



Mr. Loo today: examining a Sung painting he sold to Mrs. William H. Moore in 1915. Photograph by Rudolph Burckhardt at the China Institute.

By Henry A. La Farge

Mr. Loo and the China trade

Almost seven hundred years ago Marco Polo, returning to Venice from China, described Hangchow, then capital of the Sung Emperors, as "beyond dispute the finest and noblest city in the world," its merchant princes "living nicely and delicately as kings" and entertaining foreigners "in the most winning manner." Yet it is only in our century that the springs of that ancient culture have begun to be revealed in the great works of art that have emerged from China since 1900. In the small, distinguished group of scholars and collectors who have brought this about, there must be included a dealer, Ching Tsai Loo of Peking, Paris and New York who, now seventy years old, recently announced his forthcoming retirement and the liquidation of his fifty-year-old firm.

The activities of this slightly built, cultivated merchant have played a major part in uncovering some of the great masterpieces of China's bronze and golden ages, and helped to build many important collections in Europe and America. Speaking French and English fluently—generously interspersed with liquid "L" sounds for "R's," which the Chinese-born never completely divests himself—and married to a Frenchwoman, Mr. Loo is completely Europeanized, yet retains an Oriental fastidiousness of taste and charm of manner.

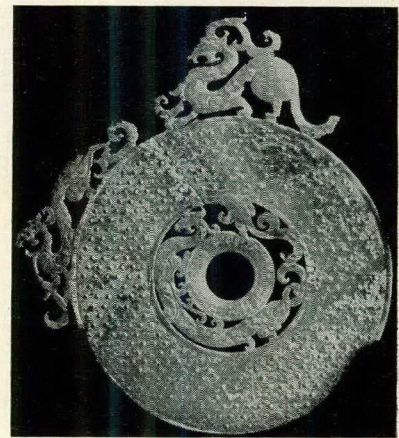
When he started in business, in Paris at the turn of the century, the rage for Chinese porcelains was at its height. Of course, it had been the rage for over two hundred years, as the old inventories of Versailles, of the royal factories at Meissen and numerous other collections abundantly confirm; but, like English Lowestoft, most of these early importations were made specifically for the European trade and almost all incorporated European designs such as coats-of-arms. The shrewd Chinese potters even executed Rococo designs sup-

plied by artists like Fragonard and Pillement, but pure Chinese motifs remained largely unknown. Although in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries there was a vogue for blue-and-white and single color wares, these appear today but crude provincial imitations of pieces made specifically for emperors and princes, which only started to come out of China after the Boxer Rebellion in 1900 and the looting of palaces. Only then did the West get a vision of the best K'ang Hsi porcelain. The superlative quality of these, their purity of form, the infinite variety of designs and the sparkling yet subtle color were a complete revelation. C. T. Loo was one of the first to introduce these fabulous objects in the Paris of the early nineteen hundreds, and his role as an educator of true Chinese taste immediately became apparent. In America, collectors like Benjamin Altman, Samuel Peters, J. P. Morgan and Henry Clay Frick eagerly invaded the field, bidding against each other with figures ranging from fifty to a hundred thousand dollars for supreme examples of black hawthorne and *famille verte* figured vases. Through the years, only John D. "Lockefeller"—as C. T. Loo inevitably pronounces it—has continued to collect K'ang Hsi porcelains, and his collection today is undoubtedly the greatest in the world.

