



Recent Acquisitions: Asian Art

• JAN VAN CAMPEN, MENNO FITSKI, ANNA A. ŚLĄCZKA,
WILLIAM SOUTHWORTH AND CHING-LING WANG •

I ANONYMOUS

Ear Disc

East Java, Indonesia, c. twelfth to thirteenth century
Gold, diam. 3 cm, h. 1.2 cm

This small ornamental ear disc takes the form of a hollow, cylindrical box or container. The box has been carefully constructed from thin sheet gold, with a band forming a circular drum connecting two round plates, of which only the base plate remains. At the centre of this plate, a design has been embossed using a repoussé technique. The main feature of this design is a circular droplet surrounded by four scrolled leaves, from which twelve elegantly pointed petals radiate around the base. These repoussé petals, though still visible on the outer surface, are here partly obscured by a superimposed layer consisting of four pointed and serrated leaves around a central bud that has been delicately soldered onto the design below. The surrounding, circular rim of the plate is decorated with a band of tiny gold beads.

The wide rim on the open side of the disc was left plain, but originally, the drum's hollow interior would have been sealed by a separate, openwork gold plate. A slightly larger, intricately decorated plate from a similar ear disc (inv. no. AK-MAK-1244), preserved in the Rijksmuseum for fifty years, is now on display in the Asian Pavilion alongside the present disc for context.

When worn in the ear, the smooth, cylindrical side of the drum would have been inserted into a large hole pierced in the extended earlobe of the wearer, holding the disc firmly in place. Among the wealthy aristocratic families of ancient Java, gold ornaments were frequently worn both by men and women from early childhood. The weight of

gold earrings and pendants gradually stretched the earlobes, allowing the use in adulthood of larger ear discs such as this for adornment.

The precise date of the present ear disc is uncertain, but a comparison with jewellery depicted on ancient stone statues and sculptures from Java can provide some important indications. On this basis, a similar disc analysed by Pauline Lunsingh Scheurleer and Jaap Polak has been dated to the thirteenth or fourteenth century. The piece here, however, is perhaps of slightly earlier date.

As with many small archaeological artefacts from Indonesia, the ear disc's early provenance is unknown. It was acquired in Jakarta by Thomas and Danielle White in the late nineteen sixties from a local, itinerant dealer.

WS

LITERATURE:

Jaap Polak, *Ancient Indonesian Gold of the Central and Eastern Javanese Periods 750-1550 – A Selection*, Leiden 2022, pp. 356-59
Pauline Lunsingh Scheurleer, *Goud uit Java | Gold from Java*, The Hague 2012, pp. 44-46

PROVENANCE:

...; The White Collection, London, bought by Thomas and Danielle White from a local dealer named 'Lainin' in Jakarta in the late nineteen sixties; ...; the dealer Gallery Sue Ollemans, London; from whom to a private collector, 2018; by whom donated to the museum, 2022

(inv. no. AK-RAK-2023-4).

2 ANONYMOUS

Buddha Shakyamuni

Ayutthaya, Thailand, fourteenth century

Bronze, lost wax, hollow cast, h. 50.5 cm

This image of the Buddha from Thailand shows him wearing a monk's robe over his left shoulder, leaving the right shoulder bare. An undergarment is clearly visible at the waist, with an additional sash draped over the left shoulder. He is seated with his right leg folded over the left. His left hand rests on his lap with the palm turned upwards, while his right hand is placed over his right leg with the fingers pointing downwards. This gesture is sometimes called *Maravijaya*, or 'Victory over Mara', referring to the Buddha's rejection of all illusion (*mara*) by touching the ground and calling the earth to be his witness, shortly before his enlightenment. This form of depicting the historical Buddha Shakyamuni appears to have become popular in Southeast Asia at the court of the Pagan Kingdom (c. 849-1287) in Burma (present-day Myanmar) during the eleventh and twelfth centuries, prior to becoming the dominant representation in central Thailand and Cambodia from the thirteenth century onwards.

In this period, central Thailand had fallen increasingly under the political influence of Angkor, the capital of the Khmer Empire (c. 802-1431) in Cambodia, which reached the height of its military power at this time. Important regional centres were created at Lopburi and Suphanburi, but full independence was only consolidated in the mid-fourteenth century with the founding of a new capital at Ayutthaya by Prince U-Thong, who reigned as King Ramathibodi I (r. 1351-69). The art of this period is therefore often referred to as the Early Ayutthaya or U-Thong style. The earliest Ayutthayan images retain some stylistic elements of Khmer statuary, but this influence is gradually remoulded into a new, consciously Thai aesthetic.

Some of these features can be seen in the present image. The overall composition of the body is balanced and natural in appearance, while the head is large and square in shape. The face is characterized by naturally moulded eyebrows, downcast eyes, a strong nose and a serene, slightly smiling mouth. A plain, narrow band separates the face from the small, spiky

curls of the hair. The raised area at the top of the head (*ushnisha*) is a common feature of all Buddha images, symbolizing the Buddha's supernatural intelligence and understanding, enhanced by the compact flame motif rising from the top of his head.

The bronze is hollow and was cast using a lost-wax process. Over time, the sculpture has acquired a rich, dark-brown patina, though it retains some traces of gilding. It was clearly made and used for worship.

The buddha was acquired in Siam (present-day Thailand) by Otto Schwend (1892-1951), a German doctor who worked and lived in Tungku (southern China) from 1923 and in Bangkok from 1926. His economic success, numerous connections and expertise in Siamese and Chinese art and culture made it possible to assemble an extraordinary collection of art objects over a period of fifteen years. Dr Schwend returned to Europe in 1938, settling after the Second World War at Traunstein in Bavaria, where he practiced medicine until his death in 1951. The Buddha statue remained in the possession of his family until shortly before its acquisition by the Rijksmuseum.

WS

LITERATURE:

Hiram W. Woodward Jr, *The Sacred Sculpture of Thailand: The Alexander B. Griswold Collection, The Walters Art Gallery*, Baltimore/Seattle 1997, pp. 175-78

David K. Wyatt, *Thailand: A Short History*, New Haven/London 1984, pp. 63-67

PROVENANCE:

...; Dr Otto Schwend (1892-1951), acquired in Thailand in 1926-38, kept in Traunstein until 1951; by descent until sale, Stuttgart (Nagel), 8 December 2021, no. 636, to the dealer Marcel Nies, Antwerp; from whom to the museum, 2022, with the support of the bequest of J. Vrieze/L. Akkers (inv. no. AK-RAK-2022-10).



3 SONAM GYALTSEN (or his atelier, first half of fifteenth century)

Guhyasamaja Akshobhya

Tibet, 1400-50

Gilded copper, polychromy and turquoise, h. 32 cm

This intricate sculpture depicts Guhyasamaja, a manifestation of the Buddha Akshobhya, one of the five cosmic Buddhas, in an erotic embrace with his consort, Sparsavajra. Each of the figures is provided with three heads and six arms holding various objects. Akshobhya's symbol is a *vajra* (Sanskrit: diamond; thunderbolt), prominently displayed here as the principal attribute of both the Buddha and his consort. The other attributes include the wheel of dharma (*dharmacakra*), a lotus flower, a jewel and a sword.

