpose here is not to present a history of Chinese participation in world expositions. Rather, I want to focus on just a few aspects of Chinese participation in world expositions at the turn of the 20th century, the period before the ideas of our modern concept of Chinese art were formed. I will focus on two expositions in which the objects displayed were “purposely,” using Baxandall’s term, intended to represent China. By doing so, I hope to reinforce the argument I made with my discussion of Nathan Dunn’s Chinese Museum, i.e. the Chinese played an important role in presenting the image of China to Americans. At the same time, as part of my interest in understanding Chinese art in American museums, I also want to look into what were displayed. Did the Chinese exhibit art works—what were these and how are they different from our ideas about Chinese art today?

A. The 1876 Centennial International Exposition in Philadelphia

I start my discussion with the 1876 Centennial International Exposition held in Philadelphia (will henceforth be referred to as Centennial) because it is documented as the first American exposition in which the Qing government officially participated in. It is therefore a good case study to know what objects were deemed important by the Chinese.¹¹ The Chinese have participated in earlier world expositions. However, before 1876, the Qing government had not really shown too much interest and had left it to the Imperial Maritime Customs Service of the Zongli Yamen, or the Qing Foreign Office, the organization established by the Qing government to manage foreign affairs in China. Studies on the role of the Customs Service in modern Chinese history abound. More recently there has been more interest on its role in Chinese participation in world expositions. These have been helpful in my research. After the 1860s when China had to open up as the result of the Opium Wars, the Qing government took more direct interest. The reasons for the new interest may have been instigated by a change in the Chinese outlook of the world. In her doctoral dissertation on China’s participation in world’s fairs and expositions, Susan

English.

¹¹ I made no differentiation between Chinese and Manchu in my earlier analysis of Dunn’s Chinese Museum. In my discussion of Chinese participation in world expositions at the end of the 19th century, the differences between Han or Manchu Chinese became evident and crucial, and I will make the distinction when the situation calls for it.

Fernsebner cited some comments from Shanghai newspapers criticizing the government's lack of involvement in earlier expositions in Europe and using foreigners to organize the Chinese display (p. 22-23). When the United States government invited the Qing court to participate, Prince Gong accepted, and according to the records of the American organizers:

[Prince Gong had] taken measures to accede to the proposal by directing the two Superintendents of Trade for the Northern and Southern ports to instruct the officers under their jurisdiction to issue proclamations fully informing all mercantile, artisan, and laboring classes of this Exhibition. It has further ordered the Inspector General of Customs to select suitable officers to be Commissioners to attend it.¹²

As stated above, the Chinese display was, again, organized by Robert Hart, the Irishman hired by the Qing government to run the Customs Service. This time Hart's commission to Philadelphia included Chinese representatives. Hart sent out memorandums to the provincial offices to ask them to choose the most representative products from their regions. According to Haddad's study on the exposition in his book *The Romance of China*, the best of artifacts produced in China were chosen.¹³ In the American reports, it was impressed upon the public that the Chinese thought highly of the exposition because of the participation of a wealthy banker, Hu-Quang-Yung, who was reportedly to have been a prominent collector of ancient and valuable specimens of Chinese art. The descriptions in the Centennial report stated:

The Chinese section in the Main Building has proved to be one of the most attractive in the entire exhibition, and compares favorably with that of Japan in the curiosity and interest which it excites...The arrangement is comprised as follows: At the western end are the china-ware, furs and skins, and the trade collections; at the eastern side are the furniture, woodwork and carvings; in the centre are the silks and satins, the cloisonnes-ware and bronzes; and in the rear part, the office. (Leslie, 244)

The report spent a lot of time describing many of the objects, focusing on the distinction of the materials and craftsmanship. Interestingly, a mention of paintings and imperial wares, things which consider as art today, was listed only briefly at the end of the discussion of the Chinese section. It is written as follows:

¹² Quoted in Jennifer Pitman's "China's Presence at the Centennial Exhibition," master thesis, The Bard Graduate Center for Studies in the Decorative Art, 1999, p. 20.

