

# **From La Farge to Paik**

*Research Resources at the Smithsonian American Art Museum*

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A wealth of materials related to artistic interchange between the United States and Asia await scholarly attention at the Smithsonian Institution.<sup>1</sup> The Smithsonian American Art Museum in particular owns a remarkable number of artworks that speak to the continuous exchange between East and West. Many of these demonstrate U.S. fascination with Asia and its cultures: prints and paintings of America's Chinatowns; late-nineteenth-century examples of Orientalism and Japonisme; Asian decorative arts and artifacts donated by an American collector; works by Anglo artists who traveled to Asia and India to depict their landscapes and peoples or to study traditional printmaking techniques; and post-war paintings that engage with Asian spirituality and calligraphic traditions. The museum also owns hundreds of works by artists of Asian descent, some well known, but many whose careers are just now being rediscovered. This essay offers a selected overview of related objects in the collection.

### *West Looks East*

American artists have long looked eastward—not only to Europe but also to Asia and India—for subject matter and aesthetic inspiration. They did not always have to look far. In fact, the earliest of such works in the American Art Museum's collection consider with curiosity, and sometimes animosity, the presence of Asians in the United States. An example is Winslow Homer's engraving entitled *The Chinese in New York—Scene in a Baxter Street Club-House*, which was produced for *Harper's Weekly* in 1874. Here Homer examines the seamy underside of immigrant culture, depicting a group of Chinese immigrants gambling and smoking opium. His image reveals the reigning Anglo-American anxiety about the arrival



1. Edwin Lord Weeks, *Street Scene in India*, ca. 1884–88. Oil on canvas, 28 <sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub> × 23 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> in. Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, DC, Bequest of Harriet Lane Johnston.

of large numbers of Chinese immigrants at mid-century, an anxiety that manifested itself in the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. Almost concurrent to the Exclusion Act is Theodore Wores's *The Chinese Fishmonger* (see Mills, Figure 1), depicting San Francisco's Chinatown. Completed just after Wores's return to San Francisco from training in Munich, this deep-hued and richly textured painting opened the door for further picturesque depictions of the exotic ethnic quarter.<sup>2</sup>

These two early images are complemented by works on paper by subsequent genera-

tions of artists active in San Francisco: several prints by Helen Hyde, such as *Alley in Chinatown* (1898); three etchings of Chinatown vendors by Austrian-born John Winkler (1912–73); and a market scene by Loren Barton (ca. 1924).<sup>3</sup>

A small number of American artists traveled to Asia in the late nineteenth century. As Virginia Anderson describes in her essay in this volume, artist Katherine Carl was invited to the imperial palace in 1903 to paint the first portrait of the controversial empress dowager of China, Cixi. Carl spent nine months in China and produced several portraits of the empress, including one exhibited at the Louisiana Purchase Exposition in St. Louis in 1904. Following the exposition, Carl's portrait was presented by China to the U.S. government with much fanfare, and it entered the American Art Museum's collection in 1960. Carl's unusual painting, recently transferred to the Smithsonian's Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, reflects traditional Chinese portrait conventions and is surrounded by an intricately carved, camphor wood frame designed by the Empress herself.<sup>4</sup>

The core of the American Art Museum's collection was formed in the late nineteenth century when Orientalism was a prevalent trend. Originally named the National Gallery of Art, the museum received its inaugural gift of 34 objects from Harriet Lane Johnston in 1906, and another 150 works from William T. Evans beginning in 1907.<sup>5</sup> Johnston's collection includes the striking *Street Scene in India* (Figure 1),

painted by Edwin Lord Weeks in the 1880s during one of his many extended travels throughout the Near East. Among Evans's gifts to the museum are two additional works that reveal the Gilded Age fascination with the "exotic" East and an appreciation for its decorative arts: Irving R. Wiles's *Brown Kimono (Portrait of Kathryn Beta la Forque)* (1908), and H. Siddons Mowbray's *Idle Hours* (1895), both of which depict Western women clothed in kimonos and surrounded by Asian objects and decor.