The *Guhyasamaja Akshobhya* is a particularly fine piece by the hand or the atelier of Sonam Gyaltzen, who lived during the first half of the fifteenth century and worked throughout central Tibet. Like many Tibetan sculptures, the object is not signed, yet its distinctive shape and the incisions of the jewellery and the lotus petals on the base, together with the extensive use of turquoise, leave little doubt regarding its attribution.

In Hindu and Buddhist esoteric (Tantric) schools, a ritualized sexual act was believed to symbolize the union of two opposite concepts, such as wisdom and compassion, and one way to experience transcendental wisdom. Unlike the traditional Western view, wisdom is linked to the female principle, compassion to the male. Indeed, images of the type seen here are most commonly encountered in Tantric Buddhism, especially in Tibet. Nevertheless, erotic sculpture, mainly in stone, is also found in Hindu art, where sensual reliefs might be located in 'transition zones', such as temple entrances, because of their auspicious nature and purported protective powers.

The sculpture is hollow-cast in several sections by means of the lost-wax process, common in the region. It is sealed at the bottom with a baseplate, on which a *visvavajra* (a double *vajra*) symbol is engraved. The first phase of technical research (Parker and Creange, 2025) has identified many of the materials and techniques used in making the statue. Further imaging with X-rays and neutrons has revealed that almost the entire interior of the sculpture is filled with objects, most likely scrolls, folded textiles and other organic materials. Such objects were typically inserted into sculptures

during the consecration ritual, widely practiced for Tibetan Buddhist statues. Ongoing research combines input from various experts and practitioners of Tibetan Buddhism, with scientific data, collected solely by means of non-destructive techniques, in order to determine the exact nature of the contents without opening or removing the consecration deposit. This research is expected to provide a great deal of insight into the history of the statue and its ritual use in the past.

AS

LITERATURE:

Meghan Parker and Sara Creange, 'Technical Analysis, Ethical Considerations, and Conservation of a 15th-Century Tibetan Statue', in Nicola Emmerson, Johanna Thunberg and David Watkinson (eds.), *Metal 2025: Proceedings of the International Conference on Metals Conservation, 1-5 September 2025 Cardiff, Wales, UK*, e-book 2025, pp. 412-21
 Jan van Alphen et al., *Cast for Eternity: Bronze Masterworks from India and the Himalayas in Belgian and Dutch Collections*, Antwerp 2005, no. 69, pp. 204-05
 Olivier Demianoff (ed.), *Claude de Marteau Collection*, Vottem [s.d.], cat. no. 19, pp. 118-25

PROVENANCE:

...; Pan-Asian Collection, Christian Humann (1924-1981), New York; from whom to Collection Claude de Marteau (1935-2016), Brussels, before 1980-2016; from whom to Collection Jasbir Kaur Sandhu, Belgium, 2016-24; from whom to the museum, 2024, through the mediation of the dealer Marcel Nies, Antwerp, with the support of the J.J. Staargaard Fonds/Rijksmuseum Fonds
 (inv. no. AK-RAK-2024-7).



4 ANONYMOUS

Bhairavi

Mandi, India, eighteenth century

Ink and opaque watercolour on handmade paper, 159 x 165 mm

In the late tenth or early eleventh century, a branch of the Sen dynasty of Bengal established itself in Mandi, in the remote region of the Himalayan foothills in northern India, marking the beginning of the 'princely state' – as it is usually called – of Mandi. The small kingdom retained its (semi-)autonomous status until 1948, at which time it merged with the independent Union of India, becoming part of the modern state of Himachal Pradesh. Miniature paintings from Mandi belong to a larger group of *Pahari*, or 'painting from mountainous regions' (*pahaar* is the Hindi word for mountain, hill), a broader term applied to works produced in all the historical princely states of the lower Himalaya, such as Basohli, Chamba, Kangra and Guler, among several others. Despite the relatively small size and shared geography, each state developed its own distinct artistic style.

By the eighteenth century, a mature Mandi style of painting had emerged, of which the present miniature is a perfect example. The Great Goddess (Devi) is a popular object of veneration throughout the Himalayan foothills. Here she is depicted in her destructive aspect as Bhairavi, carrying a trident and a skull-bowl tinted with blood, and wearing a necklace and earrings composed of dead bodies. The jackal and vultures – animals associated with death – strengthen the overall atmosphere of desolation and destruction. She is followed by a tiger, her usual companion. The tiger skin wrapped around her hips, the crescent moon, the third eye on her forehead and the trident as a weapon allude to her association with Shiva. The sharp outline of the figures, the scant depth with everything presented on the front plane, and the bare background devoid of additional elements like trees or buildings are typical of a mature Mandi style. Paintings like this one were chiefly used in worship and meditation, and the artist was tasked with invoking the power of the gods rather than aesthetically pleasing the viewer. As aptly voiced by B.N. Goswami and E. Fischer in their monograph on the *Pahari Masters* (1992): 'It is an awesome vision that the painter conjures up here. One is made a witness to what the powers

that ordinarily create and nourish can do once they take upon themselves to destroy and liquidate.'

The broad red border framing the composition is another common feature of the later Mandi style. Technical analysis at the Rijksmuseum demonstrates that the characteristic colour was obtained by combining lead-based pigment with a smaller amount of mercury-based pigment, in this case vermillion. The acquisition of *Bhairavi* enriches the museum's collection of *Pahari* paintings, while the recent research broadens our understanding of the techniques used by the eighteenth-century North Indian artists.

AŚ

LITERATURE:

- Amélie Couvrat Desvergnés and Juliet Baines, 'Five Mandi Paintings in the Rijksmuseum Collection: Iconography, Provenance and Pigment Analysis', *Aziatische Kunst* 56 (2026), no. 1, pp. 49-59
 B.N. Goswami and Eberhard Fischer, *Pahari Masters: Court Painters of Northern India (Artibus Asiae Supplementum, vol. 38)*, Zurich 1992, p. 208
 Detlef Ingo Lauf, *Terrifying Deities of Vajrayana Buddhism*, exh. cat. Paris (Galerie Marco Polo) 1978, p. 103

PROVENANCE:

- ...; the dealer Galerie Marco Polo, Paris, 1978; from which to Anna Libera Dallapiccola (1944), London, 1978-2024; by whom donated to the museum, 2024 (inv. no. RP-T-2024-61).



5 ANONYMOUS

Chocolate Pot and Two Small Saucers Bearing the Luls Family Coat of Arms

China, 1760-70

Porcelain with enamel colours and gold, h. 17.5 cm (pot), diam. 23.1 cm (saucers)

This chocolate pot and saucers are decorated with garlands and scatter flowers, painted in the manner customary for Meissen porcelain. The central element is an escutcheon bearing a family coat of arms: a Black man wearing a headscarf and a blue coat, set against a yellow background. The escutcheon is crowned and flanked by two standing bears.