¹³ Haddad based his analysis on the writings of Hart and Li Gui, a customs official who traveled to Philadelphia with the commission. In fact much of what we know about the Chinese participation in the 1876 Centennial International Exposition comes from Hart's and Li's personal descriptions and analysis.

Some curious pictures in water-color and aquarelle on pith paper, are subjects illustrating the cultivation of and manufacturing of teas, occupations in the life of a Chinese lady, mandarins, landscapes, flowers and fruits...A number of Chinese relics are shown from the Imperial summer Palace of Peking, and the collection of curious articles may be closed with mention of a pair of bronze idols, also from Peking. (Leslie, 247)

As a gesture of goodwill, at the end of the exposition the Chinese delegation bequeathed many of the remaining unsold objects to the Philadelphia Museum of Art. Jean Gordon Lee, former curator of Far Eastern Art at the Philadelphia museum, indicated in her studies of the Chinese ceramics collection that some can be traced back to being bought from the exposition. (Lee, p. 62-63) Henry Walters bought some of the Chinese porcelains which are now part of the Walters Art Museum in Baltimore, Maryland. (Pitman, p. 1) All in all, the Chinese at the time looked at the Centennial as a success. In keeping with the agenda of the Self-Strengthening Movement, the Qing government continued its participation in a series of international exhibitions. My second interest in the 1876 Centennial International Exposition is to see if the expressions of discontent in Chinese newspapers editorials regarding the management of the exhibits by Westerners were justified.

Interestingly, as I read contemporary studies about the Centennial, I found that these writings do not all agree on the meanings and significance of the exposition for our image of China. It is not for lack of materials or because the studies used divergent sources. Rather, the differences are, again, results of the legacy of Said's concept of "orientalism" in the East/West discourse. The key reason for the differing opinions about the meaning of China's participation is because the Chinese display was organized by Robert Hart, a Westerner. For some scholars, the Centennial still reflected the Western (or Hart's) ideas about China. In Katharine P. Burnett's unpublished paper she quoted Barbara Vennman, who stated, in her article on China at American world's fair, that Hart and the Customs Service commissioners shaped the images of Chinese people and their culture.¹⁴ Others, like Haddad, understood the complexity of "agency" in cross-cultural interactions and looked at Hart's role differently. As mentioned earlier, he used Arif Dirlik's concept of "self-orientalizing" to describe Nathan Dunn's Chinese agents. Dirlik's idea was developed from Mary Louise Pratt's concept of "contact zones" discussed in her book *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (1992). "Contact zones" is where Europeans encountered non-European resulting in "transculturation," an anthropological term to describe an exchange between the dominant and subjugated

¹⁴ I thank Katharine P. Burnett for sharing her unpublished paper "Inventing a New "Old Tradition": Chinese Painting at the Panama-Pacific International Exposition." At the time of writing I was not able to access the article by Vennman.

cultures. To Pratt's explanation of transcultural exchange Dirlik added the idea that in order to communicate with the dominated, the person from the dominant culture goes through a language change. For Dirlik, the "orientalist" becomes "orientalized," enabling him not just to speak about but also for the Other. (Dirlik, p. 101) In his study of the 1876 Centennial International Exposition, Haddad described Hart as an example of Dirlik's "orientalized" metropolitan, the term used by Pratt to describe the European. In fact, Hart himself wrote in his diaries:

It is to be distinctly and constantly kept in mind that the Inspectorate of Customs is a Chinese and not, a foreign, Service, and that as such it is the duty of each of its members to conduct himself towards Chinese, people as well as officials, in such a way as to avoid all cause of offence and ill-feeling... The first thing to be remembered by each is that he is the paid agent of the Chinese Government for the performance of a specified work, and to do that well should be his chief care.¹⁵

Although they were Westerners, Hart and his colleagues were consciously aware that they were working for the Qing government and thus organized and managed the Customs Service affairs, including the Chinese participation in world expositions, from the Chinese perspective.