The nineteenth-century taste for Asian decorative wares, textiles, and prints is perhaps most visible in the collection of John Gellatly, whose 1929 gift was an early and significant boon to the museum. Gellatly, a New York City collector, donated 1,640 works including more than 140 contemporary American paintings—most by Abbott Handerson Thayer, Childe Hassam, Albert Pinkham Ryder, Thomas Wilmer Dewing, and John Henry Twachtman—along with European paintings and nearly 1,500 other decorative art objects. This jewel box of *objets d'art* contained English and French enamels, Italian majolica, Roman glass, and close to 150 Asian art objects. The cultural origins of many of the Asian works in the Gellatly collection remain unidentified or unconfirmed, but they consist of fragments of Buddhist wall paintings as well as jewelry, ornaments, figurines, and vessels made of jade, glass, stone, and precious metals. As the museum's identity evolved over the years to focus exclusively on American art, these Asian decorative works were relegated to study collections and eventually placed on long-term loan to the Smithsonian's Freer Study Collection. Yet Gellatly's collection of Asian objects remains an under-utilized source for scholars investigating early American collecting practices.<sup>6</sup>

American paintings collected by Gellatly reflect his contemporaries' similar taste for Oriental objects, such as celadon ware, folding screens, and Japanese prints. Paintings such as Thomas Wilmer Dewing's *The Necklace* (ca. 1907) and *Lady in White (No. 2)* (ca. 1910); Robert Reid's *The Violet Kimono* (ca. 1910); Childe Hassam's *Tanagra (The Builders, New York)* (1918); Henry Golden Dearth's *Bronze Buddha* (n.d.); and Ruth Payne Burgess's *Green Chinese Jar* (see Mills, Figure 3) all feature such decorative wares in domestic interiors.<sup>7</sup> Among the paintings donated by Gellatly is a watercolor entitled *Water Lily in Sunlight* (ca. 1883) by John La Farge. Even more so than his contemporaries, La Farge shared Gellatly's early interest in the art of Asia, specifically Japan. He owned Chinese and Japanese ceramics and *ukiyo-e* prints, lectured and wrote about Japan, and traveled around the country with the historian Henry Adams in 1886, recording his impressions in *An Artist's Letters from Japan* (1897). The American Art Museum owns a number of La Farge's stained glass windows, such as *Peonies in the Wind with Kakemono Borders* (ca. 1893), which evoke the bird and flower motifs of Chinese and Japanese screens.



2. Helen Hyde, *The Sauce-Pan Shop*, 1908. Color woodcut on paper, 12 1/2 x 17 7/8 in. Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, DC, Gift of Hyde Gillette in memory of Mabel Hyde Gillette and Edwin Fraser Gillette.

In 1935, not long after the Gellatly donation, the museum received nearly 700 works from the Chicago Society of Etchers, including two prints by Mukul Dey that are an early indication of cultural interchange between the U.S. and India. Mukul Dey (1895–1989) was a student of Rabindranath Tagore’s Santiniketan School. In 1916 he accompanied his teacher on a yearlong visit to the United States, where he met Bertha Jacques, founder of the Chicago Society of Etchers, and took a course in drypoint etching from James Blanding Sloan. He was elected to the Society, which exhibited and eventually donated to the museum his portrait of Tagore and a traditional image he made of the Tree of Life. On his return to India, Dey became known as the pioneer of drypoint etching, recognized for his portraits of national and world celebrities.<sup>8</sup>

A fascination with Japanese prints and a desire to learn Eastern techniques propelled artists such as Helen Hyde and Bertha Lum to venture to Japan and China at the turn of the century. While the museum has just three woodcuts by Lum, it holds 126 works by Hyde (mostly color etchings and woodcuts), the majority of which depict women and children in Japan, where the artist spent more than a decade. While Hyde’s images (Figure 2) often reflect American stereotypes and fantasies about Japan and its people, they are a rich resource for anyone researching the early Japanese influence on American artists and the role of women in this development.<sup>9</sup>

In post-war decades American abstract artists engaged with Asian spiritual and design traditions in new and fruitful ways. As scholar Ding Ning discusses in his



essay in this book, Mark Tobey, a practicing Baha'i, studied brushwork in a Zen Buddhist monastery in Japan and learned Chinese calligraphy and painting from his close friend, Chinese artist Teng Baiye. The museum owns several works, such as *Canticle* (1954), that demonstrate Tobey's use of light-colored calligraphic symbols over a colored ground, a style that came to be called "white writing." Also in the museum's collection are works by Morris Graves, a friend of Tobey and practitioner of Zen. Graves's *Folded Wings—Memory—& the Moon Weeping* (ca. 1942–43) demonstrate both his appreciation of Tobey's white writing and his incorporation of nature imagery, especially the bird, as vehicle for expressing his inner state.<sup>10</sup>

