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PUBLICATIONS

FREER GALLERY OF ART

Smithsonian Institution

FIRST PRESENTATION

of the

CHARLES LANG FREER
MEDAL



Washington, D. C.

February 25, 1956

FREER GALLERY OF ART
Smithsonian Institution

FIRST PRESENTATION
III

of the

CHARLES LANG FREER
MEDAL



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Freer Gallery of Art,
Washington, D. C.

FOREWORD

On February 25, 1956, occurred the one-hundredth anniversary of the birth of the late Charles Lang Freer, who founded the Freer Gallery of Art. To mark this occasion, a medal was established in his memory and presented to Professor Osvald Sirén of Stockholm, Sweden, before some three hundred guests in the auditorium of the Gallery.

On the rostrum were Count Carl L. Douglas, Minister Plenipotentiary, representing the Ambassador of Sweden, Professor Osvald Sirén, Miss Katharine N. Rhoades, representing the Friends of the Freer Gallery named in Mr. Freer's last will and testament, the Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, and the Director of the Freer Gallery of Art.

On the following pages will be found the program and exercises accompanying the presentation.

A. G. W.

FIRST PRESENTATION
of the
CHARLES LANG FREER MEDAL

February 25, 1956

Opening Remarks

LEONARD CARMICHAEL
Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution

THE CHARLES LANG FREER MEDAL

ARCHIBALD G. WENLEY
Director of the Freer Gallery of Art

PRESENTATION

by

THE SECRETARY OF THE SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION

ADDRESS OF ACCEPTANCE

PROFESSOR OSVALD SIRÉN

Following the Address of Acceptance
Reception in Gallery 17

OPENING REMARKS

By DR. LEONARD CARMICHAEL

Secretary, The Smithsonian Institution

Mr. Minister, Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen:

I call you to order on a notable occasion in the history of the Freer Gallery of Art. This convocation marks the one-hundredth anniversary of the birth of the founder of this world-famous gallery of the Smithsonian Institution. The Smithsonian Institution, the parent organization of the Freer Gallery, like this gallery itself, was founded by the generous gift of a distinguished man. The foundation endowment of the Smithsonian was bequeathed to America by a great English scientist and the foundation endowment of the Freer Gallery by an outstanding American industrialist and art lover.

In its basic law, largely written by the sage John Quincy Adams, the Smithsonian Institution is directed to maintain a gallery of art. Today this requirement is met by the fact that the Smithsonian has as bureaus, the National Collection of Fine Arts, the National or Mellon Gallery of Art, and this specialized and significant Freer Gallery in which we are met today. The seven other scientific bureaus of the Institution are enriched by their

association with these three bureaus which are dedicated to work in the arts.

The Chancellor, the Regents and the staff of the Smithsonian Institution are proud of the Freer Gallery because of the unique character of its collections and also because of the outstanding research that is done here by its scholarly staff.

It is an especial privilege, therefore, for me as the seventh Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution to introduce to you Mr. Archibald G. Wenley, the second Director of the Freer Gallery of Art. Mr. Wenley is an academician by heredity as well as by training. His father, a learned Scotsman, was long a distinguished member of the faculty of the University of Michigan. Our Director himself, after advanced studies in this country, continued for several years his research training in Paris. Then for a number of years he was engaged in archaeological and scholarly work in the fine arts in China and Japan. Mr. Wenley is not only Director of this Gallery, but also holds the title of Research Professor of Oriental Art in the University of Michigan. He is a member of many American and foreign societies. Everywhere he is recognized as one of America's leading experts in his difficult and important chosen field of Far Eastern art.

It is a privilege for me to introduce Professor Wenley, the wise guiding intelligence of the Gallery which may be described as a principal jewel in Smithsonian's crown. Mr. Wenley:



PORTRAIT OF CHARLES LANG FREER
Oil Painting by James McNeill Whistler
About 1902
Freer Gallery Number 03.301

REMARKS

By MR. A. G. WENLEY

Director, The Freer Gallery of Art

Mr. Secretary, Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen:

We are here today to commemorate the one-hundredth anniversary of the birth of the founder of the Freer Gallery of Art. As you all know, the late Charles Lang Freer was among the earliest and most successful collectors in this country of Oriental art, particularly that of China and Japan. In giving his collections and this building to the nation under the trusteeship of the Smithsonian Institution, he realized that not only must the Oriental collections be augmented, but, believing as he did that much may be learned concerning a civilization or epoch from the art it has produced, he envisioned a program of continuing research based on the objects in the collection. He provided funds for both these activities.

