Consuming the Devil's Idols
(Re)presenting Tibetan Art in the United States

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The work presented in this thesis is, to the best of my knowledge and belief, original except as acknowledged in the text. The material has not been submitted, in either whole or in part, for a degree at this or any other university.

Dianne McGowan
2010
VOLUME ONE
dedication

to my son, Niels
perseverance has its rewards
It is a humbling experience to stop and reflect on the help along the way. There were moments, a gesture or antic, which brought sunshine on what seemed a grey day, such as the squabbling parrots and warbling magpies; the smell of pine resin on a hot summers’ day as I left my air-conditioned office; the soft scent of wattle; the open space and isolation of the research centre, which brought together a wonderful community. I am grateful to have had the opportunity to belong to something so special.

It has been an eventful journey, doing a Phd, and I have found the support of my peers invaluable. Who else understands the many things that could and do go wrong at a time when you lest need. I give my heartfelt thanks to my fellow students, in particular Jan Cooper, Georgina Fitzpatrick, Sylvia Marchant, Robyn McKenzie, Nancy Michaelis, Daphne Nash, Tina Parolin, Leigh Toop, Jill Waterhouse and especially to Alison French who has patiently read many developing drafts. What a fabulous bunch of Girls! There are many who have shared coffee and laughter along the way, thank you one and all. I must also thank the wonderful support staff at the Centre, Suzanne Groves, Anne-Maree O’Brien, Rosemary Shepherd, Sharon Komidar, Emma Arnold and Alan Wyburn. Every Centre has its leaders, and these giants led by example—with wisdom and compassion—thank you to Howard Morphy, Paul Pickering and Carolyn Strange.

I also have people to thank outside of the Centre. I raise a glass of bubbles to friend and fellow doctorate traveller, Doris Kordes. Thanks must also go to John and Sheryl for sharing their accommodation with me in New York, to Denise and Alan for their New York hospitality and sake, to British Alison for her friendship in London. To Cath and Manuel who kindly lent me their home in paradise [Bermagui] for six weeks and my neighbours, Rosemarie and Ray for their support. At the same time as thanking people who opened doors for me, I must also thank those that slammed them closed before I crossed the threshold. Such actions forced me down uncharted paths, ultimately enriching my dissertation.

I must end with the last hooray for my extended family. To my mother, Roz and brother, Don, I sincerely hope all your love and support on my behalf is repaid in rain. To my father who didn’t see this day, I wish he had. To Katherine, I finished before you left us. To Melissa and the boys, thank you for all your patience, at times I must have been a trial. To Thor who has read a number of drafts, I am not sure I can say a big enough thank you. To my son, Niels, whose first words were, you go and do your homework mummy—for all your unselfish caring, love and support—the biggest hug.
This dissertation examines the transformation of Tibetan artefacts into fine art. I seek to understand how this transformation originated, why and when it occurred and, most significantly, the value creation processes associated with maintaining artworlds. My original contribution is the analysis of the history of Tibetan art’s reception in the west. In essence, I investigate the western commodification of Tibetan art during the twentieth century. The focus of this study is the central locus for this phenomenon, the United States, specifically New York City. Beginning with the premise that the concept of Tibetan art as a fine art is a western construct, I trace the (re)presentation of Tibet and Tibetan culture within the western artworld. The exhibition of Tibetan art by the prestigious New York Asia Society in 1969 exemplified the worthiness of Tibetan artefacts as art and began an ‘informational’ cascade phenomenon. I argue that the institutionalization of Tibetan art discourse at this exhibition, acknowledged the transforming process.

Through observations and critical analysis of primary and secondary material, this dissertation investigates the transformation of Tibetan artefacts into art by means of the value creation processes of art exhibition catalogues and associated New York Asia Week activities—the art auctions and fairs. This analysis found that the recent emphasis on the aestheticization of Tibetan art has generated a burgeoning private demand for museum-quality masterpieces, resulting in anomalies in collecting and exhibiting practices. For instance, the alleged practice of overpainting highlights the over emphasis on aesthetic appreciation, while bringing into question the interrelationship of authority and authenticity. At the same time, the narrative of lost Tibetan culture obscures questions of representation, consuming and ownership.
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Translation note:
When quoting directly I have remained faithful to the original source, except where noted. I have also endeavoured to keep quoted catalogue details in their original format. Throughout the dissertation, I have used Tibetan and Sanskrit terms as they are commonly recognized and employed in the Tibetan artworld.
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Words possess authority, they reflect a particular stance. They have an intended audience. Over the centuries many words have been written about Tibet, its people, customs and culture. The isolated land of Tibet has been a lure—a space on which to construct. Whether, the words were imaginings or based on the latest scientific findings, they remain constructions configured to argue and/or support particular points of view. My words intrude upon other words, they interrupt—they break in, re-call, re-interpret, re-frame written testimony and recorded history. Other authors will follow, adding their authoritative words, armed with concepts and interpretations on which to construct other ways of seeing Tibet. The underlying concepts, which brace written constructions, such as political and social ideology, are frequently invisible and in the case of the artworld, hidden by the gloss of an exhibition or the fervour of an auction sale.