William T. Wiley studied the work of Tobey and Graves as an art student, and became independently acquainted with Zen philosophy, parables, and poetry. Throughout his career, Wiley borrowed ideas and symbols from Zen, incorporating them into works like *Body Dharma* (1995) and *There is no Buddha Out There* (1999). The museum's in-depth collection of Wiley's work (more than 90 objects) and the catalogue of his recent retrospective, *What's It All Mean*, organized by senior curator Joann Moser, reveal one example of Zen's reverberations in late-twentieth-century American art.<sup>11</sup>

### *Asian American Artists*

While the 2009 conference focused specifically on artistic interactions between East and West, it is important to also consider art made by Americans of Asian descent. The American Art Museum has rich holdings in this subfield, although these objects have not heretofore been considered as a group in its collection guides, catalogues, or survey exhibitions. Most American museums do not publish guides to their Asian Pacific American holdings and may not even classify works as such, and while numerous institutions have curators of Asian art, only the Japanese American National Museum in Los Angeles has a full-time curator, Karin Higa, working on art of the Asian diaspora. University departments in Asian American studies (UCLA being a prime example) are doing much to develop this neglected field of art history, but still a large percentage of artists of Asian descent remain unknown, under researched, and excluded from the American art canon and, consequently, from museum displays.<sup>12</sup>

A major contribution to the documentation effort has been the California Asian American Artists Biographical Survey 1850–1965 (CAAABS). Funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities and published as part of the important 2008 survey book, *Asian American Art: A History, 1850–1970*, this initiative has documented more than 1,000 artists, with an emphasis on those active on the West Coast. Also now underway is a newer initiative to document artists, archives, and art collections based on the East Coast. Co-organized by Alexandra Chang and Margo Machida and

sponsored by New York University Asian/Pacific/American Institute, the East Coast Asian American Art Project (ECAAAP) will produce a volume of new scholarship documenting collections and artists in this region. While it will initially focus on New York City, research is also planned for Washington, DC, Boston, and Chicago. Another key resource is the Smithsonian's Archives of American Art, which holds extensive correspondence, oral history interviews, and other documents related to Asian American artists.<sup>13</sup>

A review of the Asian American holdings at the American Art Museum shows a surprisingly far-reaching collection. Over the past 50 years, works have entered the collection in a variety of ways: they were transferred from other government agencies, given by foundations or collectors as part of larger collections of twentieth-century art, occasionally purchased, and in a few instances donated by artists or their estates. Despite never having set out to systematically establish a collection of Asian American art, the museum now owns more than 450 works by 100 artists of Asian descent. Some of these artists were not born in the United States and some were not U.S. citizens, but they are included in the collection because they lived in America for a number of years and contributed to the nation's artistic heritage in some meaningful way. The collection is almost exclusively modern and contemporary; only two works predate 1920. Japanese American and Chinese American artists predominate; however, the collection includes works by a number of artists of Korean, Filipino, Vietnamese, and Indian descent. The majority of the museum's holdings of Asian American art are graphic arts, but it also has a significant collection of studio craft and sculptural objects. This distribution is not surprising considering limited acquisition budgets, but it also reflects a strong Asian tradition of craft, printmaking, and brush painting.

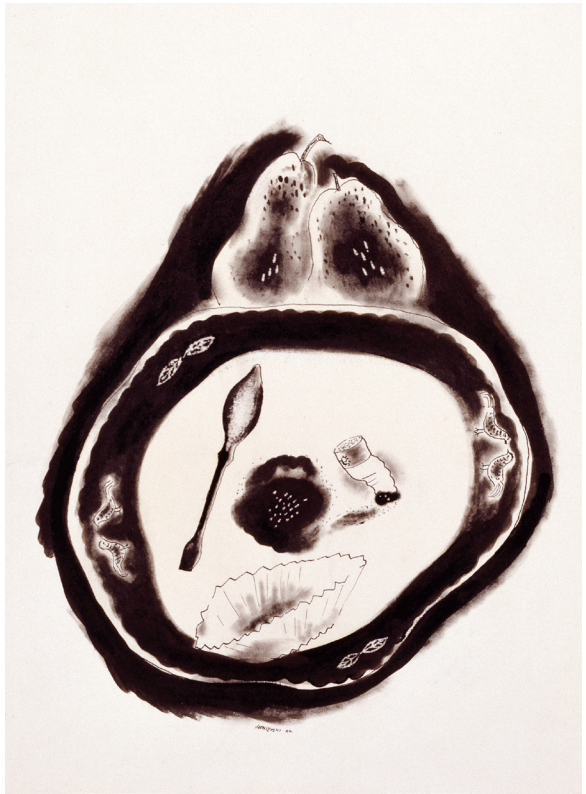
The museum owns 16 works by one of the most acclaimed Japanese American artists of his generation, Yasuo Kuniyoshi (1893–1953). Born in Okayama, Japan, Kuniyoshi immigrated to the United States as a young man in 1906, eventually becoming a prominent figure in the New York avant-garde. The museum's works span nearly the length of his career and include paintings, lithographs, and drawings of his best-known subjects: landscapes with cows done in a folk art style, sensuous female figures, and carnival performers. A recent acquisition, the ink-and-brush drawing *Remains of Lunch* (Figure 3) shows not only the artist's skill as a draftsman but also his subtle humor. Complementing the collection is a portrait of Kuniyoshi in his studio painted in 1930 by his lifelong friend, Japanese-born Woodstock painter Bumpei Usui.