You will find the exhibition galleries upstairs devoted to a centennial exhibition. Here you may see many of the remarkable works from the original Freer collection. Besides these, you will see some of the numerous important additions made since 1920 and due in no small measure to the wisdom and taste of my eminent predecessor, the late John Ellerton Lodge.

The work of research has gone forward as Mr. Freer wished, and the publications, both books and scholarly articles, resulting therefrom are taking their places in libraries on Oriental art all over the world. It is from this point of view that it seems appropriate at this

time to establish a commemorative medal to be given from time to time to scholars who have produced outstanding work in this field. Our guest today, Professor Sirén, needs no introduction to most of you. He is an internationally known scholar, having worked in both the European and Far Eastern fields. His publications, of which you have in your hands merely a partial list numbering some 69 titles, attest his scholarship, as do his several monumental studies on various phases of Chinese art which are indispensable to scholars. Here I refer particularly to his stupendous four-volume works on the history of Chinese sculpture and the history of Chinese painting. These great works have done much to advance our knowledge in this field of study, and together with his other writings are in constant use by scholars of Far Eastern art all over the world. For some forty years he has toiled indefatigably in the Far Eastern field, travelling all over the world, seeing and studying all the important collections and monuments. Even now, in his 77th year, he is about to publish another epoch-making book on Chinese painting. He is a former professor of the history of art at Stockholm University, and as of today, is Keeper Emeritus of Pictures and Sculptures at the National Museum of Stockholm. Thus, in setting up this medal, we had no difficulty in deciding what to do with the first one, which we hope will be not only an incentive to Oriental scholars, but a continuing memorial to Charles Lang Freer for his encouragement of research.

And now I am going to ask Dr. Leonard Carmichael, Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, to make the presentation to Professor Sirén.



THE CHARLES LANG FREER MEDAL

PRESENTATION OF THE CHARLES LANG FREER MEDAL

By DR. LEONARD CARMICHAEL

When it was decided to establish a medal in honor of the donor of this Gallery, Charles Lang Freer, Professor Archibald Wenley, Miss Katharine N. Rhoades, an old and good friend of Mr. Freer and of this Gallery, Dr. John A. Pope and the other members of the staff of the Gallery were especially anxious to make the first award to a scholar recognized throughout the world for his preeminence in research in the field of Oriental art. Dr. Osvald Sirén, you were unanimously selected for this honor because of your distinguished and scholarly contributions to the knowledge and understanding of Oriental civilizations as reflected in their arts.

As Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, it is therefore my privilege to award to you this Charles Lang Freer Medal.

Professor Sirén, we would all be most grateful if you will address us at this time. Professor Sirén:



PROFESSOR OSVALD SIRÉN

Professor Siren's Address

Mr. Secretary, Mr. Director, Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen:

The award of the newly instituted Charles Lang Freer Medal fills me with feelings of deep gratitude and esteem. I receive it as one who through many years of experience and research has learned to consider the Freer Foundation as the most important center of Far Eastern art in the Western world, not only because of the many inestimable treasures that it contains, but also because of the way in which these are made accessible to students, and the care and knowledge with which this collection is continuously increased and improved (as I will try to explain to you in reviewing the history of the collection).

When last October I received the most unexpected invitation from the Director of the Freer Gallery of Art, Mr. Archibald G. Wenley, to come to Washington and take part in this centenary celebration of Charles L. Freer's birth, it was accompanied by a request that "in view of the audience" present at the occasion I should "prepare and deliver a short lecture on my recollections of the collectors and collections of Mr. Freer's day." The proposed task did not seem very easy, because my recollections of those days may not be sufficiently important to interest the distinguished audience, but I welcomed

it insofar as it offered me an opportunity to express my indebtedness not only to the Governors of the Freer Gallery and the Smithsonian Institution, but also to some friends of the past who in former years served the same cause and ideas as those of Mr. Freer.

In thinking of the most prominent among these predecessors I cannot but feel that I serve here today as a substitute for more worthy representatives of Oriental art-history, friends who would have received the honor conferred upon me, if they still had been among us. Some of them would also have been better fitted than I to describe Mr. Freer's life-work as a collector. But since the duty has fallen on me today, I will try to convey in a few words some observations regarding the development of scholarship in the Far Eastern field (particularly in America) during the last fifty years, and the collecting of Chinese and Japanese art, to which I will add some personal recollections of Mr. Freer and of two or three other men who were connected with his work.