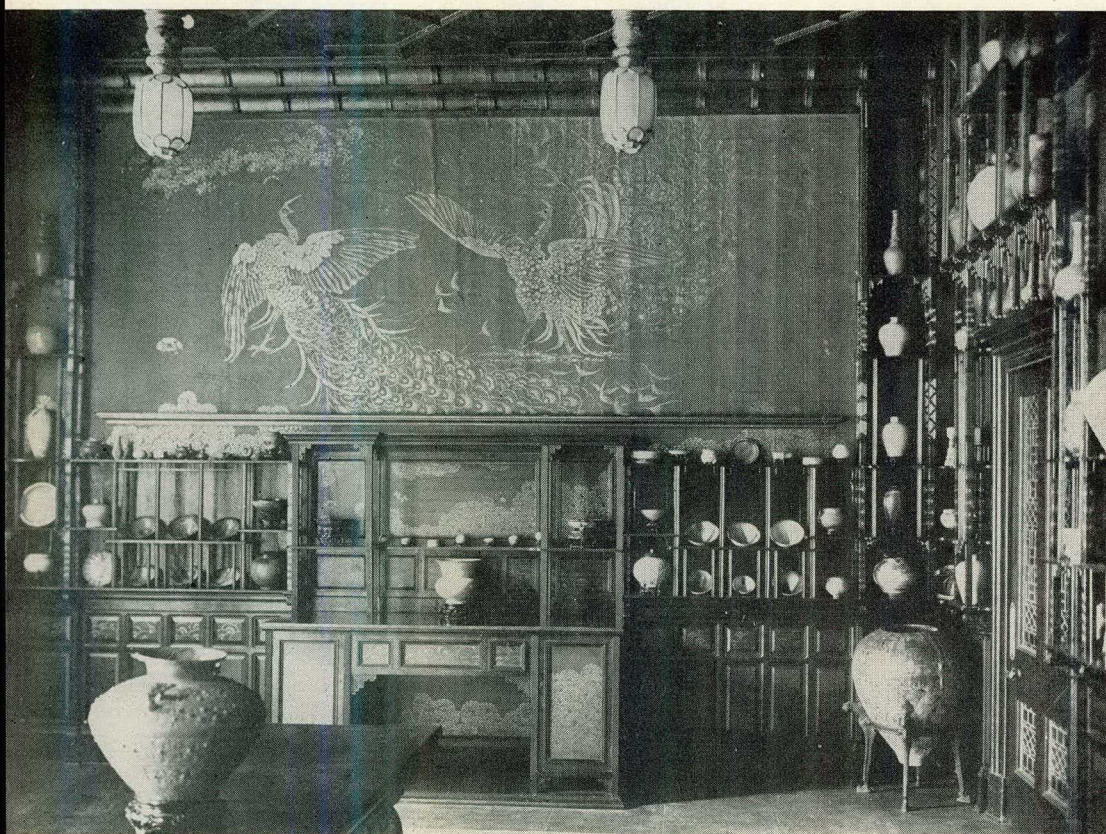
Laurence Binyon has noted that even these objects, which are among the highest achievements in decorative art, are, after all, only the products of China's decadence. He pointed to the simpler and grander forms of earlier periods. The statement is a clue to the evolution [Continued on page 57]



Ritual bronze vessel: Shang Dynasty (1766-1122 B.C.); Mrs. William H. Moore.



Archaic jade: Late Chou Dynasty (771-256 B.C.); Nelson Gallery, Kansas City.



Sung painting: *Taoist Patriarch* (detail), by Wan Li-yung; Nelson Gallery.

Around 1900 taste favored Oriental art in decorative motifs like Whistler's *Peacock Room* (left), shown as it was in Freer's Detroit house. Since the 'twenties, interest has turned to the dynamic forms of early Chinese art, in objects like the above from C. T. Loo.

important art movements that it witnessed. Outside the museums, only the Galerie Charpentier could secure canvases important enough to fill the ranks labeled Impressionism, Cézanne, fauvism, cubism. Cézanne, Renoir, Monet, Manet, Pissarro, Braque, Picasso, Delaunay, La Fresnaye, Utrillo, Van Dongen, in their best manner, are among the giants who march in this section. The other half is their contrasting contemporaries who rallied to the banners of conservatism, if not downright academicism. While Bonnat, Brisepot and other pillars of the Salon are included, the stress is rather on those better painters who have left more valid pictorial evidence—men like Béraud, Raffaelli, Luigi Loir, who convincingly evoke "the good old days (see page 17).

The Galerie Bernheim-Jeune, whose founders were his dealers, will present an important Bonnard retrospective. André Weil will present a Pissarro retrospective, and Maeght's will have Miró's recent sculpture on view until mid-June, then Calder's "machins" until the end of the month. Maeght will stay open through the summer with a choice from its exhibition of the past year—Braque, Bazaine, Miró, Adam, Chagall and Calder. Drouant-David's will show sculpture by Jean Matisse early in July.

