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The Frank Caro/ C.T. Loo Archive: Treasures of the Eye and the Mind

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The Frank Caro/C. T. Loo Archive in the IFA, NYU, is a two-fold treasure. It preserves a visual record of Chinese art in North America from the 1930s through the 1960s as it passed through the hands of the premier dealer of Chinese art, C. T. Loo, and his successor Frank Caro. Encompassing Shang bronzes, Buddhist sculpture, Song paintings and Ching Dynasty decorative objects, it is a panorama of master works now in public collections across the country and an incomparable document of provenance. In addition, the archive preserves at least part of its original structure: index cards of works sold and unsold in several iterations of the business; huge (& fragile) glass negatives of photos from the 1930s apparently from C. T. Loo's Paris establishment; hundreds of celluloid negatives with the dimensions and purchasers carefully noted on the frail glassine sleeves, and a card file recording the shift of works from the Loo numbering systems to the Caro system. These records allow one to trace the business of Chinese art in the 20th century as well as its aesthetic appreciation. At present un-indexed and without cross-references, the archive yields its information only to the most tenacious researcher.

Biographical Note

Trudy S. Kawami (PhD Columbia U., 1983, Director of Research, Arthur M. Sackler Foundation) has always been as interested in old records of excavations as the excavations themselves. She has worked in the Aurel Stein papers in the India Office Library, London, the Surkh-Dum excavation reports in the Oriental Institute, Chicago, and the Ernst Herzfeld Archives in the Freer Gallery of Art, Washington, DC, with a number of resulting papers.