



FAAC CHRONICLE

FALL 2021

From the President's desk

Have you visited the DIA lately? The Asian and Islamic galleries provide a historical and cultural window into our diverse communities and share common threads. The art collection is varied from ancient to modern. Since the initial installation, some of the artwork has been rotated out, and other works have gone on view. There are some stunning new art pieces on display now that should inspire a revisit!

For me, in the India gallery, the complex Chola period granite sculpture of Shiva with four heads looking in the four directions of the universe brings sheer joy. The sculpture evokes meditative calm, euphoria, the intense energy of life, and the very nature of being. I have encouraged my community to admire the symmetry of this intricate piece while discussing their personal interpretations of this and other pieces in the gallery. Subsequently many members have brought their families and grandchildren to explore the art.

This past year, Katherine Kasdorf, Associate Curator of Arts of Asia and the Islamic World, strived to keep you engaged with virtual talks and lectures that have been both educational and informative. In addition, some of our members have worked diligently with the DIA staff during the COVID-19 pandemic to bring virtual programs

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to the community. Jumana Cooper, FAAC Vice President led the thought-provoking book and movie clubs. Larry Baranski, Director of Public Programming, has worked with FAAC to facilitate virtual programs. Sharon Dow was a central player in organizing the month-long Asian Pacific American Heritage Month in May. Yen Ling Chou-Von Meister, Yee-Ho Chia, Li Hsieh, and Theresa Chang worked on a Thursdays at the Museum program in May titled “Studio Visit: Traditional Calligraphy with Dr. Shinming Shyu from Taiwan.” Li Hsieh and Theresa Chang worked on the “2021 Taiwan Bunun Indigenous Music & Film Festival” program in October. Thanks to Katherine, Larry, and these board members for their contributions to the FAAC.

In leadership news, we elected a new Board that was installed on September 14. The majority of our previous board members are continuing to serve. They have provided invaluable advice and service. We are welcoming six new members to the FAAC Board for a three-year term. Rhona Lee is an artist and graphic designer from the Taiwanese community. Karen Chopra, a lawyer, has an avid interest in miniature paintings from India. Vasu Tolia is an excellent artist and pediatric gastroenterologist from the Indian community. Rouba Ali-Fehmi, from the Arab American community, is a professor of pathology with a passion for art. Saeed Khan, a scholar and lecturer in Near East & Asian Studies and Global Studies, brings art into discussions of history and culture. Bob Tera is an investment manager with a collection and interest in Japanese art.

In other news, we recently hosted the Consul General of India from Chicago, Mr. Amit Kumar, at the DIA. He toured the Asian galleries with Katherine and was very impressed by our unique art collection.

Finally, as a DIA auxiliary, we have an initiative to increase public awareness and cultural exploration of Asian and Islamic art through the paintings, sculptures, manuscripts, ceramics, textiles, and other objects in the museum’s galleries. Our DIA collections present historical narratives that reflect diverse cultures from ancient periods through the present day. In addition, the Asian and Islamic galleries can provide a space for quiet contemplation or can encourage enlightened thinking on the balance between nature and humanity. Let us encourage potential museum goers from our communities to visit the DIA by initiating conversations to find common ground and our shared connections to art.

I thank you all for your continued support and commitment to our important work.

Anita Rajpal
President, Friends of Asian Arts and Cultures



ON THE COVER

*Charger, Ottoman Turkey,
1480–1500, underglaze-
painted fritware, 16 in. diam.
DIA 2006.58, Museum
Purchase, Robert H. Tannahill
Foundation Fund.*

CURATORIAL UPDATE

Katherine Kasdorf

Over the past nineteen months, as we've learned how to live amidst a pandemic, we've all needed to adapt to a "new normal." Gatherings are smaller. We wear masks in public indoor spaces. Many of us who have jobs that may be done remotely—myself included—work mostly from home.