This specific coat of arms was first used (and likely designed) by Gerard Luls, a prominent inhabitant of Wijk bij Duurstede and burgomaster of the city in the year 1687. Three years later, Gerard moved to Curaçao, where he was appointed governor in 1704. A trade hub for tropical products in Dutch hands since 1634, Curaçao was above all the geographic centre of the Dutch slave trade. Gerard Luls returned to the Netherlands, though precisely when is unclear. Evident is that the connection with the island endured also in future generations.

The dating of the pot and saucers, inferred from their form and decoration, suggests they were likely commissioned by Gerard's son, Matthias Luls (1688-1767). Matthias, who chose to pursue a career in Wijk bij Duurstede and Utrecht, never visited Curaçao himself. Yet the choice of tableware adorned with the Luls coat of arms, clearly alluding to the source of the family's affluence, affirms his pride therein: money made via the slave trade. In traditional heraldry, the figure of a Black man wearing a headscarf refers to an inhabitant of Spain originating from the Middle East or northern Africa prior to the Reconquista. Existing since the Middle Ages, the motif appears, for example, in the coats of arms of Corsica and Sardinia. The Luls family adopted the motif for their coat of arms, but for them the same figure undoubtedly represented not a Spaniard but an African man. Eighteenth-



AK-RAK-2025-2

century depictions of enslaved individuals wearing similar headscarves are known; close-fitting jackets of the type worn by the present figure also commonly appear in portrayals of African men serving well-to-do families in the Netherlands.

Chinese tableware is an example of affordable Asian luxury, acquired and valued across broad segments of Dutch society. Although European porcelain was in production as early as 1760, its manufacture was more costly; ordering works of porcelain in China therefore remained an economical option, when desired made to imitate European armorial pieces like the present set. Moreover, the introduction of coffee, tea and hot chocolate, consumed with sugar, served to stimulate the use of new sorts of tableware. That the present object functioned as a chocolate pot can be deduced from its form: supplied in blocks, cocoa had to be whipped and crushed using a wooden spatula, a process facilitated by the object's straight sides and wide mouth.

Wealth acquired from the slave trade on Curaçao, porcelain from China, cocoa from

South America, sugar from Asia or/and the Americas, decorative motifs from Meissen: these tableware pieces offer a fascinating glimpse into the role of the affluent Luls family in the Netherlands' entwinement with 'the Global South' in the eighteenth century.

JvC

LITERATURE:

Han Jordaen, *Slavernij en vrijheid op Curaçao: Dynamiek van een achttiende-eeuws Atlantisch handelsknooppunt*, Zutphen 2013

Jochem Kroes, *Chinese Armorial Porcelain for the Dutch Market*, Zwolle/The Hague 2007, no. 298

PROVENANCE:

Pot: ...; the dealer Jorge Welsh Works of Art, London/Lissabon, 2025; from whom to the museum with the support of the Fonds De Zuidroute/Rijksmuseum Fonds

(inv. no. AK-RAK-2025-2).

Plates: ...; private collection, France; from which to the dealer Zebregs&Röell, Amsterdam, 2025; from whom to the museum with the support of the Fonds De Zuidroute/Rijksmuseum Fonds (inv. nos. AK-RAK-2025-3 and -4).



AK-RAK-2025-3

6 ANONYMOUS

*Babhruvahana Being Shot into the Sky*Andhra Pradesh or Karnataka (*Chitrakatha* style), India, nineteenth century

Opaque watercolour on paper, 470 x 312 mm

Chitrakatha is a Sanskrit term combining two words: *chitra* (a picture, 'anything that is bright or coloured') and *katha* (story). Indeed, it is an art form that unites painting and storytelling: the paintings have traditionally been used by itinerant bards, known as *chitrakathis*, to accompany their recitations. Each set of pictures illustrates a particular story. *Chitrakatha* is a hereditary art, meaning that it is practiced by families belonging to a specific community and is transmitted from parent to child. It is uncertain where the *chitrakatha* tradition originated. In publications and auction catalogues, paintings such as this one are usually described as 'Paithan,' after a village in Maharashtra. However, this attribution seems to have little grounding in fact. Instead, the style strongly resembles that of paintings on cloth and of shadow play puppets produced in central-northern Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh. While the 'Paithan' style of painting was no longer used in the early twentieth century, it soon gained recognition among collectors. Nowadays, 'Paithan' paintings can be found in several collections in India and elsewhere.

The 'Paithan' paintings are executed on relatively large sheets of paper. No background colours are used. Colours range from sets dominated by strong blues and reds to those displaying lighter beiges and greens. There is a strong linear emphasis, bringing to mind the sharp contours of shadow puppets. As with shadow puppets from Andhra, the eyes are large and provided with oversized pupils, the bodies are depicted frontally, while the heads and feet are shown in profile.

Many paintings can be dated fairly precisely on the basis of the paper used. The artists worked on industrially made paper imported from Britain, Italy and the Netherlands; some sheets bear a watermark, occasionally provided with a date. Many sheets date to the nineteenth century, particularly the eighteen thirties and eighteen forties. Another indication of the date might be the type of pigment used. Technical analysis would probably result in a similar dating of the present painting.

The subject matter of the *chitrakatha* paintings is drawn primarily from the great Hindu epics, the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana*, and the

Puranas, a genre covering a wide range of topics. However, many depicted stories are not found in the 'classical' editions of the texts, but only in their regional versions written in local languages, or in the oral tradition. This is also the case with the painting illustrated here. We see Babhruvahana, the lesser-known son of Arjuna (one of the heroes from the *Mahabharata*), engaged in combat, literally shot into the air and surrounded by his magical, crescent-shaped arrow weapon. The Sun and the Moon are depicted nearby, indicating the sky. The five arrows in the Sun's hands will subsequently be given to Babhruvahana to help him defeat his adversaries. The figure at the bottom of the painting, aiming his bow at Babhruvahana, could be either Vrishaketu, Surya's grandson, or Pradyumna, another *Mahabharata* hero, as Babhruvahana fought them both. As mentioned above, this story differs from the standard Sanskrit version; it is not easy to determine on what written text, if any, it might be based. It may have been inspired by *Sripandavapratapa*, a work by the Marathi author Sridhara (c. 1658-1729), or some other version of events compiled in a local language, possibly Marathi or Kannada. The Babhruvahana story is one of the most popular narratives in 'Paithan' painting, but the lively depiction of the figures with the shower of arrows as a dividing device, executed in the unusual – for the style – vertical format, places the present painting among the best of its genre.