A full historical presentation of the whole story would take us back two or three decades before the beginning of the 19th century, when the first collections of Japanese and Chinese art were formed by Americans who at that time lived or travelled in Japan. You may have heard about the well-known Bostonians, Dr. William Sturgis Bigelow, Dr. Charles G. Weld and Professor Edward S. Morse, who in the 1870s and 1880s formed interesting collections of Japanese and also to a minor extent Chinese art, which later gradually became the property of the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston. Their main advisor, particularly in regard to painting and sculpture, was Ernest Fenollosa, who since 1878 served as Professor of Philosophy and Political Economy at the

Tokyo University, and at the same time was actively engaged in the work for the preservation of the art treasures of Japan and the organization of the new art-school in Tokyo. As such, he had excellent opportunities to acquire first-hand knowledge about the old arts of Japan and also to some extent about Chinese works of art in Japanese collections. Through this training he gradually became well fitted to take up the position of a curator of the newly organized Far Eastern Department in the Boston Museum in 1890.

Fenollosa's influence during his Bostonian period seems to have been considerable. He was naturally somewhat prejudiced in favour of Japanese art, but he knew more than any other Westerner about the fine arts of the Orient as a whole, and possessed the rare faculty of inspiring those around him with something of his own enthusiasm for Eastern ideals. Those who knew Fenollosa during his best years in Boston are unanimous in testifying to his remarkable eloquence and power of conviction. I do not know exactly at what date Charles Freer first came into contact with Fenollosa, but I think it must have been shortly after Fenollosa settled in Boston, and he remained during his whole life a very close and faithful follower, not to say disciple, of Fenollosa. Fenollosa's posthumous work, *Epochs of Chinese and Japanese Art*, together with Herbert Giles' Introduction, remained all through Freer's life his principal literary guides in the field of Chinese and Japanese studies.

Fenollosa's departure from Boston in 1896, caused by circumstances quite foreign to his activities as an art-expert, put a premature end to his immediate personal influence, but he certainly left deep traces, not only at the Museum which he had helped to create, but also in

wider circles.

In order to realize the importance of this new approach to the arts of the Far East (as started in Boston), it should be recalled that no museum activities of a corresponding scope or compass had as yet been organized elsewhere, be it in Europe or in America. The collections of Far Eastern art objects which at that time existed in some European museums were composed mainly of porcelain and rare pieces of pottery, besides lacquer, cloisonné and colour-prints, i.e., relatively late forms of decorative art, and in addition to these there were also in some museums large bronze Buddhas of the Ming period (or made in Japan), not to mention other kinds of religious paraphernalia which were collected because of their ethnographical interest rather than as works of art.

The important point in the new approach towards these problems of Eastern art, which first became manifest in Boston, consisted in the admission that the artistic creations of the Far East were not inferior to those of the Western world, and that consequently the figurative arts of the Far East should be placed on the same level as the corresponding products from various European countries. The establishment of the new department in the Museum of Fine Arts, in which the figurative arts of China and Japan occupied dominating places, became, so to speak, the opening of a new door, or a new trend of development, in several corresponding institutions elsewhere. The leading museums in America gradually followed suit in starting to enlarge and to build up new departments for Chinese and Japanese sculpture and painting, beside the decorative arts of these countries. A new impulse had been released towards the end of

the 19th century, but the practical results of this did not become fully visible until a decade or two later (and still more slowly in Europe, where the museums never could catch up with the American institutions in this field).

Fenollosa's activity was, indeed, that of a precursor, but it had a wide influence and bore rich fruit. The exact measure of Charles Freer's indebtedness as a collector of Far Eastern art to Fenollosa escapes my estimate, but from all that I have seen and heard I would call it very large. Freer followed, to begin with, the path of approach opened by Fenollosa and became thus primarily attached to Japan as the staple land of Oriental art, before he ventured into the less explored and vaster fields of operation in China proper. This was indeed natural, not to say unavoidable, at a time when the knowledge of Chinese painting, for instance, was transmitted to the West mainly through Japanese colour-reproductions which often were more attractive than exact. It should be remembered that the *Kokka* magazine started in 1889, and the early Shimbi Shoin publications followed soon after. They served to increase the atmosphere of legendary lustre around the artistic products of these far away countries and to strike a romantic keynote in the minds of sensitive amateurs. Freer as well as Fenollosa was inspired and guided by this keynote; it satisfied their searching minds, yet aroused their enthusiasm, and it made them happy.