Chiura Obata (1885–1975) also came to the United States from Japan at the beginning of the twentieth century, moving to San Francisco in 1903. In 1927

Obata first visited Yosemite National Park and the Sierra Nevada, where he sketched dramatic landscapes in pencil, ink, and watercolor. These studies served as the basis for a limited-edition portfolio of 35 color woodblock prints that Obata created in Tokyo over a period of two years. In 2000 the American Art Museum acquired 26 of the full set from the artist's family, and in 2005 the family gave three of the watercolor studies and a set of 125 progressive proofs that illustrate the artist's labor-intensive working methods. While Obata has been largely unknown to U.S. audiences, the museum's 2008 exhibi-

tion, *Obata's Yosemite*, and a segment in Ken Burns's 2009 documentary on the national parks may help to increase awareness of his work.<sup>14</sup>

A number of artists of Asian ancestry who were active in the 1930s and 1940s are represented among the American Art Museum's extensive holdings of New Deal art. Chinese American watercolorist Dong Kingman (1911–2000) received popular and critical attention in his day, exhibiting in group shows at major San Francisco museums and working for the Works Progress Administration. The museum owns five of his California landscapes including *Bridge Over River* painted in 1936 under the auspices of the WPA, while the Smithsonian's Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden owns a dynamic streetscape, *Station Platform* (1946), painted after the artist's move to New York City. Other works by Asian American artists completed under New Deal art programs were transferred to the American Art Museum from various federal agencies starting in the 1960s. These include a wood engraving by Hawaiian-born Japanese American artist Isami Doi entitled *Near Coney Island* (ca. 1937), two watercolors by Fugui Nakamizo, Sakari Suzuki's New York landscape *Merrick Road* (1934), Hideo Date's *White Gardenias* (n.d.),



3. Yasuo Kuniyoshi, *Remains of Lunch*, 1922. Pen and ink, brush and ink on paper, 13 <sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub> × 10 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> in. Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, DC, Museum purchase through the Luisita L. and Franz H. Denghausen Endowment.



nine lithographs by Chuzo Tamotzu, and Kenjiro Nomura's oddly desolate *The Farm* (1934), painted before the Seattle artist's internment.<sup>15</sup>

An interesting if minor collection of works by several noted mid-century Asian American artists came to the museum as part of a 1984 gift from the Container Corporation of America. Under the direction of design consultant Herbert Bayer, a major Bauhaus figure, the corporation undertook some of the first fine-art advertising campaigns, commissioning artists to create original works in various media that were then reproduced as full-page ads in mainstream magazines. An early series entitled *United Nations* was undertaken during World War II as a tribute to allied nations. Chinese American artists Yun Gee and Mai-mai Sze were chosen to represent China and Indo-China, while Filipino artist Venancio Igarta created *Freedom!* (1945) in reference to the four-year Japanese occupation of his homeland.<sup>16</sup> The corporation also donated 161 original works of art created for the *Great Ideas of Western Man* series, launched in 1950, and its smaller and largely forgotten counterpart, *Great Ideas of Eastern Man*. For the Great Ideas campaigns, artists were asked to create a work in response to a preselected quote by a great thinker; Eastern reflections were culled from Buddha, Gandhi, Issa, Confucius, Rabindranath Tagore, Lao Tzu, and the Bhagavad-Gita. The museum's holdings include ten works from the Eastern Man Series, eight of them by artists of Asian and Indian descent: Chi-kwan Chen, Wing Gig Fong, Shiro Ikegawa, Genichiro Inokuma, Yusaku Kamekura, Matazo Kayama, Shiko Munakata, and Mohan B. Samant.<sup>17</sup>