AS

LITERATURE:

Anna A. Ślaczka, "'Paithan' and Pinguli Styles: The Past and Present of *Chitrakatha* Painting', *Aziatische Kunst* 55 (2025), no. 3, pp. 40-49

Faith, Narrative and Desire: Masterpieces of Indian painting in the British Museum. Celebrating 60 Years of Indian Independence, exh. cat. London (British Museum) 2007

Anna L. Dallapiccola, *Die 'Paithan'-Malerei: Studie zu ihrer stilistischen Entwicklung und Ikonographie*, Wiesbaden 1980, no. A13

PROVENANCE:

...; Anna Libera Dallapiccola (1944), London, ? purchased from Sotheby's, c. 1975-2024; by whom donated to the museum, 2024 (inv. no. RP-T-2024-49).



- 7 SATŌ KICHIGORŌ (woodwork), MATSUNAE KITARŌ (base layer lacquer), KUNII KINZŌ (*nashiji*-lacquer), SHIBATA ZESHIN (1807-1891) and WATANABE TŌSEN (1815-?) (*maki-e* lacquer)
Paper Box 'Crow with Snowflakes'
 Tokyo, Japan, c. 1881
 Wood, lacquer, silver, 42 x 35 x 16 cm
 Signed (carved), on the side: '古満是真', 'Koma Zeshin' with *kaō* (cipher signature); on inside of lid in *maki-e*: '松風斎桃船', 'Shōfūsai Tōsen' with *kaō* (cipher signature)

Shibata Zeshin maintained a lifelong interest in the materiality of lacquer. He was a pioneer in lacquer's use as a medium for painting on paper, and in creating lacquer objects like this large paper box, he sought the boundaries of what was possible in the areas of texture, form and ornamentation. The crow is depicted in various tones of black on black, with its tail feathers extending gracefully over the side of the box; the high relief and softly modelled plumage contrast with the sleek, smoothly executed background. This monochrome effect is punctuated only by a few floating snowflake crystals in sprinkled silver powder. The overall result is a subtle, restrained elegance.

Like many works of Japanese applied art, the element of time is built into the object itself. The act of opening the box is part of the appreciation: it reveals a radiant, golden interior. Designed by a second lacquer master, Watanabe Tōsen, the inside of the lid has the appearance of woven bamboo (*ajiro*), perhaps a serving tray, with draped across it sprigs of hyacinth bean (藤豆, *fujimame*, *Lablab purpureus*), a plant that blooms in summer. Executed in brilliant gold *maki-e*, the warm colour palette offers the person who opens the box a pleasurable surprise after seeing the dark austerity of the early winter scene.

The present lacquer box originally formed a set, together with a matching writing box. Both were shown at the Second National Industrial Exhibition in 1881, organized by the Japanese government to promote the nation's industry and applied arts. The exhibition featured an array of products, as well as manufacturing techniques for textile, lacquerware and other media. In the accompanying exhibition catalogue, the set appears under the entry for Seikōsha, then a newly founded Tokyo firm and today a well-known Japanese watch manufacturer. The description reads:

料紙硯箱(五) 檜
 表面黒蒔画鷹に鳥[烏]
 裏網代藤豆蒔画、...

木地工佐藤吉五郎、
 塗工松苗喜太郎
 梨子地工國井金蔵、
 蒔画工柴田是真渡桃船。

Document and writing box (5), cypress wood, the exterior decorated in black *maki-e* with hawk and bird [crow], the interior in lacquer with hyacinth bean (*fujimame*) on woven bamboo (*ajiro*). ... woodwork Satō Kichigorō, base lacquer Matsunae Kitarō, *nashikoji* lacquer Kunii Kinzō, *maki-e* lacquer Shibata Zeshin and Watanabe Tōsen.

Besides the names already mentioned, the entry notes the contribution of three other makers. One of them, Kunii Kinzō, was responsible for the rich, warm orange-gold surface of the box's interior, executed in *nashiji*, a technique whereby gold granules are embedded in the lacquer layer. The catalogue entry illustrates how the art of lacquer – as with all applied arts in Japan – was a workshop-based endeavour involving various specialists, each charged with a specific stage of the production process. However, times were changing. As early as 1890, a generation of lacquer makers was already being trained at the University of Tokyo, composed of students determined to define themselves as individual artists. They would make their mark in the ensuing decades (see acquisition no. 10).

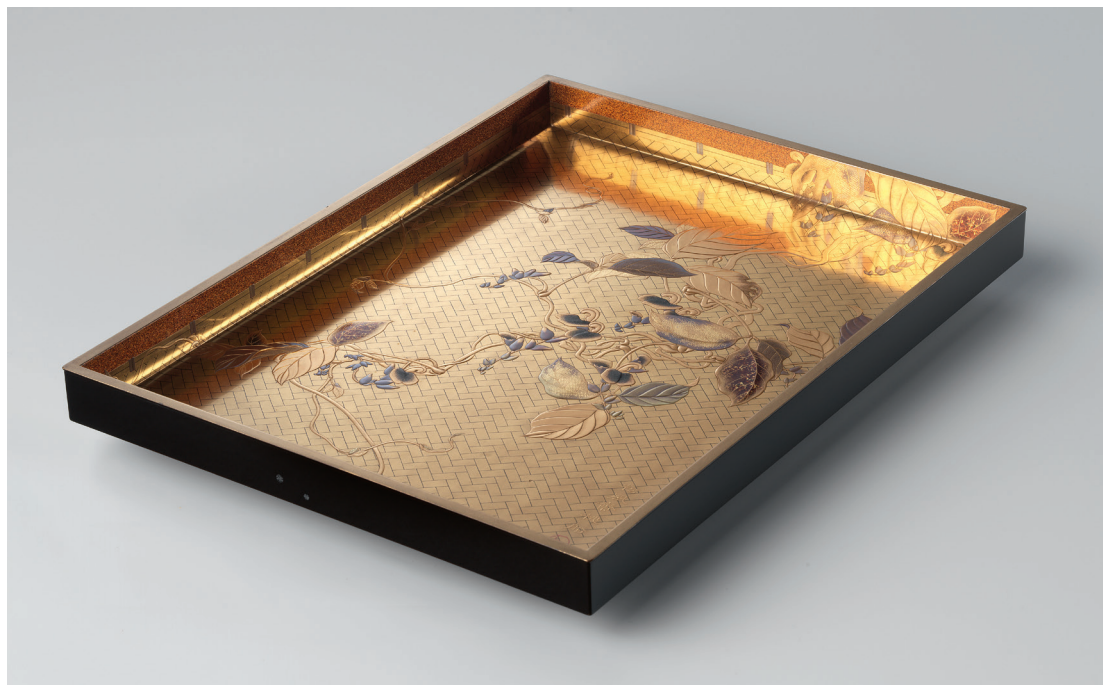
MF

LITERATURE:

Tokyo kokuritsu bunkazai kenkyū-jo (ed.), *Naikoku kangyō hakurankai bijutsu-hin shuppin mokuroku* [Table of contents of the art exhibits at the Domestic Industrial Expositions], Tokyo 1997, p. 212, no. 2613

PROVENANCE:

The artist, shown at the Second Domestic Industrial Exposition, 1881; ...; collection Yoshida Kōzō 吉田耕三 (1915-2013), Japan; ...; the dealer Grace Tsumugi Japanese Art, London, 2018-23; from whom to the museum, 2023, with the support of the Flora Fonds/Rijksmuseum Fonds and Rituals (inv. no. AK-RAK-2023-1).