We have to admit that many of their estimates, opinions or theories regarding Chinese painting are unacceptable in the light of a more exact historical knowledge and critical experience, but their whole-hearted enthusiasm was of the creative kind and opened new avenues of approach; nor should we be too sure that our

critical knowledge is sufficient to save us from illusions.

Ten years after Fenollosa left his position as Curator of Oriental Art in the Museum of Fine Arts, another remarkable personality was attached to the same institution as his successor. His name was Okakura Kakuzo, the well-known Japanese painter and critic, whose connection with the Museum started in 1906 and lasted until his death in 1913. Okakura's period of activity in Boston was relatively short—a little less than seven years—but it marked, strictly speaking, a new epoch in the development of the collection of Chinese and Japanese painting not only in Boston but also at other places, to which his influence gradually reached. His knowledge of Eastern art (and painting in particular) was more intimate and penetrating than the knowledge or experience of any Western expert of the time, and he was highly independent and assertive in his opinions. As a museum worker he introduced strict critical methods for the classification of the pictures and made important new acquisitions in China and Japan by which the Boston collection was brought to a degree of relative superiority as compared with similar collections elsewhere. The number of the pictures which he bought was not as large as that of previous acquisitions (through Fenollosa and others), but their artistic quality was remarkably high, which served to establish a new level for institutions of the kind. The whole thing was brought closer to the time-honored standards of art-appreciation in China and Japan, and in conformity with ideals which had served as guidance for Eastern collectors for centuries. We have to admit, I believe, that this marked an important new step in the development of Oriental art-collections (and in the collectors' activities) in America, and it

should be noted that Okakura, as a critic and a collector, was not prejudiced in favour of his native country, but centered his main efforts on obtaining good specimens of early Chinese painting. He had evidently a remarkable sense of quality and made few, if any, real blunders in his attributions and estimates, but he had not as yet acquired the taste of the Chinese scholars for the later epochs of their native schools of painting—an attitude which hardly was recognized or admitted in America until recent times.

It may not be necessary to enter here into any further attempts to characterize Okakura as an art-expert and collector of Chinese painting, because his relations with Mr. Freer were not particularly friendly or intimate. Freer did not have much patience with Okakura's critical opinions, particularly when they were not in harmony with those of Japanese collectors of an older generation, among whom Freer had his best friends. They were both sincerely in love with Chinese and Japanese ideals (such as they had grasped them) and might insofar be called romantics, but whereas this attitude in the case of Okakura was filtered through a very subtle and critical intellect, it was in the case of Charles Freer more of a religious faith, a firm belief in the cultural mission of Eastern ideals as expressed in art. The individual backgrounds and scopes of activity were quite different.

Okakura found his most devoted listeners in the exclusive circle of amateurs, artists and growing experts who used to gather in the indescribable milieu of Mrs. Jack Gardner's candle-lighted tea-parties at Fenway Court, where he was the venerated high priest of Oriental aestheticism—always aloof and detached, even in his way of dressing and living.

Freer worked under entirely different conditions. His home was in Detroit (when not at the Hotel Plaza in New York), i.e., in one of the busiest industrial centres of modern America, where he hardly could find any response for his aesthetic endeavours. He took pleasure in showing selected specimens of his rapidly growing collection to sympathetic friends who, however, were not expected to express independent opinions or critical comments about the paintings. The house at Ferry Street in Detroit was, however, only a temporary abode for his treasures, from which they were to be moved to a more dignified and sympathetic home. Freer's devotion to the ideals of the East and his belief in their redeeming power (particularly in the field of art) was no less sincere than Okakura's, but whereas the latter gave expression to his aesthetic attitude in brilliant literary discussions known to us through such books as *The Ideals of the East* and *The Book of Tea* and in his critical activity at the Boston Museum, Freer gave a more practical expression to his faith in the permanent value of the Eastern ideals in bequeathing to posterity a beautiful home for the arts of the Orient and ample means to maintain this home and increase its contents. We who are now here in the midst of it cannot but feel gratitude toward its founder and admiration for the successful development of this institution in accordance with the principles of its founder.