On the American side, there seems to have been different responses to the Chinese display, which have led to divergent analysis of the significance of the Chinese display at the Centennial.¹⁶ By the opening of the Centennial in 1876, American sentiments toward China had been affected by the disasters of the Opium Wars. Japan, on the other hand, had gained respect from the world with its success in modern development. In the introductory section of the Historical Register of the Centennial Exposition, it was written that the attraction of the Chinese section was its "owing more to the extreme gaudiness of the structure which incloses it than to any extraordinary interest possessed by its contents." (Leslie, 87). However, there were also positive responses to the Chinese displays. In fact, in another section of the Historical Register mentioned earlier, we find a more positive report on the value of the objects themselves. Jennifer Pitman expanded on this in her thesis on China and the 1876 Centennial International Exposition. She pointed out that the Chinese display was very well-received as indicated by the sales records of the exposition which listed that most of the objects were sold. (Pitman, p. 1) To point out the overall goodwill towards China at the exposition, Haddad related the warm and almost celebrity-like reception given to a group of young Chinese boys who toured

¹⁵ Quoted in Jonathan D. Spence's *To Change China: Western Advisers in China*, New York, Penguin Books, 2002 reprint, p. 112..

¹⁶ Conn, Haddad and Pitman vary in their analysis of the Chinese participation at the exposition.

the expositions. These boys were the first group of students sent by the Chinese Educational Mission set up by Yung Wing to study in Hartford, Connecticut. (Haddad, p. 277-282) Whether or not the Chinese exhibition at the Centennial was a success, the mixed reviews it received indicate the existence of inequality in transcultural exchanges in the “contact zones,” which resulted because of an imbalance in power relationships amongst the people involved in the exchanges. In fact, from the negative reviews of some Americans based on cultural comparisons with the Japanese, and the critique of Hart’s role by Chinese reformers, the notion of national identity was already at play. It should be noted that in a few years, the United States government passed the Chinese Exclusion Act, imposing laws restricting Chinese immigration. Therefore, to describe the Chinese participation at the exposition as expressing elements of orientalism and self-orientalizing is justifiable. But, it does not make the exhibition a failure. And, whether or not these objects were meant to be art works is not pertinent since, as I have argued earlier, the definition of art was different from how we understand it today. In retrospect, I believe the Chinese display at the 1876 Centennial International Exposition should be considered a success since it presented Chinese objects considered by its organizers (Hart and his Chinese agents) to be the best that could be offered at the time. Some of the objects are still valued in museum collections today.

B. 1904 “Louisiana Purchase” Exposition in St. Louis

While there are different opinions regarding the significance of the 1876 Centennial Exposition in representing China, there seems to be a uniform assessment of the “Louisiana Purchase” Exposition held in St. Louis in 1904.¹⁷ Firstly, it is considered the first truly Chinese participation because the Customs Service had been dismantled. China’s participation in world expositions was still under the jurisdiction of the re-organized Customs Service office, which by this time was headed by Chinese officials. Moreover, the Qing government had a specific agenda in their selection of objects for the exhibitions. Yet, as will be elaborated later, this plan backfired and the Chinese exhibit in St. Louis can, in my opinion, be considered a better example of self-orientalizing than any of the earlier displays of Chinese culture in the United States. In fact, most historians are in agreement with the assessment of the meaning of the Chinese participation. In the opinions of many Chinese reformers of the time and present-day scholars of modern China, the Chinese participation in the 1904 St. Louis exposition was one of the many examples of the

¹⁷ I am relying on Wang Cheng-hua’s and Susan Fernsebner’s studies for my general discussion of the 1904 St. Louis Exposition. I will only annotate sources for particular information not common to both research works.