My contribution to the body of Tibetan art knowledge is through my observation of exhibitory and collecting performances of the Tibetan artworld. My words are written using concepts particular to the late twentieth and the early twenty-first century. Over time, opinions and practices once acceptable have shifted in response to socio-political values, such as the acceptance of war booty and colonizing conquests. More recently, source nations have began to agitate for the return of their lost cultural heritage. Tibet is a thought provoking exemplar. It has stood as a seemingly independent geographical and cultural region for eons, and maintains a special place in the western imagination. There is a prevailing western attitude that the Chinese are destroying Tibet’s heritage, which has resulted in the western artworld supporting salvaging and caretaking operations. But does Tibet’s perceived national and cultural loss sanction the collecting practices which elsewhere are condemned?
America
Americas
AMNH
ARTIC
ARTIC 2003
BLISS 2003
CTA
C-V
C-V 1936
H.H.
IAC
KMT
L.A.
MARCHAIS
MET
MFA
NEWARK
NYAS
NYAS 1969
NY Asia Week
NYT
PRC
ROOF 2003
RMA
RM
ROERICH 1929
ROM
S.F. Museum
TAR
TC 1997
THUS
U.S.
USD
VCM

United States of America
Includes the continental land mass (5th America & Canada)
American Museum of Natural History, New York
Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago
*Himalayas An Aesthetic Adventure* catalogue, ARTIC
*The Circle of Bliss* catalogue, L.A.
Central Tibetan Administration of H.H. the Dalai Lama
C. Suydam Cutting and Arthur Vernay
The Cutting -Vernay Tibetan Exhibition catalogue, AMNH
His Holiness
International Art Centre
Chinese Nationalist Party led by Chiang Kai-shek
Los Angeles County Museum, California
Jacques Marchais Museum, Staten Island, New York
Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York
Museum of Fine Art, Boston
Newark Museum, New Jersey
New York Asia Society, New York
(also incorporates Asia House, the gallery arm of NYAS)
New York, New York City
Nyingma Meditation Center, Berkeley
*The Sacred Art of Tibet* exhibition catalogue
The Art of Tibet exhibition catalogue, NYAS
New York Asia Week
New York Times
People’s Republic of China (Communist China/Chinese govt.)
*Tibet: Treasures from the Roof of the World* catalogue,
Bowers Museum, Santa Anna, California
Rubin Museum of Art, New York
Roerich Museum
Tibetan Paintings, Sculpture and Art Objects catalogue, RM
The Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto, Canada
San Francisco Asian Art Museum
(formerly part of the de Young Museum)
Tibetan Autonomous Region
*Tibet: Tradition and Change* exhibition, Albuquerque Museum
Tibet House United States, New York
United States of America
United States dollar
Virtual Museum Collection
Map of Himalayan region

Key
- Political borders (prior to 1959)
- Shaded area Tibetan influence in 20th century

1 Map source: Reynolds, V. 1999: 6. Compare Tibetan influence in the twentieth century to Tibetan influence in the 6th to 9th century, see illus. 1.
Chapter One
Introduction: Consuming the Devil’s Idols

[This is] the greatest show on Earth of the art of this kind. There has never been a greater exhibition of Himalayan art, and I doubt there will be in the next 100 years. You can quote me on that.1

Background
The veteran Tibetan art curator, Dr Pratapaditya Pal,2 made this pronouncement to the Chicago Tribune in 2003 on the eve of the major art exhibition, Himalayas An Aesthetic Adventure.3 In an earlier interview Pal announced that the Chicago exhibition’s “primary goal is to establish a yardstick for beauty in Himalayan art.”4 The regions covered by the terms Tibetan art and Himalayan art are almost synonymous geographically. Pal writes that, “one may state in a nutshell that most cultures in the Himalayas are the results of cross fertilization of the Indic and Tibetan civilizations.”5 Cultural influences are rarely contained by political boundaries, especially by those sketched onto maps. Nor have boundaries remained static. For instance, in the ninth century Tibet’s empire stretched as far as Chinese Turkestan in the north, the Ganges River in the south, Lanchow China in the east and Afghanistan in the west (illus. 1).6 Furthermore, cultural identity did not necessarily preclude an artist from making Tibetan Buddhist objects. Tibetan Buddhists sourced or were donated objects made by: artisans in India; Newar (Nepalese) artisans residing in Lhasa or Peking; Chinese artisans in Peking; and, Tibetan artisans in Tibet. They all made Tibetan Buddhist objects for

2 Pal has earned the veteran label. He has published over 50 books, countless articles, numerous lectures and almost thirty Himalayan exhibitions in a career that was launched by the 1969 New York Asia Society exhibition, The Art of Tibet. Casey Singer, J. 2000.
3 Hosted by The Art Institute of Chicago, from April 5 to August 17, 2003. See appendix A.1 for details of all exhibitions referred to in this dissertation.
5 In the Himalayas An Aesthetic Adventure exhibition, Pal divides the Himalayan region into “three broad cultural zones.” They are: Nepal; Jammu, Kashmir, western Himalayas and west Tibet; and, Bhutan, Central and Eastern Tibet. Pal, P. 2003: 15.
6 Nor does the current Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR) contain all ethnic Tibetans. Many live and have lived for centuries outside in adjoining Chinese provinces, such as Sichuan, Yunnan, Gansu, Qinghai and Xizang.
patrons across the Himalayan region. The Chicago exhibition celebrated over a thousand years of artistic endeavour within this Himalayan context.