It would certainly be wrong to imagine that the two men on whom we have centered our attention were quite isolated phenomena among the art-lovers of the period. That was not the case; they may rather be described as leading representatives of the rapidly growing interest in Far Eastern art and philosophy which became evident

in America and Europe during the first decade of the twentieth century. It found expression in an increasing number of public and private art-collections as well as in a flow of books on Chinese painting and kindred subjects which now became quite abundant, as if a pent-up force suddenly had broken through the dams. To dwell on all this in detail would carry us too far, but I will enumerate a few of the most note-worthy books to prove the case.

Okakura's two afore-mentioned books, *The Ideals of the East* and *The Book of Tea*, which were published in 1903 and 1905, served as excellent introductions to the spiritual significance of Eastern art and aestheticism; the same year (1905) saw also the publication of two important historical books on painting, i.e., Herbert Giles' *Introduction to the History of Chinese Pictorial Art*, and Frederick Hirth's *Scraps from a Collector's Notebooks*. These, which soon became standard sources of information, were followed by Laurence Binyon's beautiful books, in which his poetic interpretation shed fresh light on history, such as *Painting in the Far East* (1908) and *The Flight of the Dragon* (1912). Among contemporary publications in Germany should be mentioned Münsterberg's *Chinesische Kunstgeschichte*, a systematic compilation of all that was known about Chinese art at the time (1910), and in France, Petrucci's *La Philosophie de la Nature dans l'art d'Extrême Orient* and several important articles by Chavannes on Chinese painters in *T'oung Pao*, *Ars Asiatica* and other periodicals, not to mention Laufer's books on *Jade* and *Tomb-figurines*, or various books and catalogues of Chinese ceramics which must be passed over. The most important publication (from the student's point of view) was, however, Fenel-

losa's posthumous work *Epochs of Chinese and Japanese Art* which became accessible in print only in 1912 (reprinted the following year in a new edition) which embodied his general ideas about the development of Far Eastern art.

Many of these books as well as some other studies on various aspects of Chinese and Japanese art (published at the time) served to open new perspectives of international art-history and stimulated not only the imagination but also a thirst for a wider knowledge, which, however, they rarely satisfied. Serious students equipped with sufficient means and energy, who had enjoyed the free translations of Chinese records by Herbert Giles and revelled in the beautiful interpretations by Laurence Binyon and Raphael Petrucci, felt a growing desire to learn more about the actual monuments and paintings still preserved in the Middle Kingdom and to co-ordinate the bits of knowledge that they had gathered from Western publications with still existing Chinese source material in the form of historical and artistic documents.

The general change in the student's approach to the figurative arts and the ancient civilization of China became gradually more and more marked during the two or three last years before the first world war. This showed itself on the one hand in the growing interest in sinological studies devoted to the language and history of China, and on the other hand, in what may be called the "pull of the road" and of the hidden treasures of the Yellow Earth. All this had been brought so much closer and become a reality to students through the accounts of explorers and through the archaeological and artistic specimens brought to the Western world from

various parts of Asia by men like Aurel Stein, Paul Pelliot, Victor Ségalen, Berthold Laufer, not to mention Albert von Le Coq and Grünwedel, who all contributed in various degrees to make the arts of Asia known to us. It was indeed a period of rising hopes and enthusiasm for travel and research in China, but hardly any excavations of consequence could be started within the Middle Kingdom, owing to the adverse attitude of the Chinese authorities, and many plans and travels were cut short by the outbreak of the first world war. Even right after the war, when some Chinese students had been brought into closer contact with the Western methods of research, the facilities for actual work in China did not improve. Most of us who tried something of the kind met with disappointments; yet it should be remembered that Carl Whiting Bishop, who was the head of the field department of the Freer Gallery and cooperated with some Chinese archaeologists, carried on for some time not without success.

It would take us too far to enter into a closer account of the archaeological activities in China at this crucial epoch; I only mention them in passing as a significant evidence of how the seeds of romantic florescence planted at the very beginning of the century (and before) had grown into plants which now began to produce fruits of factual knowledge and practical enterprise.

The disappointments and adverse conditions in a disrupted country could not quench the growing interest in Chinese studies and particularly in Chinese art. A high watermark in this development was reached towards the latter part of the twenties, when a number of important exhibitions of Chinese art were held in Paris and other art centers of Europe and America. Collectors, experts

and art dealers cooperated at this epoch in building up important public and private collections and certain kinds of early Chinese art, such as bronzes and ceramics, were finally recognized by the public at large as fully equal, if not superior, to Western products of corresponding kind. The study and collecting of Chinese art had reached a state of relative maturity, though mainly within the limits of what is commonly described as archaeological material, while Chinese sculpture and painting had not as yet received the same degree of recognition in the Western world.

