



## The maharaja's new clothes

An Art Deco jacket that the ruler of Bihar swapped at a party is one of the vibrant items at Asian Art in London, along with a lacquer and eggshell gorilla

**T**HE 18th Asian Art in London week of dealers' shows will soon be with us, running in Mayfair, St James's and Kensington Church Street galleries from November 5 to 14 ([www.asianartinlondon.com](http://www.asianartinlondon.com)). I wrote of it last year as the 14th, despite having all the handbooks from 1998. Maths has never been my strong point. I am confident, however, that 52 dealers are participating against last year's 55, with 12 incomers from Portugal, The Netherlands, Brussels, Milan, New York, Paris and Singapore—and one from Suffolk. There will be appropriate auctions at Bonhams, Christie's, Sotheby's and Dreweatt & Bloomsbury, as well as Woodley & Wallis in Salisbury, on November 17 and 18, and at Lyon & Turnbull in Edinburgh on December 1.

As usual, China and Japan will predominate, but there will be ample representation for the Arts of India and the Himalayan region, Korea, South-East Asia and the Middle East, including contemporary work in several fields.

Dealers report that the middle ranges of the Chinese market can be sluggish and the fevered speculation of recent years has largely subsided at the top, so it will be very interesting to see what will be the effect of China's economic downturn. Certainly, there is still an inordinate amount of money interested in the area and it may be predicted that the best will continue to attract.

Three dealers are celebrating round anniversaries with special shows—in order of seniority, they are Marchant of 120, Kensington Church Street; John Berwald, who has second-floor premises at 17, Clifford Street, off Bond Street; and Simon Pilling, a London dealer by appointment, who is showing at Gallery 8 in Duke Street, St James's.



Fig 1: *Orpiment* by Ando Saeko. With Simon Pilling

Marchant, a fourth-generation family firm, is celebrating its 90th year in the business, which, by happy coincidence, accords with its five-yearly exhibition of the finest Chinese jades. An accompanying book (£80) details 99 of the greatest pieces to have

passed through Marchant's hands, most notably the *Hodgeon Elyton*, shown in a major show at the V&A in 1975. The firm rightly prides itself on its research and scholarship, publishing collections and original purchase documents whenever possible.

The jades in the show date from the Song dynasty (960–1279) to the Qing; the majority of the latter are from the reign of Qianlong (1736–95). Among the stars is a large water buffalo ridden by a boy, which came from the collection of the marquis and marquise de Ganay, members of a French family that has distinguished itself in many fields, including collecting, from the 14th century to date. There is also an 18th-century pair of white-jade cups on their original lotus-shaped stands (Fig 2), which comes from a collection in Switzerland. The show will continue until November 20.

Another Chinese specialist, John Berwald, has enjoyed a penitential 30-year career in the business, in which he moved from Kensington Church Street to spend six years in New York and then came back to Mayfair. He deals in ceramics, sculpture and works of art from the Han to Qing dynasties, a selection of which will be on view around a special feature of eight Transitional pieces (Fig 4).

### Pick of the week

Harrogate's other antiques event, the Pavilions of Harrogate Fair, will run from October 30 to November 1 with about 50 local and national exhibitors ([www.cooperantiques.com](http://www.cooperantiques.com)). You will rarely see a better deal of folk art than the 19th-century chimney sweeps' Molly & Maud's Passion. This is a rare British rather than American, sunflower clock, working over 200 years, most have ceased to exist.



Fig 2 above: An illustration from *Gita Govinda* (about 1780). With Simon Ray



Fig 5. Taihu Rock of the Shaoyuan Garden, an ink on paper by Liu Dan. With Eskenazi



Fig 3 left: White-jade 18th-century cups on and stands. Exhibited with Marchant. Fig 4 below left: Transitional blue-and-white ceramic. With John Berwald



The Transitional period is the name attached to the name between the years 1620–83, when the Ming had lost control of the Imperial porcelain factory and the Qing had yet to take it over. Many of the blue-and-white wares of this period went to the Dutch market, others to Dutch sympathisers, such as Queen Mary II.

Celebrating a mere 10th anniversary, Simon Pilling is a Japanese-lacquer specialist. Although he does deal in early items, his particular focus is on 20th-century and contemporary practitioners (Fig 1). He finds much of his stock in Japan and is keen to arrange commissions of specific pieces for clients.

I don't think that it is any significant anniversary for Francesca Galloway—certainly not a half millennium—but she will exhibit 'Asian Textiles—500 Years'



along with Indian graphic arts from the Paul Walter collection. One of the more modern textiles is a colourful Art Deco silk jacket (Fig 6), which belonged to the Maharaja of Darbhanga, ruler of Bihar, for whom black may have seemed exotic, as he once exchanged dinner jackets with Sir John Whitty, the Governor, who also felt he had done well by the deal.

Other notable Indian shows will include 'Pigment, Form and Light: the Arts of India 1550–1900' at Prahlad Bubbar, 33, Cork Street and 'Jali stone screens from Mughal India' at Sam Fogg, on the corner of Cork and Clifford Streets. At 21, King Street, St James's, Simon Ray has Indian and Islamic works of art (Fig 2), including a fine Indian miniature of women with Chinese blue-and-white pots.

Across the road in Clifford Street, Eskenazi will show recent paintings by Liu Dan, one of the few contemporary Chinese artists to enthrall me. Working in traditional brush and ink and on a large scale, he has taken Italian Renaissance drawings as a starting point for abstract mountain landscapes. There are also meticulous studies of scholars' rocks, again on a large scale (Fig 5). It will be fascinating to see Raphael's *St Benedict receiving Maurus and Placidus* beside Mr Dan's response, *Redefining Plants of Matter*.

For the first time in some years, an Asian Art in London symposium will be held, at the Royal Institution in Albemarle Street on November 5, 10am–6pm. The theme will be 'The Psychology of a Collector' and participants will include Giuseppe Eskenazi, Nicole Rousmaniere of the British Museum, Tao Wang of Chicago and William Dalrymple, the author and historian.

The Gala part will be at the Mandarin Oriental Hotel on November 6 and gallery openings evenings will be in Kensington Church Street on November 8 and St James's on November 9 and Mayfair on November 9.

Next week Fairs of two cities

Fig 6: Art Deco silk jacket. With Francesca Galloway