The rise in awareness and popularity of Tibetan art in the west during the last half of the twentieth century has been meteoric. The current aesthetic celebration of Tibetan art witnessed at Chicago in 2003 stands in distinct contrast to the 1921 *New York Times* report which announced the purchase of over four hundred pieces collected from the “Devil-ridden people of Tibet” by the American Museum of Natural History (AMNH). This article mentions all manner of curios, including devil dancing costumes, which had to be smuggled out of a Tibetan monastery (illus. 2). In 1921, there was no acknowledgement of these Tibetan curios as art, or recognition of their aesthetic appeal. I argue that the conceptual shift from artefact into fine art was institutionalised by the 1969 exhibition, *The Art of Tibet*, hosted by the New York Asia Society (NYAS).

Research Question

This dissertation, *Consuming the Devil’s Idols*, is an enquiry into the western commodification of Tibetan artefacts, their transformation and incorporation into the western fine art paradigm. The aim here is to investigate how, when, where and why did Tibetan artefacts begin their transformation into fine art? This transformation constructed western values onto otherwise foreign-crafted objects. What value creating processes initiated and supported this transformation? Further, what impact has the western consuming of Tibetan objects as fine art had on the objects themselves?

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7 Anon. “The Devil-Ridden People of Tibet.” 1921. This collection was purchased from the missionary Dr H.B. Marx who had spent 16 years in the border regions of Tibet. See Meugel, L. 1920 for complete list of the Marx collection bought by AMNH. In the notation accompanying No. 1, the Todgam (five skull mask) it is noted that the devil dancers are fighting against evil spirits. J.P. Morgan provided AMNH with the funds to buy the Marx collection.

8 Fine art is synonymous with aesthetic appreciation of ‘art for its own-sake.’
My approach to these questions begins with the western foundation of a Tibetan cultural history and the constancy of these western imaginings. The early chapters review historical notions of Tibet, the reception of Tibetan objects before 1969 and why 1969 was the transformative point. Followed by chapters examining the key mechanisms in the transformation and creation value processes—art exhibition catalogues and Asia Week with its associated art auctions and art fairs. All these support and maintain the transformation of cultural artefacts into fine art. In summary, I evaluate the effect this transformation has had/or continues to have on the (re)presentation of Tibetan material culture.

The focus of this dissertation is on exhibition and collecting experiences of Tibetan art within the United States, primarily New York City, over the last one hundred years.9 My rationale for this focus is that: one, the transformation of Tibetan art began in New York; two, Tibetan objects were publicly visible in New York and neighbouring Newark from early in the twentieth century; and three, the pre-eminence of New York as the world’s art centre post WWII.10 Furthermore, America continues to lead the way in the exhibition of Tibetan art into the twenty-first century. For instance, in 2003 apart from the Chicago exhibition, two other major Tibetan art exhibitions opened and toured across America.11 Although Europe and Britain had colonized much of Asia, America led the collecting and study of Asian art forms from the early twentieth century. In 1948, Dutch curator Herman Visser wrote that “Certainly, the Americans, headed by the pioneers connected with the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, had started much earlier, had gained an insight into the great art of the Far East, long before Europeans did so or

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9 From this point on New York City is referred to as New York or NY.
10 Stuart Plattner also stated that “New York is hegemonic because aesthetic/art market value is created by the attention of key critics, curators, dealers, and collectors. Art not shown in New York loses value for that reason alone, irrespective of the features of the work itself.” Plattner, S. 1998: 482. Levine makes similar comments in respect to the relationship of Chicago art scene to New York. Levine, E. 1972. Bystyn also noted that in the late 1940s and early 1950s New York emerged as the centre of the international art world. New York had a consuming ethos, driven by an innovative and energetic art market. Bystyn, M. 1978.
11 The other two were: The Columbus Museum of Art exhibition, The Circle of Bliss: Buddhist Meditational Art, Huntington, J. and Bangdel, D. 2003; and, Tibet: Treasures from the Roof of the World at the Bowers Museum, Byrd, V. et al. 2003. All three travelled to other U.S. destinations.
were able to do so." Visser noted that New York was the leading Asian art market, followed by London and Paris, while the importance of Berlin as an art market had waned. Furthermore, he noted that if any "highly desirable" Asian objects appeared in western markets, the chances are it would be in New York.