8 Design: ELIZA CHARLOTTA VAN ZUYLEN-NIESSEN (1863-1946)

Execution: ANONYMOUS

Sarong

Pekalongan, Java, Indonesia, c. 1900

Cotton, batik tulis, 103 x 198 cm

Batik is one of the most important techniques in the textile art of Indonesia, employed for many centuries. In what is often described as a resist-dye technique, the design is first drawn onto a plain, woven cloth using molten wax, after which the cloth is dyed. The pigment adheres to the cloth only in areas not covered by wax. The wax is then heated and removed, revealing the undyed pattern beneath. The same procedure is repeated for each colour used in the design. Because of this often complex and time-consuming process, authentic batik has always been costly to produce and expensive to buy. The resultant cloth could be used for all types of clothing, both for men and women, but was most commonly worn as a skirt or *sarong* around the hips. The sarong presented here is one of seventy batik cloths acquired from the collection of art historian Kees de Ruiter (1965), representing the highest quality of batik production.

This collection is important as it provides insight into the history and cultural context in which these batik cloths and garments were first made and worn. Most of the acquired textiles were produced in Java in the period 1870-1930. While the traditional batik technique was used in their production, the designs and motifs were often inspired by European art movements, Art Nouveau and the Jugendstil in particular. This interplay between European and Asian cultures was highly prized by the Indo-European community in Java. Batiks in this composite style were especially designed and worn by Indo-European women as an important sign of their own identity within Javanese society. In this context, the earliest batik garments in the collection were acquired and worn by Veronica de Ruiter-Warnars (1938-1997) and Marie Warnars-Krol (1888-1930), respectively the collector's mother and grandmother.

Many batik workshops in Java during this period were founded and run by Indo-European designers. Eliza Charlotta van Zuylen-Niessen first opened her workshop in Pekalongan in 1890. As with many of her batiks, the present sarong bears her signature, dyed into the cloth during the batik process and sealed with a stamp



after production. The background (*lataran*) is composed of intricate squared-spirals (sometimes called *bilik*) and the main field (*badan*) is covered by a repeating pattern of parasols and fans coloured blue, green and brown, some of them held by small, uniformed figures. The large frontal design (*kepala*) is dyed in a deep red colour and features a pair of large birds (possibly pheasants) beneath blossoming bamboo stalks, with smaller birds and insects flying amidst them. These motifs were inspired by Japanese art that was popular both in Europe and Java in the late



nineteenth century. Batik cloth was often bought as a finished product, but individual pieces could also be commissioned directly from the designer. The exceptional choice of motifs and colour scheme for the present sarong suggest it may well have been designed specifically for a young Indo-European woman.

ws

LITERATURE:

Kees de Ruiter, *Art Nouveau Batik from Colonial Indonesia: The Veronica Warnars Collection 1850-1950*, Edam 2026, pp. 126-27

PROVENANCE:

...; collection Marie Warnars, née Krol (1888-1930), Batavia; her daughter Eveline Warnars, née Sersansie (1909-90), Batavia, Maastricht; her daughter Veronica Eveline de Ruiter, née Warnars (1938-97), Maastricht; her son Cornelis Pieter Norman Vincent (Kees) de Ruiter (1965), Nieuwegein; from whom, with 69 other textiles, by acquisition and donation to the Koninklijke Vereniging van Vrienden der Aziatische Kunst, 2025; from whom on loan to the museum, 2025 (inv. no. AK-MAK-1857).

- 9 BAOCHENG (workshop), BIN (maker)
Cup on Foot with Literary Scene and Inscription
 Tianjin, China, 1918
 Silver, h. 34 cm
 Signed: 'Tianjin Baocheng', 'Bin'; marked: 'zhuwen' (pure silver)

This engraved cup has the form of a European, two-handled goblet with, on one side, a traditional Chinese scene, and on the other, the following inscription in Mandarin, enclosed within a cartouche flanked by flowers:

In the 5th month of dingsi-year [July 1917] I took refuge in the Dutch Embassy because of the failure of the 'Manch Restoration'. I was well received. For this, I am eternally grateful. Now it is time to say farewell. I have nothing to return for the hospitality, hence I commissioned this beaker as a souvenir to express my gratitude.

To the Vice Commander-in Chief of the guard unit of the embassy of the Great Netherlands, Zhou Jingshan. Presented by Zhang Xun in the 11th month of wuwu-year [December 1918].

The cup's donor, Zhang Xun, was a prominent figure on the Chinese political stage in the nineteen tens. China had been a republic since the forced abdication of the last Manchu emperor of the Qing dynasty in 1912. Nevertheless, the new government was far from stable, with various factions vying for power. Under the guise of mediating a dispute between two rivals, General Zhang Xun, the then governor of Anhui Province, marched with 4,000 troops into the Chinese capital, Beijing, in June 1917. Several weeks later, on 4 July, the general proclaimed the restoration of the empire and installed Puyi, the now-famous 'Last Emperor', on the throne. When the expected support of other warlords failed to materialize, Zhang was forcibly ousted, upon which Puyi abdicated. Zhang fled to a safe haven, the Dutch legation in Beijing, where he would remain until 24 October 1918, along with a sizable entourage of his own men. After having gradually restored informal contacts with other powerful figures, he was eventually able to freely move about China. Upon his departure, Zhang presented two silver cups: one for the Dutch head of the legation, the other for the commander of the 'legation guard'. The above-cited inscription suggests the present cup was likely intended

for the latter: Baron Haro van Hemert tot Dingshof (1879-1972).

Zhang's presence on the legation site led to the neutral Netherlands' involvement in the First World War in an unexpected way. China had initially pledged its support to the Allies but shifts in the government leadership meant this stance could change at any moment. As a significant political broker, Zhang's comings and goings, made possible under Dutch protection, were being closely observed by the various world powers with suspicion.

As the Dutch interpreter and sinologist Jan Duyvendak (1889-1954) recalled, Zhang led the life of a traditional scholarly official both during and after his days in the legation quarter. He liked to emulate loyal administrators and military figures of the past. The choice of the traditional Chinese scene engraved on the cup can best be understood in this light, also to be seen as a fine example of self-promotion. Depicted is a scene from *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, a fourteenth-century novel well known throughout China. Three figures stand on a terrace, with in the centre Guan Yu (d. 220), a loyal adherent of the Han emperor. After having manoeuvred himself into a militarily untenable position, Guan Yu refuses to surrender, determined to remain faithful to the Han emperor.