Jeffrey Wechsler's 1997 landmark exhibition *Asian Traditions/Modern Expressions* and its accompanying catalogue drew attention to many mid-century Asian American abstractionists whose work was informed by Asian philosophy or technique.<sup>18</sup> Of the 58 artists featured in the catalogue, 15 are represented in the American Art Museum's collection: Leo Amino, Chen Chi, Fay Chong, Isami Doi, Genichiro Inokuma, Matsumi Kanemitsu, Seong Moy, Win Ng, Isamu Noguchi, Kenzo Okada, Arthur Okamura, Toshiko Takaazu, Walasse Ting, Ansei Uchima, and Wang Ming. Frequently on view is Noguchi's monumental marble sculpture *Grey Sun* (1967), but the museum also owns three works by the lesser-known Japanese American sculptor Leo Amino (1911–1989). These sculptures demonstrate Amino's range of media and styles: from a Henry Moore-inspired wooden carving entitled *Seedling* (1953) to *Family* (1948), an example of his pioneering work in polyester resin. Okada (1902–1982), a Japanese-born painter who moved to New York in 1950, is singled out by Wechsler as most closely aligned with the New York Abstract Expressionist school.<sup>19</sup> Two of his oil paintings—*To Point* (1962) and *Grey* (1970)—are owned by the museum; the former was part of an important gift of post-war artworks from S.C. Johnson & Son, Inc. This donation also included Okamura's expressionist landscape *Stray Cur, Eucalyptus Grove* (1961), Ng's ceramic sculpture *Two Sides of Three Blocks #3* (1967), Gwen-Lin Goo's *Semblance* (n.d.), and the abstract

landscape *The Shores of Light* (1960) by Hawaiian-born Chinese American painter Reuben Tam.<sup>20</sup> Researchers interested in Tam should also consult the Archives of American Art for his papers: nine boxes of material from 1938 to 1997 including correspondence, sketchbooks, photographs, and color slides.

The American Art Museum owns a number of works by post-war Asian American artists celebrated for their printmaking. The most thoroughly represented

is Seong Moy, who was born in China in 1921 and came to Minnesota as a child. Moy studied art in Minnesota and later in New York at Hans Hofmann's school and the Art Students League. A painter and printmaker, he began in the 1940s to create woodcuts that overtly refer to his cultural heritage, such as *Kuang Kung* (Figure 4), a woodcut abstraction of the Chinese god of war. The museum has an extensive collection of 36 drawings, woodcuts, and etchings by Moy; all but three were donated by the artist in 1969.<sup>21</sup>

Matsumi (Mike) Kanemitsu (1922–1992)—discussed in this volume by Bert Winther-Tamaki—was born in the United States but spent his childhood in Japan. He worked in New York in a variety of media including watercolor and *sumi* (Japanese ink drawing) before arriving in Los Angeles in the 1960s to learn lithography at the Tamarind Lithography Workshop. The museum owns 13 of his lithographs, which reproduce the wet look of his *sumi* paintings. *Santa Anita Yesterday & Today*, one of the 1970 series *Illustrations of Southern California*, alludes to the wartime use of the Los Angeles track to temporarily house Japanese Americans before they were relocated to internment camps.<sup>22</sup>

Contemporary with such abstract prints but more traditional in style are the works of Japanese-born master woodcutter Un-ichi Hiratsuka (1895–1997). Hiratsuka was



4. Seong Moy, *Kuang Kung*, 1952. Color woodcut on paper, 14 1/8 x 12 in. Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, DC, Gift of the artist.

one of Japan's most accomplished printmakers before moving to Washington, DC, in 1962. He lived in the capital with his daughter for more than 30 years—working and teaching—before returning to Japan near the end of his life. The museum mounted a small exhibition of his work in 1999 and owns three woodcuts, including two local scenes, *Washington Monument* (n.d.) and *Key Bridge in Winter* (1966).<sup>23</sup>

The museum's Renwick Gallery of American craft has actively acquired and exhibited objects made by Asian Americans since its opening in 1972. The 2005 exhibit *High Fiber* featured Japanese American fiber artists Kiyomi Iwata and Kay Sekimachi; *Staged Stories: Renwick Craft Invitational 2009* highlighted Korean-born sculptor Sun Koo Yuh; and the 2011 Renwick Invitational includes works by ceramicist Cliff Lee, who was born in Taiwan. The gallery's 2010–2011 exhibition *The Art of Gaman: Arts and Crafts from the Japanese American Internment Camps, 1942–1946*, organized by guest curator Delphine Hirasuna, showcased the creativity and resilience of Japanese American internees (few of them trained craftsmen) who fashioned exquisite domestic objects for their surroundings out of scraps and found materials.