This dissertation reflects the interrelationship of museum collections, exhibitions and curatorial practices with the value creation processes and their effect on the (re)presentation of Tibetan artefacts as art. This is a theme, which according to art historian Joseph Alsop is "seldom explored." Museums have the power to authorize and validate what qualifies as art. This thesis also investigates how the transformation of artefacts into art, while creating an exchange value, rehearses a representative narrative that informs the collective and exhibitory processes of a western artworld.

Methodology
At times, research is a product of small incremental steps, at other times, a leap or an abrupt shift. I originally planned to undertake museum research into the western collecting of two central components of Tibetan Buddhist iconography and ritual practice—the Tibetan rdo-rje (Eng. sceptre) and the dril-bu (Eng. bell) (illus. 3). However, my research focus shifted after attending the opening of the Himalayas An Aesthetic Adventure exhibition and the symposium that accompanied it. This event attracted many key collectors, connoisseurs, museum representatives, scholars, dealers, conservators and publishers associated with the Tibetan artworld. I found

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12 Visser, H.F.E. 1948: 8, 9. Visser was the curator for the Museum of Asiatic Art and Municipal Museums, Amsterdam. He does note that the State museum of Ethnology in Leiden was rich in Tibetan art.
16 Howard Becker defines artworlds as the network of people, whose group activities are organized according to shared knowledge. This knowledge results in the production of artworks, which fit the acknowledged art criteria for that artworld. Becker, H. 1982. Artworlds are made up of interdependent groups such as: scholars, dealers, curators, artists,
myself observing these Tibetan artworld agents in a real-time context. At times, in the context of the nuances and expectations normally encountered during symposiums and conferences their performances were surprising.

The Tibetan artworld had gathered in Chicago to witness an historical defining moment in the aesthetic appreciation of Tibetan art. Pal was setting an aesthetic benchmark. This doyen of the Tibetan artworld had brought together 187 beautiful artworks from his international wish list. There is no doubt that this exhibition was beautiful. But my personal response was complex. On the one hand, I was in awe of the beauty, power and majesty on display, but on the other hand, I had a sense of unreality. It was too beautiful. The exhibition set a high benchmark for museum-quality Tibetan art. Each exhibit was a masterpiece. Approximately two-thirds of the artworks exhibited in Chicago were borrowed from private individuals or foundations, highlighting the significance of private sources to the construction and propagation of the Tibetan artworld. The close relationship of public institutions to private collectors and philanthropic foundations obscures the potential ethical dilemma of authority, authentication and market value. Specifically, when museums exhibit privately owned artworks they are validating the objects’ pedigree, by authorizing a provenance, which in turn, creates value.

I returned from Chicago with a dilemma. During the plenary session held on the last day, the responses to a number of key questions from the audience were perfunctory, halted or left unanswered. The subject matter concerned issues of caretaking, repatriation, the absence of Tibetan presence, the indifference towards source nations and the lack of institutional interest in supporting contemporary Tibetan artists’ adoption of western art styles. For example, a reply given to the lack of Tibetan presence or participation noted administrators, media and consumers. In an entertaining article on the magnanimity and paranoia in the big bad art world, Ivan Gaskell discusses the interdependence of the professor and the curator, while each maintains a distance from the other. Gaskell, I. 1999. It is important to note that the Tibetan art world is a western phenomenon and while some indigenous Tibetans may operate within the Tibetan artworld they do so according to western concepts and practices.

that once the objects are old and damaged the Tibetans don’t care about them any more! However, evidence of old worn thangkas\textsuperscript{18} being re-painted, mended, copied or placed in sacred receptacles contradicts this stock answer (illus. 4a-b).\textsuperscript{19} Another question enquired about the current owner’s attitude to their continued possession of Tibetan objects if Tibet gained autonomy. This question recognized the fact that many of the objects on the art market or in western collections were not voluntarily released by Tibetans or temple authorities. Few present appeared to support the idea of caretaking or repatriation.\textsuperscript{20} One prominent collector stood up and passionately advocated the privilege of private ownership, irrespective of prior claims. This response was greeted with resounding applause.

Most surprising of all was the extraordinarily curt rebuttal from the chair, that if this type of questioning persisted, the plenary session would be immediately terminated. What was happening here and why? Upon reflection I was compelled to consider what research methods would be appropriate to explain these events, especially in light of the response to unwanted questioning? In addition, my earlier request to meet with a central figure in the Tibetan artworld was declined because it was explained to me that Tibetan art was not the arena for an anthropologist. Bearing this in mind, I decided that the appropriate and most effective methodology to utilize was the ethnographic approach of participant-observer. Within an interdisciplinary approach, I contextualize the historical sources of western consciousness about Tibet and its art with fieldwork observations.

\textsuperscript{18} Thangkas are portable scroll paintings. Leading thangka conservator, Ann Shaftel wrote “A thangka is a complicated, composite three-dimensional object consisting of: a picture panel which is painted or embroidered, a textile mounting; and one or more of the following: a silk cover, leather corners, wooden dowels at the top and bottom and metal or wooden decorative knobs on the bottom dowel... Thangkas are intended to serve as a record of, and guide for contemplative experience.” Shaftel, A. 1993.