JvC

LITERATURE:

Dickie Zebregs and Guus Röell, *Uit verre streken*, sale cat. Amsterdam/Maastricht (Zebregs&Roëll) June 2022, no. 42
 Melody Hsu and Jan van Campen, 'Acquisition. General Zhang Xun's Present: An Engraved Silver Cup', *Aziatische Kunst* 54 (2024), no. 2, pp. 52-57
 P.M. Bosscher, 'De Gezantschapswacht te Peking', *Marineblad* 75 (1965), no. 8, pp. 1145-98

PROVENANCE:

...; anonymous sale, Utrecht (Peerdeman), 28 November 2021, to the dealer Zebregs&Röell, Amsterdam; from whom to the museum, 2022, with the support of Rituals (inv. no. AK-RAK-2022-6).



10 TSUJIMURA SHŌKA (1867-1929)

Tea Caddy 'Wild Carnations'

Japan, 1927

Wood, lacquer, gold and mineral pigments, 16.2 x 12 x 12 cm

This small tea caddy symbolizes the emancipation of Japanese lacquerware from 1890 onwards. The generation of individual lacquer artists emerging during this period adopted a new approach to its craft. Prior to this time, lacquer objects were created by a variety of highly specialized craftsmen, each responsible for a specific stage of the production process (see acquisition no. 7). Unlike their predecessors, these younger artists wished to undertake the entire process themselves, in accordance with their training at the then newly established university programmes. These artists made their own design drawings and executed every step of the manufacturing process with their own hands – an approach that gave their artistry greater substance. However, this failed to gain them entry into the prestigious Salon established in 1907 by the Japanese government. Modelled after its eponymous French equivalent, the Tokyo Salon admitted only painting and sculpture to the exclusion of artworks made by artists specialized in lacquer, textiles, ceramics and metalwork. Frustrated with being denied participation, from 1920 onwards these neglected artists collectively launched a concerted, spirited campaign for recognition. To prove their value, however, they had to show that they could liberate themselves from the traditional boundaries governing their craft. In the ensuing years, these artists worked to renew their techniques and visual idiom, actively searching for original motifs. They found their inspiration in a variety of sources: the emerging Art Deco style, newly excavated Chinese artefacts from ancient times and traditional Japanese styles. They also turned to classical literature and the natural world around them, as exemplified by this tea caddy, shown at the 1927 Salon, the year in which lacquer artists were finally admitted to these national exhibitions.

Tsujimura Shōka created his innovative design for the tea caddy by employing the traditional technique of *togidashi*. First, decoration was applied in *maki-e*, literally 'sprinkled picture'. Using a brush, the design was painted in natural lacquer (*urushi*) onto the ground,

with motifs subsequently sprinkled onto the as yet unhardened lacquer using gold, silver and pigment powders. Next, the entire object was covered with a layer of lacquer, completely obscuring all the decoration. Finally, a piece of charcoal was used to burnish the entire object until the underlying surface decoration was just barely revealed, leaving no discernible trace of relief. Traditionally, decoration in gold and silver powders was applied to a black or gold background. Shōka's pigments, however, were new – pink, and a recently developed tint of red – enabling him to capture the subtle hues of wild carnations. Shōka draped the flowers across the surface in a loose, painterly fashion, set against a background of ornamental grasses and latticework upon a soft, golden ground.

The motifs refer to the twenty-sixth chapter of *The Tale of Genji*. This early eleventh-century Japanese novel recounts the adventures of its protagonist, Prince Genji, at the imperial court. Having taken Tamakazura, the illegitimate daughter of a deceased childhood friend, into his care, Genji brings her to his palace quarters, where her dazzling appearance makes a profound impression. The representation on the tea caddy alludes to a scene associating the young woman with wild carnations:

He had planted no elaborate garden before her wing, because here Chinese and Japanese carnations bloomed in harmonious colours, weaving their way charmingly through the low fence and catching the glow of the last light of day in the profusion of their flowers.

Japanese lacquerware often works with a so-called 'absent motif', whereby figures are omitted from the depiction and conveyed solely by a single attribute or motif. In this way, the object presents an intriguing visual game, appealing to the viewer's knowledge of classical literature and poetry.

MF



LITERATURE:

Jan Dees, *De gedroomde wereld: Beginselen van de Japanse lakkunst*, Amsterdam 2022, pp. 118-23
 Jan Dees, *Breaking out of Tradition: Japanese Lacquer 1890-1950*, exh. cat. Münster (Museum für Lackkunst)/Amsterdam (Rijksmuseum) 2020, pp. 134-35

PROVENANCE:

The artist, shown at the Imperial Fine Arts Exhibition, 1927; ...; the dealer Gallery Chikuryūdō, Tokio, ?-2001; from whom to the collection of Jan Dees and René van der Star, 2001-12, Rotterdam; their loan to the museum, 2012-23; by whom donated to the museum, 2023
 (inv. no. AK-C-2012-12).

II KISHIMOTO KEISHUN (1888-1975)

Kyoto, Japan, c. 1930-40

Screen 'Four Seasons'

Silk, wood, lacquer, metal, 177 x 144 cm

Inscribed, original wooden box (*tomobako*): '刺繡四時譜岸本景春', 'Embroidery of the four seasons by Kishimoto Keishun'; seal '景春', 'Keishun'; signed, left panel, with an embroidered seal: '景春', 'Keishun'*Accessory Box 'Four Seasons'*

Silk, wood, lacquer, silver, 16.5 x 31.3 x 25.2 cm

Inscribed, lid original wooden box (*tomobako*): '刺繡四時譜飾筥', 'ornamental box with design of four seasons in embroidery'; signed, inside lid: '岸本景春作', 'made by Kishimoto Keishun'; seal '景春', 'Keishun'

Kishimoto Keishun depicted scenes of the four seasons both on a small and large scale, as exemplified, respectively, on this ornamental accessory box and screen. In the case of the latter work, each of the four spacious panels – moving right to left, the traditional viewing direction for Japanese art – bears an image of a season, embroidered on woven silk: a rooster and hen standing surmounted by plum blossoms; a pair of peacocks before a curtain of wisteria in bloom; a pair of pheasants flanked by the changing leaves of autumn; and lastly, a flock of geese and two mandarin ducks amidst snow-covered reeds. Keishun creates his scenes using an entire arsenal of silk threads in dozens of colours, capturing every subtle nuance and gradation in colour, with the embroidery on panels of woven silk set in a taut, black lacquer frame.

Keishun obtained his training in Kyoto, traditionally the centre of fashion and textile and home to countless kimono designer and textile workshop families from which numerous artisans had emerged. Unlike them, Keishun received a training in the art of painting and chiefly studied under Kamisaka Sekka (1866-1942), a versatile artist who, in addition to painting, made designs for prints and objects in lacquer, ceramic, wood and metal. This background allowed Keishun to approach embroidery freely. Unfettered by training within the textile industry, where techniques and patterns typically followed the specific house style of a particular workshop, Keishun's creative process began with the design itself. From there he sought out suitable embroidery techniques or even developed new techniques of his own. For the design of the present screen, a multitude of stitching techniques gives the animals and plants volume, introducing relief to the flat decorative style of the overall

work. Keishun moved freely in the world of textile art, applying innovation as he saw fit, in a style palpably echoing the spirit of Art Deco. In this manner, Keishun established embroidery as a recognized art form.

