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Art News 1947

Museums

Geneva. A gallery containing Chinese and Japanese objects has been opened in the Ethnographical Museum.

London. The Print Room of the British Museum has reopened its students' room and its exhibition gallery with a show comprehending the finest things in the Department of Prints and Drawings as well as Indian paintings from the Department of Oriental Antiquities, together with thirteen selected manuscripts from the Department of Oriental Manuscripts.

Paris. At the Musée Guimet the first floor containing the rearranged collections of East and Central Asiatic Art and Afghanistan Art is now accessible to the public. The collection of Chinese Art has been enriched by contributions from the Louvre, but the rearrangement covers only the periods reaching until the twelfth century, whereas the second floor containing ceramics, lacquer, enamels, painting, and Japanese art is to be opened this year.

In the newly re-opened first floor a stele dedicated to the memory of Joseph Hackin has been erected in a room named after him and containing his last discoveries, especially Afghanistan ivories. Paul Pelliot's finds, particularly the Tun Huang collections, have been for the first time united in the Musée Guimet and were exhibited together with manuscripts likewise discovered by Pelliot and lent by the Bibliothèque Nationale for a several weeks show in memory of the late sinologist.

The Department of Oriental Antiquities at the Louvre, which had been closed since 1936, has been rearranged and opened to the public.

The Musée d'Ennery, which had been closed since the war, was reopened on November 5th. It contains the East-Asiatic collections of Georges d'Ennery.

Tokyo. The former Imperial Household Museums in Tokyo and Nara have been turned over to the Japanese nation as National Museum and Nara Branch Museum. The National Treasures Investigation Branch of the Ministry of Education and the Institute of Art Research were incorporated with the museums.

Acquisitions and Loans

Amsterdam. A large wooden figure of Avalokiteçvara attributed by Sirén to the twelfth century and purchased by the Museum of Asiatic Art in 1939 was cleaned last summer by F. A. J. Smoorenburg. Several layers of paint and paper dating from much later periods have been removed and the original polydromy of the work revealed. Especially remarkable is the gold-leaf decoration of the undergarment, executed in «kirikane», a technique which is extremely rare in what is left of Chinese plastic art and was probably applied in China only to masterpieces of painting and sculpture. The work before and after its cleaning has been reproduced by H. F. E. Visser, Curator of the Museum, in the Christmas Number of «The Illustrated London News».

Buffalo, N. Y. In «Hobbies», the magazine of the Buffalo Museum of Science (27, 4), Alfred Salmony describes the collection of Chinese stone sculpture given to the Museum by Baron von der Heydt (Ascona, Switzerland) as a permanent loan.

Chicago. The Art Institute has acquired an album of Chinese painting now remounted as a scroll. The work is in the style of Shen Chou of the Ming period and is entitled «Eight Views of Ma Wei».

Glasgow. A collection of approximately ninety pieces of oriental ivory has been presented to the Art Gallery by the Trustees of Miss Margaret H. Garroway.

Indianapolis. Twenty-five Sung porcelains have been presented to the John Herron Art Institute by Mr. and Mrs. Eli Lilly.

New York. The Review of the Year 1946 contained in the Summer Bulletin of the Metropolitan Museum of Art mentions as topping all the gifts received during this year the great «Anhalt Carpet» presented by the Samuel H. Kress Foundation. The carpet was woven at the state manufactory of the Safavid shahs probably between 1524 and 1535 and is supposed to have been part of the booty seized by the Allies in the battle of Vienna in 1683. It was owned by the Dukes of Anhalt at Dessau for a great many years.

Among other important acquisitions made by the Metropolitan Museum are the following: The portrait of a youth by the Persian miniature painter Riza-i-Abbasi dating from the beginning of the seventeenth century; a stone relief of an apsaras, dating about 500 A. D., from the Lung Mên cave temples, and the Robert Hamilton Rucker collection of Japanese sword furniture.