The Friends of Asian Arts and Cultures, like all DIA auxiliaries, have also adapted the way we operate, shifting our meetings and programs online. At first, I was a little anxious about how this new format might impact our activities. It's exciting to bring experts to the museum for lectures, and we always enjoy spending time with each other during our events. But the online format proved to have more than one silver lining: Our lectures and other events have had record attendance, as FAAC members and broader audiences have been able to tune in from the comfort of their own homes, wherever they may be. Some of our programs have even attracted international audiences, bringing global awareness to FAAC. During virtual tours of our Islamic and Asian galleries, I've been able to show you beautiful textiles and paintings that were not currently on view, due to their light-sensitive nature. I've also been able to share with you online lectures and panel discussions hosted by organizations in other cities, some of which involved my participation. With these events taking place online, we have all been able to attend far more programs than would have been possible in person.

All this said, I suspect many of you will relate when I say that I miss holding in-person events. There's a different energy when we gather in the shared space of the museum; meeting on-screen, with our faces aligned neatly in a grid, just isn't the same. And while I've enjoyed creating virtual tours that include any artwork I please, there's no substitute for looking at art together in person.

At the DIA, we recognize the unparalleled experience of viewing art firsthand, and our galleries have remained open almost continuously since July 2020, with enhanced safety protocols for the health of our visitors and staff. Now, the museum is cautiously and gradually beginning to loosen some of its covid-related restrictions, as local and regional cases and public health guidelines allow.



Chinese, Vase, Song dynasty (960–1279), porcelain, 5 1/8 x 2 5/8 in. DIA 72.829, Gift of William B. Braeuninger

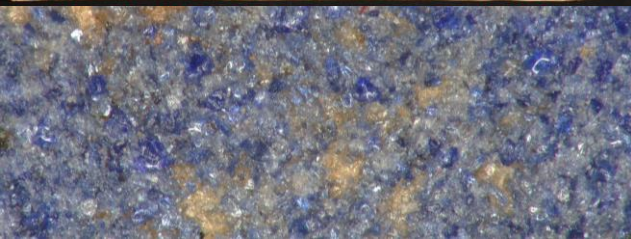
With FAAC, we hope it will be possible to resume some of our in-person events in calendar-year 2022, adapting to whatever safety protocols may be necessary at that time. We will provide more information about this as it becomes available. In the meantime, I hope you'll join us for [our next online lecture](https://www.dia.org/events/faac-virtual-lecture-prof-yunshuang-zhang-poetic-life-minded-things), at 6pm on November 11, with Professor Yunshuang Zhang of Wayne State University. An expert in Chinese literati and material culture ca. 800–1400, Dr. Zhang will speak about "A Poetic Life of 'Like-Minded Things,'" making some interesting connections between the activities of Song-period literati and our own era of social distancing. You can tune in from the comfort of your own home, wherever you may be. (FAAC Virtual Lecture with Prof. Yunshuang Zhang: A Poetic Life of "Like-Minded Things": www.dia.org/events/faac-virtual-lecture-prof-yunshuang-zhang-poetic-life-minded-things)



Figure 1: Christopher Foster using an x-ray fluorescence spectrometer to analyze the elemental composition of the pigments on the Qur'an folio (DIA 30.317, City of Detroit Purchase).



Figure 2: Indian, Kalpa Sutra folio, 16th century, opaque watercolor and gold on paper (DIA 72.792.50B, Gift of Dr. and Mrs. Leo S. Figiel and Dr. and Mrs. Steven J. Figiel), bottom image showing a microphotograph of the blue smalt pigment.



From the Conservation Department

Dr. Christina Bisulca

Andrew W. Mellon Conservation Scientist

Over the past year, the Conservation Department has been conducting more research on the DIA's collection of Asian and Islamic paintings and manuscripts. In figure 1, we see Christopher Foster, Paper Conservator, examining a large Qur'an page on parchment that has been in the DIA's collection since 1930. When acquired, the page was thought to be from 'Abbasid-period Iraq, ca. 9th–10th century, but in 2006 it was reattributed as a modern forgery, due to the peculiar outlining of the Arabic text. However, recent research by Dr. Eléonore Cellard, postdoctoral fellow at the Collège-de-France in Paris, has revealed new information about related pages in Paris, Istanbul, and Cairo. Dr. Cellard has convincingly argued that related pages with the same style of outlined script were part of a Qur'an volume produced in Fatimid-period Egypt, during the 11th or 12th century, written in an earlier style of calligraphy called Kufic. Conservation research at the DIA supports the premodern dating of the page; the pigments and ink identified are consistent with those found in other contemporaneous manuscripts. Thanks to this combination of technical and art historical research, the page has now been reattributed again, to 11th–12th-century Egypt.