The Renwick's collection of objects by Asian American artists includes, among others: fiber works by Kiyomi Iwata and Kay Sekimachi; wood vessels by Binh Pho; metalwork by Chunghi Choo and Miye Matsukata; ceramic pieces by Jun Kaneko, Mineo Mizuno, Chun Wen Wang, Patti Warashina, and Shige Yamada; and furniture by celebrated woodworker George Nakashima.<sup>24</sup> Represented in depth is the ceramic art of Toshiko Takaezu (1922–2011), who worked in clay for more than six decades. Born in Hawaii to Japanese parents, Takaezu studied at the University of Hawaii with Claude Horan and later at Cranbrook Academy with Maija Grotell. In 1955 she left for eight months in Japan, where she visited traditional pottery studios and Zen Buddhist temples in an effort to reconnect with her cultural heritage. The Renwick owns 19 of Takaezu's works, from the 1950s through 2002, including many of her signature closed vertical vessels with their painterly brush decoration.

The American Art Museum's contemporary painting collection includes significant works by Asian American artists that deal with issues of memory and cultural identity.<sup>25</sup> Roger Shimomura's (b. 1939) painting *Diary: December 12, 1941* (1980) refers to his family's history of internment during World War II. Combining elements of traditional Japanese art with a hard-edged pop style, *Diary* is from a series of paintings based on his grandmother's diary entries. On this date in 1941, his grandmother wrote of "America's large-heartedness" in allowing "we who are enemy to them" to withdraw \$100 from the bank following the bombing of Pearl Harbor (the accounts of *issei* were frozen immediately after the attack). Shimomura ironically considers America's reputation as a defender of liberty and justice by depict-

ing the shadow of Superman looming across a shoji screen behind his grandmother.<sup>26</sup>

Masami Teraoka creates politically charged art in a style that imitates *ukiyo-e*, or floating world, nineteenth-century block prints. Born in Japan in 1936, Teraoka came to California in his twenties to attend art school, arriving in the midst of the 1960s counterculture movement. Eventually, he decided to address contemporary issues in his painting by means of a style that could reflect his own hybrid identity. Paintings such as *Tale of 1000 Condoms/Geisha and Skeleton* (1989) and *Oiran*

and *Mirror*, from the *AIDS Series* (1988) reflect the artist's concern with the AIDS crisis of the 1980s, while *MacDonald's Hamburgers Invading Japan/Tokyo Ginza Shuffle* (1982) is a tongue-in-cheek critique of American consumerism and globalization.

Hung Liu (b. 1948) came of age in China during the Cultural Revolution and witnessed the government's attempt to sever the country's ties to its past through the widespread destruction of historical artifacts and cultural sites. Her paintings are often inspired by once-forgotten archival photographs. Painted nearly a century later than Katherine Carl's life portrait of the empress dowager, *The Ocean is the Dragon's World* (Figure 5) echoes the composition of a formal royal portrait. Whereas Carl was restricted by the desires of her sitter and conventions of Chinese portraiture, Liu's painting is based on a photograph now in the collection of the Palace Museum, Beijing, and reveals her contrasting creative freedom. Here, Cixi's face is left nearly featureless, so the artist can focus instead on her opulent costume and surroundings. She holds a birdcage—a real object that emerges from the surface of the canvas—which might hint at the cloistered life of Chinese royalty.<sup>27</sup> Liu's paintings were featured in the museum's 1996–97 exhibition *American Kaleidoscope: Themes and Perspectives in Recent Art* and related catalogue, and senior curator Joann Moser interviewed her in 2010 for the Archives of American Art's oral history repository.



5. Hung Liu, *The Ocean is the Dragon's World*, 1995. Oil on canvas, painted wood panel, metal support rod, and metal bird cage with wood and ceramic appendages, 97 × 82 1/2 × 17 3/8 in. Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, DC, Museum purchase in part through the Lichtenberg Family Foundation.



Recent acquisitions by the museum's contemporary curators have enriched our collection of installation and new media artworks by Asian Americans. In 2009 Joanna Marsh organized *Jean Shin: Common Threads*, a solo show featuring eight of the Korean-born artist's colossal installation pieces that reflect upon aspects of contemporary American culture. Among the works on view was the recent acquisition *Chemical Balance III* (2009), an assemblage of prescription pill bottles in the shape of stalactites and stalagmites that addresses Americans' addiction to prescription medication. With the assistance of John Hanhardt, senior curator for media arts, the museum recently acquired a work by Japanese-German artist Kota Ezawa (b. 1969), who became famous for his 2002 animated sequence of the reading of the O.J. Simpson verdict. Ezawa's four-minute digitally animated film *LYAM 3D* takes as its source various scenes from the 1961 French film *Last Year at Marienbad* in which the actors stand motionless.<sup>28</sup>