As with the lacquered tea caddy (see acquisition no. 10), the present screen is a testament to the emancipation of the applied arts in Japan. Indeed, textile art was not admitted to the annual 'National Exhibitions' until the late nineteen twenties. In 1932, Keishun presented a folding screen featuring a very similar design depicting the seasons across four panels at the Thirteenth Imperial Exhibition. This double-sided embroidery, executed on an open-weave mesh, functioned from every angle when positioned in the centre of a room. In a 1932 newspaper interview coinciding with the debut of his new screen, Keishun described his unique approach:

Embroidery experts might say I have strayed from the orthodox path, but I am confident that I have, in any case, forged a new one. I created this piece because I decided to take a bold step to break with the traditions of embroidery. Embroidery is usually done on one side only, but I specifically made this a double-sided piece. I believe that is where its uniqueness lies.

By contrast, the more densely woven fabric Keishun chose for the present screen lends the vertical compositions the look of hanging scrolls or prints. The graphic style reflects the influence of the artist Sekka, who, through the creation of innovative prints, revitalized the decorative Rinpa style, one of the historical schools of Japanese art, in the early twentieth century.



AK-MAK-1836

Keishun was known for his continuous exploration, and this journey is evident on the ornamental accessory box, acquired by the Rijksmuseum simultaneously with the screen. He applied motifs comparable to those found on the latter piece, forcing himself to incorporate the same visual idiom of animals and plants but on a much smaller scale, by instead setting the motifs in a separate, looser arrangement through meticulous stitching.

MF

LITERATURE:

Mutsuko Imai, *Shishū Kishimoto Keishun* [Kishimoto Keishun Embroidery], Kyoto 1983, p. 228, no. 43

PROVENANCE:

...; the dealer Grace Tsumugi Japanese art, London, 2023-24; from whom purchased by the Royal Asian Art Society in The Netherlands as part of their loan to the Rijksmuseum, 2024

(inv. nos. AK-MAK-1835, AK-MAK-1836).



AK-MAK-1835



12 ROBERT VAN GULIK (1910-1967), GUAN ZHONGHANG (1896-1972), TŌGYO MATSUMARU (1901-1975)

A Box with Various Seals

Netherlands, China and Japan, c. 1930-50

Soapstone, wood; seals in various sizes, box 14.3 x 28.6 x 14 cm

Seals in China have been used for over two millennia as authoritative marks of identity, ownership and legitimacy. Typically carved from stone, jade or metal, they are pressed into red cinnabar paste to leave an imprint on documents, artworks or correspondence. Beyond their practical use, seals carry deep cultural significance, often reflecting the owner's status, name or philosophy. In traditional Chinese painting and calligraphy, they also function as aesthetic elements, balancing composition while asserting authorship and authenticity. This practice spread throughout the East Asian cultural sphere, including Japan.

Robert van Gulik was a diplomat, sinologist and writer with a profound interest in Chinese art, literature and material culture. Seals held a particular fascination for him. Van Gulik studied seals both academically and as a practitioner. He valued the discipline and sensitivity required to create these objects: the art of seal-carving (*zhuanke*)

requires technical skill as well as an in-depth knowledge of historical scripts and styles.

Recently, a wooden presentation box containing a set of carved seals belonging to Van Gulik was donated to the Rijksmuseum by his family. According to them, these were the seals he used most frequently, which he kept on his study desk. Included are Van Gulik's studio seals, name seals and art name seal, *Zhitai*, as well as his collector's seals and informal seals bearing personally meaningful phrases. The seals were carved by Van Gulik himself, but also by friends from China and Japan in his scholarly circles, including Guan Zhonghang and Tōgyo Matsumaru.

The wooden box itself is an important part of the set. On its exterior is the text of a Han dynasty poem titled *Inscription on the Seal* (*Yinming*) by Li You (44-126), inscribed in seal script (*zhuan*shu):



赤紱在躬，非印不明。
榮傳符節，非印不行。
龜鈕犢鼻，用爾作程。

The red knee-covering is worn upon the body;
without a seal, it is not made clear.
Tallies and credentials for passage cannot function
without a seal.
Thus the 'tortoise-knob' and 'calf-nose' [seals] are
used to fulfil their purpose.

This poem highlights the essential role of
seals as markers of authority and authentica-
tion, a subject Van Gulik also emphasized in
his research. He understood seals as a uniquely
integrated art form, combining calligraphy,
carving and visual composition. That Van Gulik
himself executed the inscription on the box is
confirmed by the presence of his art name seal.
Decorated using seals similar to the ones it

holds, the box showcases the way seals were used
to personalize objects special to their owners.

CLW

LITERATURE:

Ching-Ling Wang, 'Gao Luopei shufa yu yinzhang de yishu
yu wenhua yihan: Helan guojia bowuguan cangpin xuanjie'
[The Artistic and Cultural Significance of Robert van Gulik's
Calligraphy and Seals: A Selection from the Collection of the
Rijksmuseum], *Qianyin [Seals]* 40 (2024), pp. 19-27
Koos Kuiper, 'Schenking van de familie Van Gulik aan het
Rijksmuseum: Robert van Guliks Chinese zegels en zijn
handrol met zegelafdrukken', *Aziatische Kunst* 52 (2022),
no. 1, pp. 19-37

PROVENANCE:

Donated by the heirs of Robert Hans van Gulik (1910-1967),
2020
(inv. nos. AK-RAK-2020-64 to -80).





AK-RAK-2020-69

Seals contained in the box

Studio seals:

3 x *Yin Yue Hermitage* (吟月菴 (齋)), nos. 67, 71, 75; *Zunming Pavilion* (尊明閣), no. 79; 2 x *Zhonghe Qin Studio* (中和琴室), nos. 69, 77

Name seals:

2 x *Seal of Robert van Gulik* (高羅佩印), nos. 70, 76

Art name seal:

Zhitai (芝臺), no. 78; *Seal of Gao Zhitai*, (高芝臺印), no. 72;

Collector's seals:

Celebration of Hundred Painting Collection (慶百畫藏), no. 66;
Gao Luopei's Collection (高羅佩藏), no. 73

Informal seals:

Blue Clouds Do Not Rise as High as White Clouds (青雲不及白雲高), no. 64; *If One Does not Engage in Seemingly Useless Pursuits, How Can One Find Joy in this Finite Life?* (若復不為無益之事則安能樂有涯之生), no. 65; 2 x *Enjoying the Qin-zither and Calligraphy in [my] Leisure after Official Duties* (公餘樂琴書), nos. 68, 74



13 YI-TSAI CHIANG (1973)

Copy of Fan Kuan's Travellers Among Mountains and Streams

Taiwan, 1993

Ink on paper, 187.5 x 92.5 cm

Fan Kuan (c. 950-1032) is widely regarded as one of the most influential Chinese landscape painters of the Northern Song dynasty (960-1279). His monumental vision of nature, most famously expressed in *Travellers Among Mountains and Streams* (*Xishan xinglü tu*, National Palace Museum, Taipei), presents towering mountains that dwarf human figures, conveying a philosophical perspective rooted in Daoism and Neo-Confucianism. In this worldview, nature is vast, enduring and fundamentally superior to human concerns. Fan Kuan's technique, including his distinctive 'raindrop' texture strokes (*yudian cun*), lends his landscapes a powerful sense of structure, weight and permanence. His emphasis on the direct observation of nature – reportedly developed through retreating into the mountains – helped establish a lasting model for Chinese monumental landscape painting.