\textsuperscript{19} Worn thangkas associated with revered persons may be deposited inside stupas or large sculptures to extend or renew spiritual efficacy, see Reedy, C. 1991.

\textsuperscript{20} The Tibet House U.S. (THUS) has begun a Repatriation Collection which recently received a large donation from Rose Museum, Brandeis University, Massachusetts. This collection was originally the Roerich Museum Collection, which later became known as the Riverside Collection. Uhlfelder, A. 2004.
I undertook my observations during visits to three New York Asia Weeks held in October 2004, March 2005 and April 2006. During these visits, I attended activities and events relating to Tibetan art, including: Indian and Southeast Asian Art previews and auctions of Christie’s and Sotheby’s auction houses 2004 and 2005, dealer galleries and the Uptown and Downtown Fairs of 2004, 2005 and 2006. This also included the opening of the Rubin Museum of Art (RMA) specializing in Himalayan art. To supplement these visits I also examined the newspapers, art magazines, art journals and museum periodicals for exhibition reviews, and reports on auction sales, art fairs and exhibition catalogues. In addition, I have sampled historical points in time and created vignettes, which together connect value creating processes and performances with the western constructed Tibetan artworld. Visual images, the written word and critical analysis have guided my methodology. *Consuming the Devil’s Idols* tells the story of transformation—how Tibetan artefacts became art and what impression this transformation has had on the continuing (re)presentation of Tibetan art.

### Theoretical frameworks

The transformation of Tibetan material culture from artefact into fine art presents an opportunity to explore the function of an artworld. Serendipity, charismatic characters and opportunistic collecting may have excited curiosity, but rarely opened the fine art museum doors. The transformation from curio into fine art proceeds through burgeoning discourse authored by the artworld, which includes institutions, markets, consumers and scholars. Art theorists George Dickie, Arthur Danto and Howard Becker discuss how art is institutionalized according to artistic criteria approved and applied by the artworld in general. I argue that this standard of art discourse was not

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21 The Spring, late March/early April, New York Asia Week is a major event, while the Autumn New York Asia Week in September, does not have the same impact as Spring, although that depends, in particular, on the extent and quality of the auctions offered in Autumn.

formally applied to Tibetan artefacts until 1969 when the elite New York Asia Society hosted *The Art of Tibet*.

Art institutions such as the New York Asia Society (NYAS)\textsuperscript{23} are positioned to introduce and interpret new styles and categories of art. Since its inception in the mid 1950s, the NYAS has sponsored Asian cultural events as an important tool to open dialogue between the United States and Asia and vice versa. Cultural exchange was an opportunity for a xenophobic America to experience Asia.\textsuperscript{24} Museum walls, like the performance stage, offered non-threatening encounters with the Other.\textsuperscript{25} At the same time, museums (re)present and construct narratives of the Other, positioning us in respect to the Other. Buried in these western museum narratives are assumptions that authentic indigenous art reveals the timeless beauty of the lost or vanishing cultures of the Other.\textsuperscript{26} This enshrined timelessness informs public expectations.\textsuperscript{27}

The western consuming of Tibetan artefacts also narrates a Tibetan identity, especially the inter-relationship of a lost world narrative and its accepted consequence of a diminished supply of objects.\textsuperscript{28} This story has shaped western perception of Tibetan identity. Furthermore, the narrative is so ingrained that it is not necessary to repeat the narrative—it becomes implicit, leaving an invisible but at the same time a *known* trace. Literature theorist Carol Fleisher Feldman proposes that national narratives, such as loss are group-defining stories, which "serve as mental equipment for the interpretation of events."\textsuperscript{29} This powerful hidden message acts as a "mythopoeic connective tissue," which appears to be especially the case in the western consuming of Tibetan art. Western narratives bind Tibetan identity to the Tibetan's loss of material culture and the west's action of

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{23} To avoid confusion I have chosen to refer to the art gallery arm of the New York Asia Society, *Asia House* by its parent title, the New York Asia Society (NYAS). In doing this I acknowledge the interdependence of the Asia House Gallery to the aims, motivations and goals of its parent, NYAS.
\textsuperscript{24} Isaacs, H. 1958.
\textsuperscript{26} Coutts-Smith, K. 2002: 2.
\textsuperscript{27} Desai, V. 1995: 170.
\textsuperscript{28} Narratives are an effective communication method for transferring knowledge across social and generational barriers, and over time. Tuffield, M. et al. 2005.
\textsuperscript{29} Feldman, C. 2001: 129.
\end{flushleft}
salvaging and (re)presenting these precious relics in western museums and private collections.\textsuperscript{30}

The inclusion of Tibetan art in museums re-contextualizes and transforms objects irrespective of their original intended use.\textsuperscript{31} The very physical presence of an art museum is invariably imposing upon and setting the visitor’s expectations. Once inside museums, the visitor becomes the pilgrim—respectful, hushed—following well-worn paths, stopping to admire and reflect. Art museums generate and give access or portals to knowledge. They authorize representations and define how to see and know, in this dissertation, the beauty of Tibetan art.\textsuperscript{32} At the end of the museum visitor’s tour, souvenir and merchandising paraphernalia beckons, such as postcards, replicas and exhibition catalogues. This paraphernalia miniaturizes and packages the exhibition for continued exposure outside of the museum. Apart from reproducing glossy images, art exhibition catalogues carry overt discursive statements, which expand on abridged exhibition labels and document aesthetic evaluations.