This discrepancy in the Western appreciation of art objects from China was recognized by Mr. Freer ever since the beginning of the century; he spent most of his energy and means on efforts to adjust this disproportion in building up the largest and most important collection of Chinese painting ever established in any Western country, and was indeed in this respect ahead of his time. Before adding a few more words about Freer's activity as a collector, I would like, however, to mention three men who also were active at the time and worked more or less for the same scope or in the same direction as Mr. Freer. I cannot pass them in silence, because I owe them debts of personal gratitude for guidance and encouragement. I am thinking of Denman W. Ross, John Ellerton Lodge and Langdon Warner.

The first named, Denman Ross, was the oldest and most easily approachable of the three. As the principal teacher in the Art School at Harvard, for many years, he had acquired great facility in expressing his aesthetic ideas theoretically and illustrating them practically (as for instance in his treatise on colour schemes) and as these ideas were based on wide experience and knowl-

edge of artistic products of various countries, his opinions were well founded and often expressed in a striking way. His home in Cambridge was filled with choice specimens of paintings and sculpture from the Far East as well as from France and Italy, and in addition to these, many of the most precious works of art that he had brought back from travels in foreign parts of the world were transferred as gifts to the Museum in Boston.

In order to illustrate the peculiar charm of Dr. Ross' aesthetic personality and his faculty of explaining his reactions to works of art, I would like to give you a glimpse of a memorable meeting with him in the Museum in Boston (which probably took place in 1915 or 1917). I found myself in one of the old exhibition rooms of Chinese painting in the distinguished company of John Lodge and Dr. Ross. My actual knowledge of Far Eastern art was very slight, but I was on the trend of new discoveries and eager to arrive at a better understanding of the essentials in this art, which attracted me irresistibly. By my searching questions I was trying to draw out the secret from these gentlemen who did not lose their patience in explanations. Finally Dr. Ross opened his arms, as if to embrace the view in front of him, then joining his fingertips on his breast, said, "In Western art it is all like this"—illustrating by the gesture the artist's dependence on an outside view or motif. But then, as a second act, he moved his hands from the breast outward again, and said, "In Chinese painting it is the opposite way"—illustrating by the gesture how something was growing from within, from the very heart or creative center of the painter, and then opening out into flowers of art. The gestures said more than the words and brought home to me a realization of the Chinese point of

view in contradistinction to methods of representation or reproduction more common in Western art, and that gave me a starting point for further speculation about the essentials of Chinese painting.

John Lodge, who at that time served as Curator of the Department of Chinese and Japanese Art at the Boston Museum, looked on, smiled and made perhaps a few pointed remarks, as was his habit. Many of you have known him better than I, and I do not need to tell you that he never wasted many words, but whatever he said was the result of careful thought and experience. He never gave out all his knowledge on a subject at once, and he compressed his written statements into the shortest possible terms, thus making you feel that he knew a great deal more than he revealed in words, a reticence which I think often was caused by a tendency to hide his artistic sensitiveness under an unmoved and unassuming surface rather than any attempt to impress you by his knowledge or to pose as the greatest authority on Chinese painting. Yet those who have had occasion to follow in detail the work that Lodge accomplished after he had accepted the directorship of the Freer Gallery, will no doubt agree that he was the safest and soundest man for this very difficult position. He knew and admired the noble intentions and magnificence of Charles Freer as a founder and donor of this beautiful institution for Eastern art, but at the same time he exercised his critical judgment as an art expert to the utmost in order to save Freer's foundation from becoming a dusty emporium where some good things and many noble intentions easily might have been drowned in the vast mass of indifferent things.