Outside Paris

In the provinces, the summer's most important event may well be the formal opening of the tiny chapel at Vence entirely conceived and decorated by the last named artist's

illustrious father, Henri Matisse, who considers this the chef-d'oeuvre and the logical culmination of his career. Matisse has worked on his project for the past two and a half years, a great part of the time in the bed in Nice to which a serious illness has confined him. When his condition and the weather permit, a car takes him to Vence for rapid inspections of the project, now completed, of which he was architect, for which he designed the murals, the stained glass, the tiled floor, the altar, chandeliers, painted the Stations of the Cross and even designed the altar cloth.

The Dijon Museum will exchange exhibitions with Rotterdam and will receive a generous showing of fifteenth- to seventeenth-century Dutch art in June and July. In Toulouse

will be "The Spain of Painters" until summer closing. Quimper plans "The School of Pont-Aven" for July. Nearer Paris, the Château de Sceaux will evoke the "Vanished Royal Dwellings"—the châteaux of Saint-Germain, Marly, Saint-Cloud, Bellevue, Meudon and Choisy-le-Roi (through July).

Last but not least in interest to Americans will be a tour, which leaves Paris early in June, of the first all-out show by American artists residing in France. Sponsored by the Cultural Relations section of our Embassy, severely chosen by a Franco-American jury from 400 works submitted, those of fifty Americans will travel to Marseilles, Lyons, Monaco, Bordeaux, Lille and Strasbourg during the next six months.

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of Western taste for the art of the Far East. In America, scholars like Okakura—called the "William Morris of Japan"—and Ernest Fenolosa, onetime professor of philosophy at the University of Tokio, recognized Japan's immense cultural debt to China. By the 'eighties, they were aware of the existence in Japan of reverently preserved collections of Chinese art, and were the prophets of the fact that the central tradition of Asiatic art must be sought in China, much as the West looks toward ancient Greece. Unfortunately examples were lacking in Europe and America, and this insufficiency of data largely colored Western no-

tions of Oriental art. In these circumstances, the activities of C. T. Loo, together with archaeologists like Sir Aurel Stein, Von Le Coq and Pelliot, assumed significant proportions. With a scholarly approach and a sense of history, Loo had the advantage of intimate contacts with original sources and was able to acquire great works of art which he channeled into the hands of collectors eager to explore the uncharted hinterland of Chinese culture. In 1909, he introduced the first sculptures of the T'ang and earlier dynasties. The great fifth-century stone lions at the University Museum in Philadelphia came from him, and

interest was awakened in the early Buddhist sculptures on the arrival of fragments from the cave temples of Yüing K'ang and Lung Mén in northern China. Dating from the second to the fifth centuries of our era, these are the equivalent in monumentality and richness of iconography to the greatest examples of Romanesque art—to Moissac and Vézelay.

At about the same time, an early Chou bronze was accidentally discovered by a friend of Loo's who was digging a well for a new house in the Chansa Province. It was the first archaic bronze vessel to be found, and, brought to Europe by Loo, is

now in the Eumorfopoulos Collection, (which has passed to the Victoria and Albert Museum). In this connection, it is interesting to follow the development of taste in Charles L. Freer of Detroit, founder of the Steel Car Construction Company and pioneer collector of Oriental art in America. A friend of Whistler, he at first shared the latter's reverence for Japanese decorative motifs and attempted to correlate the "modern art" of his time with Eastern cultures. This aim reflects an idea then prevalent that there was something infallible in Oriental design. But Whistler's famous *Peacock Room*, commissioned for Freer's house in

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Detroit (p. 43), now seems dated and a somewhat incongruous setting for archaic bronzes and Sung ceramics. Fortunately Freer preserved his own intuitions and possessed indefatigable enthusiasms. He traveled all over China and Japan, learning as he went, establishing relations with diplomats, scholars and merchants; and with vast means at his disposal, brought together a fabulous collection, numbering over six thousand objects by 1912, when the Freer Gallery in Washington was established. In his later years, largely through C. T. Loo, Freer's eyes were opened to early Chinese sculptures and the extraordinary jades and bronzes of China's feudal beginnings. In 1915 he bought from Loo a group of archaic bronzes, the first in America. They were dug up at night by farmers from the ground at Anyang—site of the capital of the Shang emperors (1766-1122 B.C.)—smuggled past the local authorities and taken to Peking, where they were acquired by Loo. Bristling with mysterious projections and abstract convolutions, these amazing objects of incredible technical skill established once and for all what were the native origins of Chinese art.