We have also initiated a broad survey of the pigments and dyes used in the Asian painting, as these materials are less well studied than those found in Western painting. This study was prompted by Harvard University's Mapping Color in History Project (MCH) which brings together scientific data drawn from existing and on-going material analyses of pigments in Asian painting in a historical perspective. MCH provides a searchable digital platform for participating institutions to share pigment and dye information obtained based on scientific analysis. With MCH, our results can ultimately be used to note temporal, regional, and cultural trends in the materials and methods used in Asian painting. This will also reveal the introduction of imported Western painting materials across Asia. One of the works being analyzed is shown below: a 16th-century Kalpa Sutra manuscript page from India. Blue areas were found to be



Figure 3: Korean, Ksitigarbha as Supreme Lord of the Underworld, early 18th century, opaque watercolor and ink on silk, 86 x 118 in., DIA 24.106, City of Detroit Purchase.

made with the pigment smalt. Smalt is it is prepared from finely crushed cobalt blue glass; these glass fragments are visible in the bottom image of figure 2. In the 16th century, smalt was likely prepared from cobalt ores mined in Iran. Based on research by MCH, by the seventeenth century, India likely started importing this pigment from Holland through the Dutch East India Company. By analyzing more paintings and comparing smalt compositions, we will get a fuller picture of trade materials throughout Asia.

We also plan to continue analysis on a Korean temple banner, representing Ksitigarbha as Supreme Lord of the Underworld, dated to the early 18th century (figure 3). The silk support is deteriorated and appears embrittled with large fractures which in some areas has led to total loss. Based on our analysis to date, areas with severe silk deterioration are associated with a green copper chloride pigment, whereas stable green areas are painted with malachite. Copper chloride pigments are synthetic, and their use throughout Asia will be investigated as part of MCH. Concurrent with this, we also plan a more detailed analysis as to why this pigment has caused deterioration of the silk substrate. We are currently seeking funding for the temple banner's conservation treatment, and will continue technical research in conjunction with this work.

DIA FAAC

FAAC Member

Robert Jacobs

Art Collector

I was fortunate to have been exposed to magnificent art in museums from early childhood, but it wasn't until I took an Art History class my senior year at the University of Michigan that I developed what evolved to be a life-long passion. I began to travel to New York and Europe in order to spend long periods of time in museums, voraciously viewing as much as I could. My early areas of interest were somewhat narrowly limited to the paintings and Egyptian art that I had been exposed to in class. In 1975, I purchased my first piece—a photolithograph by Robert Rauschenberg—primarily because I had recognized it from my university course; I hadn't fully developed my own tastes at the time.

My interest expanded to African art in the 1980s after I became a regular visitor to the Donald Morris Gallery in Birmingham, Michigan, which had an impressive selection of beautiful and dramatic things. I bought a painting by Lester Johnson because of the intense colors and abstract shapes. Various collectors, artists and curators would meet at the gallery and engage in lively discussions about paintings and sculpture (I did more talking and listening than buying). It was there around 1985 that I met Michael Kan, then curator of African art at the DIA, who became my mentor and advisor. I was curious, eager to learn how to discern quality and authenticity of various works, and to hear advice from knowledgeable people.

An art critic who wrote for *The Detroit Free Press*, Marsha Miro, suggested that I go to the DIA to see as much art as I could and discover what I was really attracted to—and I did. Despite the good advice and direction I received, my first forays into collecting African art were not all successful; I bought more than a few mediocre pieces, but vowed to learn from my mistakes. Under Michael Kan's tutelage, I began buying better African pieces, including a great Dogon figure from a New York dealer named Mert Simpson, which I subsequently donated to the DIA. In living with and comparing the best pieces with those of lesser quality, I began to recognize the important differences in craftsmanship and innovation. Over the years, Stephen Morris, Carlo Bella and other African dealers taught me how to appreciate the quality of sculpture from all sides, including negative space.