The collection of Chinese, Japanese and Korean art

which Freer donated to the Smithsonian Institution contained almost 7,000 objects, mainly paintings, but also a certain number of sculptures, bronzes, ceramics and decorative works of art, many of which had been acquired on the Chinese art market under high-sounding names or attributions intended to increase their value and they had all to be scrutinized. The paintings constituted no doubt the hardest test not only for the classifier's historical knowledge and artistic sensitiveness, because even paintings with misleading attributions may sometimes prove interesting if properly classified. Lodge could probably not accept more than about 10% of the traditional attributions, but he also found things in the collection which merited more attention and care than had been bestowed on them before. His card-catalogue, established not only during the preparatory years before the Gallery was open to the public in 1923, but all through the period of twenty-two years when he was in charge of the work, became thus a valuable source of information and a guide for later students. He might indeed have had occasion during the years of critical preparatory work to recall some significant remarks by the first real historian of picture-collecting in China, viz.: Chang Yen-yüan of the T'ang period, who has left the following statement about collectors' ways in the eighth century:

“Once a great collection has been made, it is sure to contain works of fine quality, but when the beautiful and the ugly are all jumbled together, everything depends on the owner's (i.e., classifier's) critical judgment. If he is not the right man for them, then even works of recent date will decay and become worm-eaten,

whereas when works find their right places, then even the most ancient will remain in perfect condition.” *

The truth of these remarks was certainly realized by Lodge as proved by the excellent care, remounting and preservation of the pictures instituted by him and carried on by his successor. No one, not even the most meticulous Chinese collector, could find any cause for grief in working through the vast reserves of paintings in the Freer Gallery. If Mr. Freer could see the collection which bears his name in its present state, I think he would feel not only surprised, but happy and proud over the brilliant development and increase of his collection through a large number of very important new acquisitions by which the general standard of the collection has been raised to a higher level. Lodge succeeded in lifting the heavy load of thousands of pictures (i.e., the bulk of the original collection) out of the morass of bewildering attributions and in sifting it, so that it could serve (at least in part) as a basis for the ideal museum of Far Eastern art—the dream of Charles Freer which would not have been realized as completely as we see it here around us if it had not been for the purposeful cooperation of John Lodge and the present director of the Gallery.

This may sound as severe criticism of the great donor whose devotion to the spiritual and aesthetic ideals of the Far East and magnificent generosity laid the foundation for this institution, but it is certainly not meant as such. It signifies only a passing stage in my

* This as well as the following quotations from Chang Yen-yüan's treatise in *Li Tai Ming Hua Chi* are here given in William Acker's translation.

attempt to characterize the successive periods in the appreciation and collecting of Far Eastern art in America. No one could think of Mr. Freer's personality and work with more sympathy and greater esteem than I. His power of conviction was irresistible, and if he sometimes made mistakes, it was because he was one of those born collectors, active ever since the T'ang period, whom Chang Yen-yüan describes as follows: "People who make collections feel that they must possess well-known scrolls by Ku K'ai-chih, Lu T'un-wei and Wu Tao-tzu before they can say that they own any paintings. (If a man says that he has some books, how can he be without the Nine Classics and the Three Histories.) It is an (inner) necessity (for them) to feel the scrolls in their hands and determine their value by discussion, and not to be stingy in money, but to regard the keeping of them in their chests and boxes as the only important thing." And in speaking about his own activity as a collector, Chang Yen-yüan says:

"When there was a chance of getting something I would even sell my old clothes and cut down (the allowance for) rice and other food. My wife and children and the servants nag and tease me, saying sometimes, 'What good does it do after all to spend all day doing useless things?' To which I sigh and say, 'But if one does not do these useless things, then how can one find pleasure in this life which has an end?'"

Such was the view of the true Chinese collector ever since the T'ang period (and before) and, *mutatis mutandis*, the same was true of Charles Freer even though there was no necessity for him to sell his clothes or to cut down his allowance for food. He certainly felt "le sacre feu" burning in his heart and experienced the joy

depending on the fact sometimes expressed by Charles Vignier in the words, "On n'achete pas l'art avec l'argent, on l'achete avec l'amour."

This statement may at the first moment sound surprising, but I believe that the truth of it has been admitted by art lovers in various lands and epochs (including Mr. Freer), even though variously expressed. The old Chinese critic and collector mentioned before had it in mind when writing about the value of the old masters' works: "Where any of these men is concerned one cannot speak of price at all. If one should by chance acquire (even so little as) a square inch (of their works) one ought to keep it sealed in a box." This may sound like a Chinese hyperbole, but I think that Mr. Freer, in his most enthusiastic moments, might have been willing to subscribe to it. He was never happier than when he had got hold of what seemed to him a masterpiece or when he had succeeded, so to speak, in opening a gate in the Chinese wall to a neophyte who was willing to proceed. I had some experience of this when I left for my first pilgrimage to the Far East, and to explain it I can do no better than quote from one or two of the letters that Mr. Freer wrote to me at that time (in December, 1917):