With these revelations, there arose an entirely new attitude toward

Oriental art. No longer content with acquiring random objects of unknown or doubtful provenance, which happens so easily in the art markets of Shanghai or Tokio, it now became the aim of collectors to exercise a more scholarly approach. Men like the flour millionaire, the late Alfred Pillsbury in Minneapolis—who started with porcelains, then turned to archaic jades in 1916, and finally to bronzes in 1926—sought out examples from the far reaches of central China. It is related that it was Loo who introduced the Swedish Sinologist Karlgren to Alfred Pillsbury, but that Loo "made the collection." Thus archaeological knowledge became gradually more important than aesthetic judgment, and far-flung expeditions were organized by institutions like the University Museum in Philadelphia and the Field Museum in Chicago. These have widened and deepened our knowledge of China's four-thousand-year-old civilization; and for the enjoyment of future generations remain the archaic jades and bronzes in the Winthrop and Pillsbury Collections, the paintings in the collection of Mrs. W. S. Moore, not to speak of Kansas City's Nelson Gallery, the Chicago Institute and the Freer Gallery, Washington.

Albright continued from page 47

I Did Not Do, which he completed after ten years' work, in 1941, Albright prepared to resume painting on this picture in the spring of 1948. In order to simulate the lighting conditions in his old Warrenville studio, he bought a two-story house on once-fashionable Ogden Avenue on Chicago's near-north side and commissioned architect Andrew Rebori to design special skylights for the upper floor. Next, the setup in Warrenville was carefully documented, dismantled and shipped in fifty packing boxes to Chicago.

Last January Albright finished re-assembling the still-life and in February he began to check the lighting, an important procedure since the eerie phosphorescence of the artist's work is in large part due to the top lighting under which he composes. To aid in controlling the illumination in his studio, Albright had special blinds designed to measure out each fraction of light. In addition, the three major elements of the setup—the tree, the window and the interior of the room—were mounted on casters so that they could be easily moved around the studio on days when the light is difficult to work in. So strongly does Albright feel about light, that he thinks the "only place a picture should be hung is in the place it is painted." For this reason he has composed *The Window* under museum lighting conditions.

Through Albright's striving for contorted movement in space several changes have been made in the still-life since its reassembly. The brick wall was rebuilt with a slight twist to give a swelling motion; a branch of the tree was moved to the right to form "a cavity of space" between it and the wall. Eventually the tree will be split and attached permanently to this section in the setup, for Albright must work directly from life.

At least four more months will be spent on strengthening and sharpening the tones of the charcoal drawing shown on these pages. Then, when Albright feels the canvas won't hold any additional modeling, he sprays it with fixative and using this as sizing, begins to paint directly on the drawing. Although Albright says "there is no point in going too far in the drawing," he goes farther than any other artist since Seurat and one of the most elaborate drawings of the twentieth century is being lost in the painting.

In preparation for painting Albright has ordered seventy Winsor & Newton brushes ranging in size from No. 1 to triple-O, and expects them to last him about half the picture. His steel studio cabinet contains a helter-skelter collection of old brushes from a 2¼ inch non-twist scenic brush to red sable miniatures—but his favorite is the triple-O cut down to a single hair.

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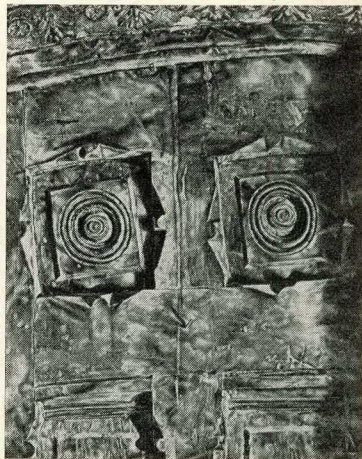
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Detail of Albright's *The Door* shows his meticulousness, achieved with a soft triple-O brush.