Qing court's unsuccessful attempts to bring China to modernity. Ironically, the Qing government carefully planned out the exhibit. The Qing court sent one of its family members, Prince Pu Lun, as the Imperial High Commissioner to the exposition. Other representatives of the court, along with the officials of the Customs Service and merchants were also present. According to Wang Cheng-hua's detailed study of the exhibit, the Qing government spent three times more than it spent on other expositions. (p. 421) The records show that the objects selected for exhibition did not differ greatly from earlier displays. These included: carvings, ceramics, enamel ware, textiles and furniture. Interestingly, there were also porcelain figurines depicting the daily activities of Chinese, but much smaller than those displayed in Philadelphia. What stood out were antique objects such as bronzes and ceramics loaned by Duan Fang, a Manchu official who was also one of the modern collectors/dealers whose activities changed the attitudes about Chinese art, as will be discussed later. By far, the most noteworthy of the objects sent by the Qing government was an oil portrait of the Empress Dowager Cixi. So, if all the careful planning went accordingly, what happened?

The harshest criticisms came from a Chinese officer, Chen Qi. He co-authored with Chen Huide a book recording their travels. The title of the work, *Xin dalu Shengluji bolanhui youji* (A travel diary of the New World's St. Louis Exposition) was inscribed by Zhang Jian, one of the reformers who founded of the first Chinese modern museum. The two Chens covered a broad range of topics, much of which have been analyzed and put into the historical context by Wang Cheng-hua. The most telling controversy was Chen Qi's description of the argument between a visiting Qing government official and the Qing representative at the fair over the display of opium pipes and the small shoes for bound feet. (Fernsebner, p. 52-54) Chen Qi's point was that the decision to display these items was made by a Western customs official, Francis Carl, demonstrating the unresolved problem of the Qing government's management of fairs. Opium pipes and small-foot shoes had been shown in other expositions. Therefore, the reason why displays of old familiar objects became a problem was because of the changing attitudes about things and their meanings. For Chen Qi and many of the reform-minded Qing officials who had become more self-conscious about how China is perceived as a modern nation, the display of opium pipes and small shoes, previously considered examples of mundane daily goods, became representations of backwardness and thus images of national disgrace.

The problem of representation did not manifest itself only with the choice of objects on exhibit, but also with regard to how and where they were displayed. According to Wang Cheng-hua, the St. Louis exposition organizers had decided not to

organize the displays according to countries, but rather according to how the objects showed the progress of civilization. Each country displayed objects according to the themes of the twelve different exhibitionary halls, which were called “palaces.” They were: Arts, Education and Social Economy, Liberal Arts, Machinery, Manufactures, Mines and Metallurgy, Forestry, Fish and Game, etc. The Chinese representative Huang Kaijia requested that China be exhibited in one place. The St. Louis exposition organizers agreed and from their understanding of what the Chinese brought as objects of display, they decided that most of the entries should be shown in the Liberal Arts Palace. Objects that did not fit were displayed in other pavilions. The Chinese representatives accepted. (Wang, p. 445) This resulted in Chen Qi’s comments that everything about the Chinese displays, because most of them were put together in one hall, was “chaotic.” Chen criticized many of the displays as being misplaced in the wrong pavilions and unorganized. (Fernsebner, p. 48) In retrospect, we can only speculate that the Chinese were not yet aware of the growing importance of the classification scheme dictated by scholars and researchers in American museums and universities at this time. Nor were they sensitive to how the different classifications of objects also meant the positioning of the cultures according to their development. When we compare the photographs of the Chinese exhibits with displays from other countries, the Chinese exhibits were cluttered and disorganized while most of the other displays were orderly and arranged to types and sizes in the manner we are familiar with in modern museums today.¹⁸ Moreover, Chen lamented that the Chinese did not have more examples in the Arts Palace. Actually, the exposition organizers showed their respect to the Qing court by displaying the oil painting of the Empress Dowager Cixi in the Arts Palace, which, of course, was considered an exhibition space for the highest form of culture: art. Interestingly, Chen Qi did not have an issue with the painting.