For a sum close to a million dollars the Metropolitan Museum of Art has purchased a major share of the private art collection of the late Joseph Brummer, art dealer and authority on Egyptian, Byzantine, Oriental art and on Roman and Greek sculpture. The acquisition comprises about 150 objects of Middle East, Classical and mainly Medieval art, ranging in date from 3000 B. C. to A. D. 1400. The most ancient pieces are of Sumerian origin and include a basalt head of Ur Nirgisin, ruler of Lagash, a small bronze statue of a bull and a bearded bull's head with inlaid eyes. There is also a bronze portrait of an Elamite nobleman, about 2000 B. C., considered to be one of the most interesting examples of early realistic portrait sculpture.

Exhibitions

Basle. Indonesian tissues including pieces lent by Dr. Werner Rothpletz and by public and other private collections were on show at the Museum of Arts and Crafts.

Berne. The Art Museum together with the Swiss Society of Asiatic Studies held an exhibition of old Islamic tissues and Indian miniatures from September 13th to November 16th.

Boston. The Museum of Fine Art has on view 220 pieces of Chinese ceramics ranging from 1200 B. C. to 1800 A. D. and lent by Mr. and Mrs. Eugene Bernat of Boston.

Detroit. An exhibition of Chinese ceramics held at the Institute of Arts until Oct. 26th contained more than 200 examples of pottery and porcelain, figures and vessels representing the great periods of Chinese ceramic from the Neolithic Age to the end of the eighteenth century. They were selected from the collection of C. T. Loo of New York and Paris.

The Hague. From June 21st to August 10th the Municipal Museum had an exhibition of Art of the Indian Archipelago comprising over 550 exhibits from the Museum itself and from the great museums of Leyden, Amsterdam and Rotterdam but especially little known items from small museums and private possession.

London. An exhibition of Art from the Dominions of India and Pakistan held at the Royal Academy was opened on Nov. 29th. It was the largest and most comprehensive exhibition of the fine arts of India ever seen in Europe and consisted of examples of Indian sculpture, painting, textiles, illuminated manuscripts, terra-cotta, metalwork and jewelry, most of which were lent specially for this exhibition by museums and private collectors in India. There was further a number of important loans from the Royal Collections in Great Britain. The galleries were arranged as far as possible chronologically. The first section contained finds from the Indus Valley city-states (3rd millenium B. C.) and examples of Mauryan and early Buddhist sculpture of the 2nd and 1st centuries B. C. This was followed by galleries containing sculpture of the Kushan period (2nd and 3rd centuries A. D.), and contemporary works of the school of Amaravati. The large gallery was devoted to works of Gupta and early medieval periods (5th – 8th centuries A. D.), and this was succeeded by several smaller galleries displaying later medieval sculpture and Southern Indian bronzes. In the section of paintings the Jain, Mughal and Rajput schools were fully represented, and Mughal textiles, jades and jewels were displayed in these rooms. A final gallery was reserved for examples of modern Indian painting.

The Indian Galleries of the Victoria and Albert Museum were opened with an exhibition of «The Human Form in Indian Sculpture». It comprised 45 objects owned by the Museum or lent by private collectors and covering the time from the 3rd millenium B. C. up to the nineteenth century. The original works were supplemented by photographs of the most important examples of sculpture in India and elsewhere.

The Oriental Ceramic Society had a loan exhibition of celadon wares running from Oct. 27th to Dec. 20th.

New York. The Metropolitan Museum showed Japanese prints of the Phillips collection, which was assembled in Japan, New York, London and Paris between 1911 and 1922 and came to the Museum by bequest in 1940. About 250 examples were exhibited, among them over 90 by Hokusai and a score by Hiroshige.

Excavations

Amman, Trans-Jordan. The fragments of a more than life-size marble statue of a Gaulish or other barbarian warrior in a pose of strenuous action has been

unearthed about half way up the south-east side of the citadel hill on a sort of terrace. The statue, which may date from the 2nd or 3rd century A. D., is said to be the finest classical sculpture yet found in Trans-Jordan or Palestine.