Ezawa's predecessor, the international video artist Nam June Paik (1932–2006), who was born in South Korea, had a long relationship with the American Art Museum. Among the Paik works in our collection are the early *Zen for TV* (1963, 1976 version) and two later video walls: *Electronic Superhighway: Continental U.S., Alaska, Hawaii* (1995) and *Megatron/Matrix* (1995), on view in the museum's contemporary galleries. In 2009 the museum also acquired the artist's complete estate archive, which consists of research material, documentation, correspondence, sculptural robots, and video and television technology. The Nam June Paik Archive provides unprecedented insight into the artist's creative process, his sources of inspiration, and the artistic communities on three continents with whom he worked for more than five decades. While the collection is not yet catalogued and available to researchers, it should prove an extraordinary resource in the future for those studying Paik and the history of the moving image.

Scholars interested in Asian American art should further consult the resources available at the American Art Museum's Research and Scholars Center ([www.americanart.si.edu/research/](http://www.americanart.si.edu/research/)). The center maintains the searchable online databases of the Inventories of American Painting and Sculpture, including records documenting artworks by nearly 150 Asian American artists in public and private collections worldwide. The inventories are supplemented by the center's photographic collection, which holds images of artworks by more than 40 Asian, Asian American, and Pacific Islander artists.

## Notes

I thank Elizabeth Anderson, Robin Dettre, and Shannon Perry at the American Art Museum and Aimee Soubier at the Hirshhorn for their assistance in accessing information about each museum's collections. My gratitude also goes to Margo Machida and Joann Moser, who provided valuable insight into the museums' Asian American holdings.



1. Works of art can be found in the collections of the Smithsonian American Art Museum, the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, and the Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery; historical collections reside at the National Museum of American History; vertical files are available through the Smithsonian Libraries; and oral history interviews and artists' papers are largely centralized in the Archives of American Art, although other archives, image collections, and research databases are maintained by the American Art Museum's Research and Scholars Center.
2. Anthony W. Lee's *Picturing Chinatown* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001) discusses this painting alongside other picturesque depictions of Chinatown, see especially 85–88.
3. The museum also owns 25 photographic diptychs by Eve Sonneman of New York's Chinatown (1970–72).
4. For a description of her work on this particular portrait, see Katherine A. Carl, *With the Empress Dowager* (New York: The Century Co., 1905), 237–38, 287–88, and 294–99.
5. For my discussion of the Johnston, Evans, and Gellatly donations, I rely on Lois M. Fink, *A History of the Smithsonian American Art Museum* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2007), 54–67.
6. Little is known about Gellatly and his collection. Xiomara Murray's dissertation in progress at New York University on the origins of the Smithsonian American Art Museum's collections includes a chapter on the Gellatly donation, focusing on the American and European paintings. Melody Deusner's dissertation, "A Network of Associations: Aesthetic Painting and its Patrons, 1870–1914" (University of Delaware, 2010) discusses Gellatly in relation to other patrons of aesthetic art such as Charles Lang Freer. The museum also owns a number of nineteenth-century Chinese export fans (mostly from a 1939 bequest by Alfred Duane Pell), which were shown in the Renwick Gallery's 1985 exhibition *Fanfare*.
7. Other fine examples from this era not in the Gellatly collection include Robert Reid's *The Mirror* (ca. 1910), which depicts a woman standing in front of a blue and gold folding screen, and William M. Paxton's *The Figurine* (1921), which shows a housekeeper dusting the vitrine of an Asian figurine.
8. See the Mukul Dey archives and the artist's reminiscences at [www.chitralkha.org/profile.htm](http://www.chitralkha.org/profile.htm). His work was included in the Society's 1917 and 1918 exhibitions; Chicago Society of Etchers, *Catalogue of an Exhibition of Etchings under the Management of the Chicago Society of Etchers* (Chicago: Art Institute of Chicago, 1917; 1918).
9. For more on Hyde and Lum, see Mari Yoshihara, *Embracing the East: White Women and American Orientalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 58–73.
10. The museum owns 16 works by Tobey and seven by Graves. On the Northwest School, see Kathleen Pyne and D. Scott Atkinson, "Landscapes of the Mind: New Conceptions of Nature" in Alexandra Munroe, *The Third Mind: American Artists Contemplate Asia, 1860–1989*, (New York: Guggenheim Museum, 2009), 94–96.
11. Joann Moser, John Yau, and John G. Hanhardt, *What's It All Mean: William T. Wiley in Retrospect* (Berkeley: University of California Press and the Smithsonian American Art Museum, 2009).
12. One obvious exception is the Noguchi Museum in Long Island City, New York. Significant holdings of Asian American art can also be found at the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, the Japanese American National Museum in Los Angeles, the Honolulu Academy of Art, and the Contemporary Art Museum in Honolulu. While at one time many U.S. art museums owned works by Asian Americans, "intervening years have seen the deaccessioning of important works, as the result of changing interests of curators and collectors"; Sharon Spain, "Introduction to Biographies of California Asian American Artists, 1850–1965" in Gordon H. Chang, Mark Dean Johnson, and Paul J. Karlstrom, eds., *Asian American Art: A History, 1850–1970* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008), 287.
13. See [www.aaa.si.edu/guides/site-asianamerican/](http://www.aaa.si.edu/guides/site-asianamerican/). Noted artists represented in the Archives' collection include Dong Kingman, Yasuo Kuniyoshi, Miye Matsukata, Seong Moy, Isamu Noguchi, Norie Sato, Toshiko Takaezu, Reuben Tam, and Patti Warashina.
14. "Chiura Obata, a Painter of Yosemite" (04:53) aired as part of Ken Burns's six-episode series "The National Parks: America's Best Idea," in 2009, and can be viewed at [www.pbs.org/nationalparks/](http://www.pbs.org/nationalparks/). See also *Obata's Yosemite: The Art and Letters of Chiura Obata from His Trip to the High Sierra in 1927* (Yosemite National Park, California: Yosemite Association, 1993).