I would like to end my discussion with a review of what the portrait of the Empress Dowager Cixi means for our understanding of China and Chinese art American museums. The painting was a work sent by the Empress Dowager to be part of the exhibit. The story behind the making of the painting is quite interesting and discussed by Wang Cheng-hua in her article on the St. Louis exposition and in an unpublished paper on how the Empress Dowager presented herself by the modern means of photography and oil paintings.¹⁹ Briefly, the oil painting was done by an

¹⁸ Since 2002 the Chinese have compiled and published materials from their previous participation in world fairs. For images of the 1904 St. Louis Exposition, see Ju Mi, ed. *Chinese Participation in the 1904 St. Louis Exposition: An Illustrated History*, 3 volumes, Shanghai: Shanghai Chinese Classics Publishing House, 2010.

¹⁹ I thank Wang Cheng-hua for letting me read her paper “Presenting the Empress Dowager to the World: Cixi’s Images and Self-fashioning in Late-Qing Politics,” paper presented at Columbia University, 2001.

American artist, Katherine Carl, who also happened to be the sister of Francis Carl, the customs official mentioned earlier. The idea of painting a portrait of the Empress Dowager was suggested by the wife of American ambassador to China, Sarah Conger, who thought a regal representation of the Empress Dowager at a world exposition would change her image that had been tarnished by her role in the failed Boxers' Rebellion. Cixi agreed. It took 9 months to complete. Katherine Carl published her experience living and working in the palace. Of interest to us, Carl stated that she had difficulties completing the portraits (she completed four) because the Empress Dowager and her court constrained her freedom of expression with restrictions and demands. The end result of the portrait is quite revealing of Carl's ingenuity in resolving the difference East/West modes of pictorial representation. It is a combination of the flatness and formalism of Chinese imperial portraits with a touch of western naturalism. Records indicate that Cixi was very pleased with the portrait. (Wang, p.424) The transport of the portrait to St. Louis and its unveiling at the exposition was conducted with pomp and circumstance befitting the Empress herself. A party given by Prince Pu to honor the unveiling was considered the greatest event of the Exposition. (Fernsebner, p. 37) The drama that accompanied the portrait and the presence of Prince Pu Lun and his attendants dressed in imperial gowns was described by Fernsebner as the Qing court's performance of "ritual celebrations." (p. 36-37) For Wang Cheng-hua, these celebrations and the exhibitions of the Empress Dowager's portraits and traditional objects were all indications that the Qing government was more interested in displaying the image of imperial grandeur than an image of a modern nation. (p. 469) Moreover, the disorganized displays were demonstrations of the Qing court's confusion about their role in relationship to the developing new modern China. (Wang, p. 475)

In light of the commentaries and studies of the Chinese participation in the exposition, I think the oil painting of the Empress Dowager Cixi is an interesting case study for the problem of what is "Chinese" art. The Qing officials who criticized the problematic representation of China at the exposition did not express anything about the portrait of Cixi. The painting was exhibited as part of the Chinese display, but it was done in oil by an American artist. It would seem that, at this time, the Americans and the Chinese notion of "Chinese" painting was more open. If we go back to look at the paintings made in China during the period of Nathan Dunn's Chinese Museum, or even those displayed in the 1876 Centennial International Exposition in Philadelphia, many of the works depicted Chinese subject matters but were executed in the descriptive manner of western painting and using western materials. They were, nonetheless, accepted as "Chinese" paintings.²⁰ Based on

²⁰ For a discussion of this issue see Craig Clunas's *Chinese Export Watercolours, V&A Far Eastern*