Since Ivan Karp and Steven Lavine published their influential edited volume, \textit{Exhibiting Cultures},\textsuperscript{33} in the early 1990s, there has been an abundance of books about museums and their practices.\textsuperscript{34} I am interested in the visible and tactile reminders of an exhibition, its words and images. Museum art exhibition catalogues archive the collecting and exhibition activities of museums. At the same time, collection, exhibition and the associated public programmes of museums influence the content and activity of the global art markets. For example, auction houses and dealers modulate their sales pitch according to recent exhibitions objects. The position of the museum in the value creation process becomes visible in the market place not only in the

\textsuperscript{30} Freeman, M. 2001: 295.
\textsuperscript{31} Gell, A. 2006: 233-234. Alfred Gell recognised that western art-making incorporated both Danto’s artworld theory and Dickies’ institutional theory.
\textsuperscript{32} Jeffers, C. 2003: 108.
\textsuperscript{33} Karp, I. and Lavine, S. 1991.
\textsuperscript{34} The following references are a very small sample of the books now available on museum practices and exhibiting policy. Cuno, J. 2004; Henderson, A. and Kaepppler, A. 1997; Gurian, E. 2006; Karp, I. et al. 2006; Crane, S. 2000; Oguibe, O. 2004; MacDonald, S. and Fyfe, G. 1999.
subsequent selection and selling of particular objects but also in the renewed vigour brought about by exposure of certain objects in recent exhibitions.

By the late twentieth century, Tibetan art had established itself as a global brand and H.H. the fourteenth Dalai Lama, whether intentional or not, had become what advertising agents call a Lovemark. Global brands, especially lovemarked products create emotional experiences, with which customers identify. For example, the exhibition at The Bowers Museum in Santa Ana was a huge success despite the protestors vocalizing Communist China’s participation as hosts of Tibet: Treasures from the Roof of the World. The 200 ritual objects were drawn directly from the private possessions of the past and current Dalai Lamas. The desire to see ‘authentic’ objects, which belonged to the Dalai Lama, overrode the fact that the Chinese denied the existence of the current Dalai Lama. The value and attraction of these objects was their association with the high profiled—lovemarked—H.H. the fourteenth Dalai Lama. Similarly, the 1969 NYAS exhibition had also used historical western imaginings of the Dalai Lamas and Tibet to re-evaluate and (re)present the devil’s idols as art commodities.

Important in the re-evaluation of Tibetan art was the production of an art discourse relevant to Tibetan objects. The 1969 NYAS published an authoritative catalogue, The Art of Tibet, which was dedicated solely to Tibetan art. It took a leading role in the transformation of Tibetan artefacts into art. Museums and their art exhibitions have authority and power over the control and access to knowledge. Authority is about performance, what is said, what is heard, what is shown and what is seen. To see is to know and we know because of the information gained from previously circulated performances and discourses. Anthropologists Jean and John Comaroff have stated that they acquired understanding by accessing a lineage of ideas carried by institutions, disciplines and individuals. These lineages carry knowledge and authority. In other words, new scholarship is authored on the

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36 Foster, R.J. 2008: 15.
authority of recognised historical disciplines. Discourse is an authorized and structured act.\textsuperscript{39} Philosopher Michel Foucault acknowledged this when he stated that “in every society the production of discourse is at once controlled, selected, organized and redistributed according to a certain number of procedures.”\textsuperscript{40} The analysis of discourse is important to this dissertation, in particular the value creation processes of art exhibition catalogues and the associated activities of Asia Week, such as art auctions and fairs.

Art discourse continually negotiates the relationships of authority to knowledge. The production, distribution and consumption of knowledge are political acts.\textsuperscript{41} Philosopher Stephen Best wrote, “The authority of discourse lies in its relationship to knowledge, that is, discourse is deployed to divide, exclude, restrict, marginalize, limit, classify, categorize, radicalize and importantly normalize” information.\textsuperscript{42} Discourse forms circuitous paths of power, which repeat and reproduce themselves, multiplying, finding a consensus and resolving tensions. Foucault suggested that this constant exposure forms chains or systems, which become the dominant rhetoric.\textsuperscript{43} Discourse authorized a few to speak for many and this privilege or exclusive right to speak is reinforced by public acceptance. Art professionals, including curators, critics, art historians and art institutions, are accepted as authorities on art. These institutions and individuals are influential in determining what is art and the way it is experienced.