Atthana, Hatay prov., Turkey. On the site of the ancient Alalakh Sir Leonard Woolley has excavated the façade of a large building, probably a royal palace dating from the early 3rd millenary and ornamented with a row of mud-brick columns, further a palace dating from about 2500; some of its rooms were vaulted with brick, a feature without parallel in that time. He has finally discovered the tomb of Yarim-Lim, a Hittite king of the eighteenth century, and a complex series of buildings apparently necessary to the ritual of a royal burial. The tomb itself has not yet been found but in a chapel a stone portrait bust, probably of the king himself, which is said to be the finest Hittite sculpture yet known. Remarkable are the wig-like head-dress and a separate stone beard, which must have been attached to the head. The history of Alalakh could be traced. The town must have been founded by newcomers in the 4th millenary; the wheel-made pottery showing advanced features and painted decorations including bird and animal motifs is unique in so early a time. In a small neighbouring mound, Tell esh Sheik, a still older civilization dating from the very beginning of the Chalcolithic Era has been found. Its pottery was made without the wheel.

Brahmagiri, Mysore. Dr. R. E. Mortimer Wheeler, Director General of Archaeology in India, has systematically excavated a number of Megalithic cist-burials with so-called «portholes» and also the remains of a town. The chief burial-rites have thus been revealed. The excavation of both the town-site and the tombs has enabled the period of the tombs to be fixed with something like certainty to the last three centuries before the Christian Era. The town may be identified with the «Isila» mentioned in King Asoka's edicts.

Gumbad-I-Kabuz (Persia). Considerable quantities of ceramic wares have been excavated here. They were stored in terracotta jars filled with sand and, thus, are in perfect condition. They show signatures of potters hitherto unknown, which add Gurdan, a town in the vicinity, as a new name to the manufacturing centres already known. The dates lie between 1213 and 1223; the styles are like the examples of the well-known centres. The figure of a man, about 20 cm high, and some vases, however, are unusual.

Kadirli, Turkey. In the Taurus Mountains Professor Helmuth Th. Bossert, Istanbul, has discovered a fortified town dating from about the eighth century B. C., the period of small Hittite realms. The walls are about 2 m thick and have quadrangular towers; two monumental buildings are annexed to the gates. In a large entry-hall guarded by lion statues basalt blocks bear alternately reliefs and inscriptions, on the left side in Semitic, probably Phoenician letters, on the right in Hittite hieroglyphs. It is to be hoped they will help to decipher and to translate the Hittite language. The reliefs illustrate the life of the royal court. There is also a statue of a King, Aztuwada, whose name was hitherto unknown, whereas the name of his people, the Danuna, had already been mentioned. The discovery is thought to be of the greatest importance for the knowledge of Syrian-Hittite civilization, language, writing and art, possibly also of the beginnings of Greek art.

Mersin, Cilicia. According to a report submitted by Professor Garstang to the Académie des Inscriptions, the oldest layers of this site have now been investigated. They comprise three chalcolithic periods dating from the fourth millenary comparable to the corresponding layers in Mesopotamia. The same types of monochrome pottery, bearing geometrical decorations, have been found.

Sales

London. At Christie's, on June 19th, a small pair of Chinese porcelain figures of a man and a woman riding horses and a famille verte mug enamelled with horses, of the K'ang-hi period, brought 280 and 195 gns. respectively.

Paris. At an auction of East-Asiatica carried out by Léon Flagel on June 5th, two porcelain ibises enamelled white, plumage and beak brown and feet turquoise, K'ien-lung period, 50 cm high, brought Fr. 105000, other figures, vases and bowls Fr. 70000 and Fr. 80000 respectively.

Personalia

London. Sir Richard Winstedt, the former director and president of the Royal Asiatic Society, received its triennial gold medal for services to Orientalism.

Obituary

On August 25, in Brussels, Frans Cumont, historian of ancient religions, president of the Belgian Academy in Rome, former conservateur of the Musée du Cinquantenaire in Brussels, who organized expeditions to the provinces of the Black Sea, to Syria and to Dura-Europos, aged 79; in San Francisco, on August 30, Abraham Livingston Gump, art collector (especially of jades) and chairman of the gallery bearing his name, aged 77; on Sept. 9th, at Needham, Mass., Dr. Ananda Coomaraswamy, Fellow for Research in Indian, Persian and Mohammedan art at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, aged 70.

Extracts from *Pallas, International Art and Archaeology News Bulletin*, Geneva.