Directly engaging in Fan Kuan's legacy is the contemporary Taiwanese artist Yi-Tsai Chiang, whose work reflects a deep commitment to classical East Asian artistic traditions. At the age of twenty, Chiang produced a copy of *Travellers Among Mountains and Streams*, now held in the collection of the Rijksmuseum. More than a mere reproduction, the present work can be seen as an interpretive act bridging historical practice and modern sensibility. By carefully studying and re-creating this iconic composition, Chiang participates in a long-standing Chinese art tradition, in which the copying of a work of art serves as a vital method of learning, transmission and reinterpretation.

In his rendering, Chiang preserves the essential compositional structure of Fan Kuan's original: the imposing central mountain mass, the layered spatial recession and the minute human presence embedded within the vast natural environment. At the same time, the work reflects Chiang's own sensitivity to line, balance and spatial harmony. His brushwork demonstrates technical control and a keen attentiveness to texture, while subtly conveying a contemporary awareness of the painting's historical significance. Rather than attempting a mechanical replication of the original,

Chiang reactivates its visual language, allowing the past to resonate within a present context.

Chiang's approach aligns closely with the literati tradition, in which painting is approached not only as a visual practice but also as an intellectual and cultural exercise. Within this framework, copying a masterwork like Fan Kuan's *Travellers* becomes a form of dialogue across time. It reflects a respect for tradition while simultaneously asserting the artist's own engagement with that tradition. Even in those cases where elements such as seals or inscriptions are present, they remain secondary to the central act of painting and the exploration of form and meaning. Through this work, Yi-Tsai Chiang demonstrates how classical artistic values can be sustained and reinterpreted in contemporary practice. This copy of Fan Kuan's original underscores the enduring relevance of his vision, while highlighting the role of modern artists in preserving, studying and renewing the traditions of Chinese landscape painting.

CLW

LITERATURE:

- Li-Hao Chang, 'Making Use of Pure Blessings: Reading Chiang Yi-Tsai's Painting', *Aziatische Kunst* 53 (2023), no. 3, pp. 3-6
 Zhengde yishu (ed.), *Rugu chuxin: Chiang Yi-tsai shuimo huazuo jingcui* [Learning from the Ancient Masters with Heart: Highlights of Ink Painting Works by Chiang Yi-tsai], Taipei 2018, pp. 38-39
 Ching-Ling Wang, 'Rugu chuxin, rugu chuxin: du Chiang Yi-tsai shuhua [Learning from the Ancient Masters with Heart, Creating the New from the Old: On Chiang Yi-tsai's Painting and Calligraphy]', in *Zhengde yishu* (ed.) 2018, pp. 8-13

PROVENANCE:

- ...; donated by a private collector, 2020
 (inv. no. BK-2020-108).



14 GIJS BAKKER (1942)

Gold Brocade

Netherlands and China, 2017

Yunjin brocade, yellow amber and acrylic, diam. 10.5 cm, h. 2.2 cm

Gijs Bakker is a Dutch designer whose work in jewellery and conceptual design has consistently challenged the boundaries between art, design and everyday objects. By approaching jewellery not as mere decoration but as a medium for ideas, Bakker communicates cultural meaning, questions conventions and connects different traditions. This perspective is especially evident in his *Gold Brocade* brooch, where his long-standing interest in concept, material and the human body converges with a cross-cultural dialogue between East and West. Both visually striking and intellectually resonant, Bakker's creation highlights the possibilities of design as a shared, global language.

Central to this work is Bakker's collaboration with artisans of *yunjin* ('cloud brocade'), a historic silk-weaving technique from Nanjing with a legacy spanning more than 1,500 years. During the Ming dynasty (1368-1644), *yunjin* weavers developed a swivel-weaving technique that enabled the creation of colourful designs on base fabrics like satin. Known for its intricate patterns, vivid colours and luxurious texture, *yunjin* has been associated with imperial and elite contexts in China. During his 2017-18 residency in Nanjing as part of the project *Revival of Chinese Traditional Handicrafts*, Bakker worked closely with master weaver Liu Junzheng to reinterpret this highly formalized craft within a contemporary design framework.

The present brooch consists of a red brocade decorated with a green dragon placed between two layers of acrylic and surmounted by a piece of yellow amber, which substitutes for the 'pearl' motif often depicted alongside the dragon in its original Chinese context. The design is derived from the 'Double Dragons Playing with a Pearl' motif, a popular, auspicious image in Chinese visual culture, depicting two divine dragons soaring through clouds as they pursue or play with a radiant pearl. It commonly appears in architecture and the decorative arts. Its widespread use reflects wishes for good fortune as well as the desire to ward off calamity and misfortune.

Bakker's brooch is not simply the adaptation of a time-honoured textile into a wearable object – it is a carefully considered act of translation. He transforms *yunjin* from a large-scale, historically embedded fabric into an intimate, portable object worn on the body. Rather than excessively altering the fabric, Bakker allows the visual and technical qualities of *yunjin* to remain central, foregrounding the symbolic depth and tactile richness of Chinese textile while emphasizing the artisans' skill and the delicacy of the woven imagery. The brooch disproves the notion of historical craftsmanship as a static phenomenon, demonstrating that it can instead be reactivated through contemporary interpretation – in this case, conceptual and experimental Dutch design. This he achieves by framing the textile as a brooch – an ornament strongly associated with Western jewellery (or decorative arts) – and recontextualizing *yunjin* for a global audience. By bringing together Eastern and Western practices in a single wearable object, Bakker creates a dialogue: the object speaks simultaneously of Chinese heritage and European design thinking, without subordinating one to the other.

This integration reflects Bakker's broader philosophy, developed from the nineteen sixties onwards, in which jewellery serves as a means of exploring relationships: between object and wearer, convention and innovation, local practice and global circulation. The *Gold Brocade* brooch embodies this approach by bridging not only materials and techniques, but also cultural perspectives. It invites viewers to consider how meaning is shaped through context, transformation and exchange.

CLW

LITERATURE:

Huang Pei and Eric Anderson, 'GRAD 1906 Conversations in Contemporary Design', 2022

PROVENANCE:

Donated by Gijsbertus Johannes (Gijs) Bakker (1942), Amsterdam, and Shanghai TraditioNow Cultural Development Co., Ltd., 2024
(inv. no. BK-2024-37).