photographic images of the two expositions under discussion, there were also paintings on display that fit the 20th century understanding of “Chinese” painting, i.e. works done in ink and mineral colors on scrolls, album leaves and fans. But, most of these were probably not done by canonical Chinese artists as defined by the “orientalist” and “oriental” art historians of the 20th century, who had by this time made an impact on how Chinese art was to be understood for most of the 20th century. The quandary of how to classify Cixi’s portrait, and what to do with it, is shown by what has happened to it since the closing of the exposition. The Chinese delegation donated the portrait to the Smithsonian Institution. It is believed to have been stored and exhibited in the Smithsonian Building, or the Castle, for many years along with the other items left from the exposition.²¹ According to Wang Cheng-hua, the Smithsonian loaned the painting to the National Museum of History in Taipei in 1960 (p. 425). As far as I know it has not been exhibited. Again, if we eliminate our restrictive definition about Chinese art, or art in general, Cixi’s portrait is very instructive for our understanding of the politics as well as the aesthetics of the time period when it was painted. Although her name is hardly recognized today, in fact, Katherine Carl was an artist of importance at the time. One of her works was displayed at the 1900 Paris Exposition. (Fernsebner, p. 37)

III. Conclusion

Among the three examples of the Chinese presenting China to Americans—Nathan Dunn’s Chinese Museum; the 1876 Centennial International Exposition and the 1904 St. Louis Exposition—the Chinese display in St. Louis was the most problematic. Interestingly, it was the one that was organized solely by the Chinese. It failed not because it did not portray an authentic China; rather, the China represented by the organizers was anachronistic for the times. China was at the crossroad of change and there were much more voices regarding what China should be than the earlier displays of Chinese culture. On the one hand, the Qing court wanted to revive the glory of its imperial past, while on the other hand, the country was moving towards change and eventual revolution. Issues regarding culture and national identity were being debated at the time. In the area of art, the period from the end of the 19th century to the early 20th century was the time when the history of China and its art history were being written.²² The notion of art was very different

Series, London: Victoria and Albert Museum, 1984.

²¹ David Hogge, the archivist at the Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, provided me with a photograph taken at the Castle of the Smithsonian Institution.

²² There are many studies on the subject, in Chinese and English. For an example see Aida Yuen Wong’s *Parting the Mists: Discovering Japan and the Rise of National-Style Painting in Modern China*, Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2006.

from what was understood by Nathan Dunn and Robert Hart and their Chinese agents. By the turn of the 20th century, the image of traditional China was no longer represented by intricate crafts and luxury goods. Instead, traditional China was now represented by jades and bronzes from China's ancient past; the art of the court and the scholar-officials, and Buddhist sculptures.²³ Newly excavated archaeological objects and antiquities from households of the deposed imperial family and other political elites were entering a very active art market. Duan Fang, mentioned earlier, was one of many traditional scholar-officials who traded art with foreign art dealers and collectors. The idea of museums and its educational function was germinating, which eventually led to the founding of Zhang Jian's museum at Nantong, the opening of the Palace Museum and the Palace Museum's participation in the 1935 London International Exhibition of Chinese Art. In short, the 1904 St. Louis Exposition was the end of an era in Chinese art and the beginning of another one. Aspects of these new developments in collecting and museum displays will be discussed by the other members of the panel.

As I said in the beginning, I started out with this research project in order to understand how American museums have displayed Chinese art. I knew I had to first learn about the history of the collections. In the process, I realized that it was not simply the history of the collections that I had to become familiar with. More important, I had to know the social history of collections. In other words, in order to understand museum objects, whether as art or not, I have to know their different lives—that of their makers and users. And the objects being part of a museum collection, I also have to know the lives of their collectors, exhibitors and viewers. As Susan Pearce so aptly explained in her studies on museums, objects and collections:

Objects, we have noted, have lives which, though finite, can be very much longer than our own. They alone have the power, in some sense, to carry the past into the present by virtue of their 'real relationship to past events, and this is just as true for casts, copies and fakes as it is for more orthodox material... We must, therefore, try to understand how it is that objects can operate both in the past and in the present, how they work to create the present, what the nature of that relationship is, why it has such profound significance for us. (Pearce, p. 24)

In short, the histories of museum collections are complex, but important for our understanding of art and culture. There is much that I still need to do.

²³ An interesting study on the subject of how Buddhist objects became art see Donald S. Lopez' *Curators of Buddha: The Study of Buddhism under Colonialism*, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1995.

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