In the artworld, professionals and institutions maintain established art categories and at times inaugurate new categories by initiating and incorporating new knowledge into the prevailing art discourse. The discourse found in art exhibitions, catalogues, auctions and fairs repeat the prevailing approaches and opinions of the artworld. Such repetition creates value by making visible, by elevating and sustaining the objects categorized as art. Important in creating value is the artwork's stability, its ability to be reliably

\textsuperscript{39} Sheridan, A. 1980: 90.
\textsuperscript{40} Foucault, M. 1972: 216.
\textsuperscript{41} Foucault, M. 1977.
\textsuperscript{42} Best, S. 1995: 94.
\textsuperscript{43} Foucault, M. 1976: 93.
dated, authenticated and assigned an aesthetic style unique to a period. This knowledge is necessary for establishing uniqueness, the promotion of connoisseurship, the stimuli to collect these artworks and the creation of value. The 1969 NYAS exhibition witnessed the re-evaluation and establishment of a new set of parameters governing the institutional recognition of Tibetan artefacts.

New knowledge and (re)new ed interest in the devil’s idols was generated by a shift in institutional attitude, a change in exhibition status, resulting in Tibetan art being incorporated into western art history discourse. The exhibition of Tibetan artefacts shifted selected objects out of ethnographic-inspired dioramas into the individualized art for art-sake appreciation of fine art. The authoritative labels and the published catalogue of the 1969 Tibetan art exhibition acknowledged and publicized these changed circumstances. The imprimatur of elite museums, such as the NYAS authorized the transformation of Tibetan artefacts into art. Cultural theorist Stuart Hall commented that new knowledge has to fit into a story before it can be communicated.44 By 1969, the perceived crimes of Communist China, the flight of H. H. the fourteenth Dalai Lama, and the loss of an independent Tibetan nation provided a powerful framing narrative. The 1969 exhibition utilized this narrative of loss to promote the exhibition.

In general, the public accept and trust the authority of museum professionals, academics, dealers and auction houses. New knowledge is mapped onto existing constructions and is legitimized because it fits expectations. Institutions take a hegemonic role in negotiating and maintaining a code for the representation of things foreign. By this I mean that institutions have prescribed a way of knowing and seeing the foreign.45 Furthermore, the community bestows authority on art institutions to represent the cultural authenticity of the Other. According to cultural critic Edward Said, authority is instrumental, it is persuasive; it has status, it establishes canons of taste and value; it is virtually indistinguishable from

44 Hall, S. 1990.
certain ideas it dignifies as true, and from traditions, perceptions, and judgments it forms, transmits, reproduces.\textsuperscript{46}

Institutional frames of reference routinely appear natural, more so than a discourse constructed and negotiated by the socio-political and economic forces of a particular time and State.\textsuperscript{47}

By accenting traditional Tibet as a bygone era, the Tibetan objects are distanced and decontextualized from the vagaries of the present. (Dis)placement of indigenous artefacts into non-indigenous schemes of meaning is an important step in the transformation process. Transformation (or metamorphosis) of artefact into art (dis)locates the utilitarian object from its intended role and relocates it, in the artworld case, on a pedestal.\textsuperscript{48} The distancing of the object from the point of origin or indigenous practices is critical in decontextualizing and (re)presenting the objects as art. Upon entering a museum collection the artefact is cleaned of its accumulated ritual dross and if necessary restored and/or conserved. However, the artefact itself has not essentially changed rather it is the audience’s perception, which has changed.\textsuperscript{49} In discussing the western transformation of Tibetan artefact into art, my focus is concerned with shifts in western perception.

Anthropologist Jacques Maquet noted that transformed objects are inevitably decontextualized,\textsuperscript{50} resulting in objects appearing as timeless. These transformed objects have materially transcended time and cultural loss. Their (dis)location is customarily a consequence of disruptive actions such as colonisation, genocide or diasporic trauma.\textsuperscript{51} Historian George Basalla

\textsuperscript{47} Hall, S. 1990.
\textsuperscript{48} André Malraux, in his \textit{Museum Without Walls}, referred to the process of artefact becoming art as metamorphosis. Malraux, A. 1974. I prefer the term transformation, because metamorphosis, as commonly used in English, suggests the emergence of a beautiful butterfly after undergoing physical change—from embryo to larva to pupa to imago.
\textsuperscript{49} Basalla, G. 1982: 192-3. Basalla used Duchamp as an example of transformation—the displacement of a familiar object from its everyday context.
\textsuperscript{50} Maquet, J. 1986: 22. He also uses the term metamorphosis.
\textsuperscript{51} More recently, museums in the search for funding and greater public appeal have formed associations with corporate identities and transformed contemporary everyday commodities into art forms. For example, The Art of the Motorcycle exhibition at the NY Solomon R. Guggenheim in 1998 attracted record crowds. Critic James Hyde wrote “Barely detectable hardware was used to keep the motorcycles upright, giving an impression of their balance at
reflected that the removal of objects from their original setting and employment does not automatically erase their earlier non-art use despite the objects’ transformed circumstances. A Tibetan deity remains a Tibetan deity, even if it is now on a secular western stage in full view of the uninitiated. Inevitably, the narrative description shifts to fit the object’s changed socio-political context. For instance, in the indigenous story, Avalokitesvara is contextualized inside religious practice, whereas, in the western story, Avalokitesvara is re-contextualized as an iconic survivor—unique, collectible, desirable and valuable art commodity—a salvaged masterpiece (illus. 5a-d).