My love of Asian art started around the time I began studying the practice of yoga, which I initially began primarily for health reasons. Over many years, I began to appreciate the spirituality and value of becoming more reflective and introspective. I especially loved the faces of Cambodian sculpture, with their gentle, serene smiles which evoked a calm sense of peace and contentment. I began collecting Asian art in 1994 when I purchased a Cambodian Vishnu in New York. In addition to enjoying stone sculpture, I also began collecting bronze sculptures, Indian paintings and Tibetan furniture. I loved the Hindu and Buddhist iconography in Cambodian and

Indian art, because they made me feel a sense of being in the presence of a higher force. The naturalistic beauty of Asian art satisfies a different, more spiritual need for me than African art, which I love because of its strength and more abstract shapes.

In looking at any piece of art, I listen to my heart. If I love a piece, only then do I analyze other features such as authenticity, quality, and how it may fit into my existing collection. I have been incredibly fortunate to have met many dealers that were very trustworthy and generous with their time, which has made a huge difference when it comes to my appreciation and love of Asian art, including John Eskenazi (London), Annie

Kevorkian (Paris), Marcel Nies (Antwerp), and Carlton Rochell (New York). I owe additional gratitude to the curators Heather Ecker (Dallas) and Katherine Kasdorf (Detroit) from whom I have learned so much.



Avalokiteshvara, Indonesia (Sumatra), 8th–9th century, bronze with traces of gilding, approx. 16 x 9 x 4 in. Collection of Robert and Katherine Jacobs.



IT HAS BEEN A FANTASTIC JOURNEY
Asian Pacific American Heritage Month Celebration
Sharon Dow
Treasurer, Friends of Asian Arts and Cultures

May is the commemorative Asian Pacific American Heritage Month (APAHM). In partnership with its auxiliary group, Friends of Asian Arts and Cultures (FAAC), the Detroit Institute of Arts (DIA) celebrated APAHM 2021 with an online series of cultural programming, beginning with the Opening Ceremony on May 1 and concluded with the Closing Performance on May 29.

The DIA APAHM 2021 program series featured more than twenty events, including films, music and dance performances, puppet shows, art and cooking demonstrations, panel discussions, and more. Throughout the program, professional and community cultural groups showcased a blend of traditional and contemporary artistry across more than ten different Asian cultures, including Chinese, Indian, Indonesian, Japanese, Korean, Filipino, Mongolian, Taiwanese, Thai, and

Vietnamese—which delivered engaging experiences filled with tradition and innovation.

The celebration launched with an Opening Ceremony featuring remarks from leadership and a contemporary dance performance. The messages from DIA Director Salvador Salort-Pons, State Senator Stephanie Chang, and Representative Padma Kuppa set a focused tone to support the Asian American and Pacific

Islander communities, with appreciation for their long history of contributions to the nation. Dancer and choreographer Joori Jung's performance, "A Journey with Minari," took inspiration from the acclaimed film, *Minari*, and her own experience moving to America to reflect on the hope, determination, and resilience required to follow one's dreams.

The large variety of APAHM 2021 events addressed a range of interests. Artists, dance enthusiasts, music lovers, and families could experience contemporary dance based on a traditional Korean Tea Ceremony, the powerful sounds of a Japanese Taiko Drum Ensemble, Mongolia's unique traditional music of Morin Khuur, the energetic music of Asian Sound Revolution, performances of Chinese songs and Motown favorites by recording artist ZiZi, Taiwanese and Indian shadow puppet performances, a viewing and director's discussion of the documentary film *Edo Avant Garde*, and more.

The celebration concluded on May 29th with "Find It... Every Dream," a collaborative Closing Performance that included artists featured throughout month and drew attention to the metaphors and symbolism in the performances of regional arts and cultural organizations led by Asian/Pacific Islander Americans. As Henry Tanaka, DIA 2021 APAHM Closing Performance Narrator, said:

America is created by people from different parts of the world. We came here bringing the threads of our culture that have been woven into the fabric of our great country, the American dream. Asia encompasses many different unique nationalities and cultures. Each brings arts that are rich in history, and spirituality. If we choose to see the metaphors and symbolism of the cultures, we can begin to understand our commonalities and differences.