"I am overjoyed with your decision to visit Japan and China and especially at the time when our mutual friend, Langdon Warner, will be out there. Warner will be a wonderful travelling companion—he knows pretty much everyone and everything worthwhile in that interesting part of the world, and consequently introductions from me seem superfluous; still, as offered when you were here and as requested in your telegrams sent from San Diego, I gladly enclose herein letters to be presented to

Mr. Takahasa Masuda and to T. Hara of Yokohama, both intimate friends of mine who are great collectors and who can and will gladly advise you as to which of the public and private collections of Japan now accessible are best worth your time and attention, and unfold to you their amazing collections. See well Tokyo, Kyoto, Nara and their environs.

While in China don't miss Lung Men and Yün Kang, and Warner can tell you what's seeable and most valuable at Honan-fu, Kaifeng-fu and the other interior Chinese cities of ancient art interest.

I wish I had the strength necessary to join you and Warner in the adventures ahead, but I must not chafe against restrictions! Have a look at every fine thing the gods permit, and think kindly of the absent sinners."

The letter was accompanied by introductions to some collectors and art experts in Japan which proved very useful, but it was particularly touching (and seems even more so today) by its undertone of nostalgia and wishful hopes that the recipient would make a proper start on the old long road of the Far East and thus gradually become fit to serve in the cause of making Chinese art better understood in the Western world. And it seems also significant that in this new adventure I had, to begin with, the excellent company of Langdon Warner, who already was well at home in Japan. He left soon for Mukden (where he was attached to some war service), but it is the first step that counts—and if he could have been here today, he would have given you a more entertaining and fuller account of conditions in Japan at the time, and of Mr. Freer's activities as a collector than my fragmentary tale.

The letter just quoted was supplemented by a

shorter note of the same date and likewise received on board the S.S. Shinya Maru in San Francisco, in which Freer expressed his satisfaction with the lecture that I had given in his exhibition of Chinese paintings in the Chicago Art Institute and, furthermore, his hopes that (as he said) I may "find ready access to many original treasures, such as you seek"; and he asked me to drop an occasional line to Detroit, "telling me of your impressions". He winds up with the following good advice: "Keep well, have a good time and come back stored with information of authenticity and value. When the modern Japanese critic boasts concerning Chinese and Japanese art knowledge, listen attentively and, if possible, when he feels willing, ask his authority. The younger class like to destroy tradition without offering a reliable substitute—so watch out."

The last remarks are indeed significant expressions for one of the least agreeable sides of the collector's experience. Freer was at the time generally recognized as *primus inter parens* among collectors of Far Eastern art in the Western hemisphere, and he did not like to see or hear any adverse opinions about dates or attributions, which could tend to shake the principles of his *musée imaginaire*. The warning he voiced in the last words were evidently caused by the critical attitude of the younger generation, represented in America by Okakura, but it is also a spontaneous expression for that deep-rooted love and search for the essentials in Far Eastern art that had been growing in the soul of Freer from the romantic seeds first planted there in the time of Fenollosa.

This is further noticeable in one or two letters that I received (from Freer) in Kyoto in the spring of 1918,

from which the following lines may be quoted:

"There is little news to send from this side of the Pacific. America is being deeply stirred by war activities and little else seems to be talked about. However, there is a strong undercurrent of interest in Far Eastern art, and I feel that when the dreadful war strife is ended, that Americans will turn from things of sheer materialism, now rampant, to other ideals."

Such were his hopes, and they were not based on shifting sands, but on the firm foundation prepared with intellectual devotion and very large material resources during a whole life-time. This was never shaken, and the foundation has been broadened and fortified through the admirable care and constructive work of the men who have been in charge of Charles Freer's gift, not only to the American nation, but to all who take some interest in Far Eastern art and culture.

The successors in charge of the gift have protected and completed it in a way which again may be described by some words of Chang Yen-yüan in his discussion of *Connoisseurship, Preservation, and Appreciation of Pictures*:

"Now," he wrote, "gold comes from the mountains and pearls are produced in the waters, and men gather these things without ceasing for all under Heaven to use. But paintings with the passage of months and years are destroyed and scattered until almost none of them is left. And since the famous men and ingenious scholars (who created them) cannot live again, can one refrain from grief?"

But, let us add, can one refrain from being grateful to those who take proper care of such treasures?