15. The museum's New Deal holdings include about 3,000 works, making it one of the largest such collections in the world. See foreword by Elizabeth Broun in Ann Prentice Wagner, *1934: A New Deal for Artists* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian American Art Museum, 2009), 6–9. Isami Doi is also represented by a complete set of wood engravings from the portfolio *The Wayward Muse*, given to the museum in 1971.
16. While the only works by Yun Gee in the American Art Museum's collection are two versions of *Indo-China* from the United Nations Series, the Hirshhorn owns five of his paintings from 1926–27.
17. An additional work by an Asian American artist in the Container Corporation collection is Keichi Kimura's *Hawaii* (1946–49) from the United States Series. On the corporation's advertising campaigns, see Herbert Bayer's introduction to *Great Ideas*, ed. John Massey (Chicago: Container Corporation of America, 1976), xi.
18. Jeffrey Wechsler, ed., *Asian Traditions, Modern Expressions: Asian American Artists and Abstraction, 1945–1970* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., in association with the Jane Voorhees Zimmerli Art Museum, Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, 1997).
19. Okada showed at Betty Parsons Gallery for many years and was included in the Walker Art Center's exhibition *60 American Painters: Abstract Expressionist Painting of the Fifties* in 1960. See Wechsler, *Asian Traditions, Modern Expressions*, 170.
20. The Hirshhorn owns an additional five works by Okamura from 1960–61 and four by Tam from the mid-1950s.
21. The Archives of American Art offers further resources in the form of the Seong Moy Papers, 1946–1970, and a 1971 oral history interview of the artist.
22. The Archives of American Art holds Kanemitsu's papers.
23. The exhibit *Woodcuts by Hiratsuka: A Master in Our Midst* ran from 14 May to 12 September 1999.
24. The American Art Museum also owns three works on paper and a recently acquired oil painting, *Sanctuary at Western Sunset* (1992), by Tom Nakashima, George Nakashima's nephew.
25. Several renowned contemporary artists of Asian descent who are not represented in the American Art Museum's collection are included in the Hirshhorn's collection, including Nikki S. Lee, Hiroshi Sugimoto, Yoko Ono, and Yayoi Kusama.
26. Jacquelyn Days Serwer, *American Kaleidoscope: Themes and Perspectives in Recent Art* (Washington, DC: National Museum of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, 1996), 92–98, quote at 101 n. 6.
27. See Jonathan P. Binstock, "Hung Liu" in Serwer, *American Kaleidoscope*, 120–31; and an interview of Hung Liu by Han Qing, translated by Luisetta Mudie, "The Many Faces of Hung Liu," *Radio Free Asia*, at [www.rfa.org/english/news/arts/china\\_artist-20051018.html](http://www.rfa.org/english/news/arts/china_artist-20051018.html) [accessed 9 August 2010].
28. Ezawa's slide projection *History of Photography Remix* (2004–2006) is in the Hirshhorn's collection.