The DIA and FAAC joined the nationwide APAHM Celebration in 2018, inspired by the opening of the museum's Robert and Katherine Jacobs Asian Wing. As part of our ongoing commitment to deepen engagement with members of the Asian Pacific American community, the DIA's APAHM programming has been developed every year to celebrate the rich cultural contributions of Asian Pacific American communities representing diverse cultures and traditions.

Most APAHM 2021 programs are still available to view on the DIA's YouTube Channel, under the "Videos" tab. Live programs can be viewed on DIA's YouTube channel or Facebook page. Please visit DIA website for program details, and join us in our adventure through the artistic universes of Asia. (www.dia.org/apahm2021 | www.facebook.com/DetroitInstituteofArts | www.youtube.com/DetroitInstituteArts/playlists search for playlist "APAHM 2021")



East Meets West:
Korean Tea Ceremony
performed by ArtLab J
with the artwork
designed by Korean-
Detroit artist Mike Han.

FAAC BOOK AND MOVIE CLUB: THE YEAR AHEAD

The FAAC Book and Movie Club had a wonderful year. With your help, suggestions, and attendance, we successfully connected on Zoom for robust discussions of books and movies with guest speakers including authors, history professors, museum curators, and movie critics. This year, we will continue to meet virtually via Zoom until further notice. We invite you to submit suggestions for books and movies for 2021–22. As our club members expand, we have instituted coherent parameters as to who we are and why we came to form the FAAC BOOK AND MOVIE CLUB.

WHO WE ARE: We are a book club and film-discussion group with a diverse membership, drawn from throughout the Detroit area, that shares an interest in Asian and Middle Eastern art, history, and culture. The idea for the club grew out of our involvement with the Detroit Institute of Arts' membership auxiliary group, Friends of Asian Arts and Cultures (FAAC). As FAAC Board members, we wanted to offer our general membership additional opportunities to engage with Asian and Middle Eastern arts and cultures outside the museum. To that end, we formed a book club and film-discussion group in 2020. Members meet regularly to enjoy lively and fascinating discussions on wide-ranging topics from a variety of geographical and cultural contexts.

WHO CAN PARTICIPATE: Members of FAAC are automatically included. All members are encouraged to suggest books or films for consideration. Please contact the coordinator, Jumana Cooper (jumana@comcast.net), with suggested titles. Guests who are not yet members of FAAC may also attend the FAAC book and movie clubs. We also welcome guest speakers, with prior approval. Before extending any invitations, please make sure your suggested title and guest speaker have been cleared with FAAC book and movie club leadership.

BOOK AND FILM SUBJECTS

Availability: When suggesting a title, please take into consideration length of book or movie, as well as its availability on Amazon, Netflix, or in local libraries.

Subject: Historical fiction, narrative, novel, non-fiction, biographies, any genres that expand our understanding of Asian and Middle Eastern art, history, and culture.

ANNOUNCEMENTS FOR DISCUSSION DATES

The schedule of meetings will be sent to all FAAC members.

Further details about meetings will be sent to members who register for the FAAC book and/or movie clubs.

LEADERS: Jumana Cooper, Freda Giblin, David Morrison, Emmy Peck, Anita Rajpal
COORDINATOR: Jumana Cooper

Book Club Discussion

Tuesday, January 18, 2022 at 6:30 p.m.
The Silver Swan: In Search Of Doris Duke – by Sallie Bingham
<https://salliebingham.com/tag/doris-duke>

Tuesday, May 17, 2022 at 6:30 p.m. - TBD

Movie Club Discussion

Tuesday, February 15, 2022 at 6:30 p.m.
The Man Who Sold His Skin (Tunisia) 2020 - by Kaouthar ben Hania
Amazon Prime:
https://www.amazon.com/gp/video/detail/B091TKJN5D/ref=atv_dp_share_cu_r

Tuesday, April 19, 2022 at 6:30 p.m.
Little Big Women (Taiwan) 2020 - by Joseph Chen-Chieh Hsu
Netflix:
https://www.imdb.com/title/tt12397078/?ref=ext_shr_lnk

Tuesday, June 21, 2022 at 6:30 p.m.
Lagaan: Once Upon A Time In India (India) 2001 - by Ashutosh Gowariker
Netflix:
https://m.imdb.com/title/tt0169102/?ref=ext_shr_em

Tuesday, August 17, 2022 at 6:30 p.m. - TBD

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