

P R E F A C E

IN MAKING THIS CATALOGUE I feel that it is more of a final inventory as I think the collecting of Chinese sculptures is nearly at its end. We must acknowledge, unfortunately, many easily accessible monuments have been damaged and fragments taken out of China.

Merely by accident did I enter the market of Chinese sculpture and perhaps influenced its development. I remember one day in the spring of 1909 I called at the Musée Cernuschi in Paris to inquire for the Director, Mr d'Ardenne de Tizac, whom I did not know at that time. During our conversation he showed me a picture of a stone head and this fine stone immediately awakened in me a desire to develop a new line in Chinese Art. Up to this time, with the Art center in Paris, we were dealing only in Ch'ing porcelains, particularly three colors on biscuit and at this time the famous Morgan, Altman and Salting Collections were made. Also there began to appear on the market archaic ceramics followed by the bronzes which were introduced by the Yu (wine vessel) in 1910 and now in the Eumorfopoulos Collection at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

I immediately mailed a photograph of the stone head to my partner in China and soon received word telling me that one of his buyers was traveling as interpretor in Sian fu for Mr Marcel Bing, a French dealer. While they were talking to a local dealer Mr Bing kicked something hard under a table at which he was sitting. This was the head in which we had been interested and Mr Bing buying it for ten Chinese dollars eventually sold it to the Stoclet Collection in Bruxelles.

A few months after this I received a cable from my Peking office telling me that they had secured eight life size stone statues. Not knowing how to dispose of these I wired to get rid of them in China but being unable to do so they were finally shipped to me in Paris. Upon their arrival I showed them to all the dealers but not one wanted to buy and as I could not sell any early things I asked Mr Charles Vignier to take a half share in order to help me to sell them. Photographs were presented all over Europe but all in vain and so in the winter of 1914-15, when I went to America, I took a set of the photographs with me to show in this country.

I first approached Dr Gordon of the University Museum in Philadelphia, whom I had never met before. He told me that he had already seen the set, had liked them, but had not cared to buy from the man who presented them. During our conversation we both realized that it would be of vital importance to gather a collection of Chinese sculptures, if possible, and so to start he bought three of my set. Following this the fourth was bought by Mrs Eugene Meyers, the fifth by the Detroit Institute, the sixth was sold by Demotte to an American collector and the two remaining smaller ones were sold to Madame A. Saint in France and exhibited in the Orangerie in 1935, Nos. 26-27. In addition to the set of three Dr Gordon purchased several other sculptures thus making the opening of Harrison Hall in 1915 a great revelation to the public.

These figures originally came from Nan Hsiang t'ang, near Chang-te fu in Honan which was a summer palace of the Emperor K'ai Hwang, Sui Dynasty, 581-604 A.D. At the death of the Emperor they transformed the palace into a temple where he was buried, which makes us classify the figures as contemporary with the death of the Emperor. We have secured also several

heads from this temple, one extremely fine example is now in the Robert W. Bliss Collection, having been owned previously by a Swedish collector, one in the Metropolitan Museum in New York, one in the University Museum in Philadelphia, one is No. 26 in this catalogue and a full size figure remains in our Paris Gallery.

Following the Revolution in 1911 sculptures gradually came into the market and many fine examples were taken from the Lung Men caves. About 1909 a monumental work by Prof E. Chavanne was issued covering his research on the Chinese stone monuments, "La Mission Septentrionale de la Chine" which had an enormous bearing on the development of interest in Chinese sculptural art.

While the ceramic ware has had an uninterrupted development of over 2000 years, the sculptural evolution is intermittent. The longest period is probably during the Buddhist era of the VIth, VIIth, VIIIth and IXth Centuries when the finest sculptures were conceived. Four hundred years of devotion and inspiration, while only some forty years of unfortunate circumstances has consummated the removal or partial destruction of some of the famous Buddhist sanctuaries.

I feel so ashamed to have been one of the sources by which these National treasures have been dispersed. Our only excuse is that none have ever been taken by us but all bought in the open market in competition with other buyers. China has lost its treasures but our only consolation is, as Art has no frontiers, these sculptures going forth into the world, admired by scholars as well as the public, may do more good for China than any living Ambassador. Through the Arts, China is probably best known to the outside world. Our monuments may be preserved even better in other countries than in China, because of constant changes and upheavals and so our lost treasures will be the real messengers to make the world realize our ancient civilization, and culture thus serving to create a love and better understanding of China and the Chinese people.

C. T. Loo