The phenomenon of transformation is not peculiar to non-western objects. Shifting narratives have been applied to everyday western objects, transforming them into art. A well-known western art example of transformation are French artist Marcel Duchamp’s ready-mades, such as the snow shovel, which he titled In Advance of the Broken Arm, 1915 (illus. 6a-b). It remained a snow shovel, but the shovel underwent selection, individuation, labelling and (re)presentation onto a museum wall where it attracted attention from art critics and the public. While Duchamp’s selection and exhibition of common household objects was intended to be controversial and question the arbitrary boundaries between art and non-art. The important point of transformation is not the object’s form, but its (dis)location from its original context. The establishment of a new label and changed circumstances constructs a new aura and a changed narrative. According to Basalla, it is the speed and allowing their design to be seen as purposeful architecture. From a museological perspective, the exhibition really was a tarted-up trade show. As such, it becomes an important marker in the shifting relationship of popular and high culture, which has characterized a major discourse in American art since mid-century.” Hyde, J. 1999. For catalogue see Krens, T. and Drutt, M. 1998.

53 Not all Tibetan Buddhist objects were intended to be on public display. Some, for example, the powerful fierce many headed, armed and legged deities were for initiates only. Furthermore, others thangkas were only on display during public events, such as ritual ceremonies and New Year celebrations. Richardson, H.E. 1993. Mary Slusser also notes that during the Nepalese annual temple festivals known as bahidyah bwayegu, thangkas are brought out and paraded. Slusser, M.S. 2005.
tension—the dissonance—between the artefacts new and old roles, which transforms it.55

By the early twentieth century, the appearance of Tibetan artefacts in the west became frequent, primarily due to the proximity of westerners to geographical Tibet through either China or India. The British desire to trade, to see and to know Tibet resulted in an armed British Mission entering Tibet. A consequence was the release of many Tibetan artefacts onto the global stage. Tibetan artefacts did not become art because the museums had filled their shelves with all the Chinese, Japanese and Indian art they needed and it was now time to collect Tibetan objects. Nor was the collecting of Tibetan objects legitimized by haphazardly calling it art. Rather, I will argue that the transformation of selected Tibetan artefacts was carried out at a specific location and time.

Transformations, such as Duchamp’s snow shovel, problematize the categorization of what is art. For Tibetan artefacts, the transformation was less contentious. Many museums and private collectors held Tibetan artefacts and while they were valued as exotic objects, they were yet to be valued as fine art. During the 1904 British Mission into Tibet, Lieutenant Waddell and The [London] Times reporter Percival Landon, were the official collectors of Tibetan objects for British and Indian public institutions, in particular the British Museum (BM). But despite this collection activity, there is no mention of Tibetan objects in the British Museum’s early publications on Asian art.56 This may reflect the fact that Tibetan objects were unfamiliar and that there were no guides to evaluate their worthiness. Unfamiliarity according to early twentieth century art historian Roger Fry, distorts any transformative effect

55 Basalla, G. 1982: 183-201. He refers to the object’s transformation as transfiguration.
56 Tatlock, R.R. 1925. Laurence Binyon the British Museum Oriental art curator noted that that appreciation of Chinese paintings was a recent phenomenon and that any beauty seen in Indian art was because of classic Greco-Roman influences. Binyon, L. 1925: 5. In the later half of the nineteenth century there was an attitude that while the Chinese had achieved an advanced culture very early, they had stopped in the “infancy” of civilization. Of George Gustavus Zerffi (1820-1892) wrote that the Chinese “have all the manners of precocious children with prematurely aged faces.” Zerffi, G.G. 1876: 45-46. He was a lecturer at the National Art Training School, South Kensington. He also gave public lectures for the London Sunday Lecture Society.
cast by the western aesthetic eye.\textsuperscript{57} He noted that, the transformation of African art was not institutionalized until their foreign forms influenced western artists such as Picasso and Braque and led to the re-evaluation of African art.

Without the imprimatur of a ‘fine’ art label, art refers to a category of artistic merit. If art is the display of skills or abilities, then what is fine art? Anthropologist Howard Morphy wrote that, “In many ways the category of fine art is not a category of objects but a way of viewing objects that are prized exemplars of aesthetic values or conceptual significance.”\textsuperscript{58} The public learns how to see selected objects as art.\textsuperscript{59} These categories are fluid. Art categories, like artists, are susceptible to the ebb and flow of popularity. The exhibition of Tibetan art benefited from the celebrity presence of H.H. the fourteenth Dalai Lama. The public’s aesthetic appreciation appears natural, however, their appreciation is drawn from knowledge filtered by their learned sensory perceptions.\textsuperscript{60} Such knowledge is articulated by artworld figures—arbiters of taste, such as art critics, connoisseurs, collectors, museum curators, scholars, dealers—and exhibitions. In arguing George Dickie’s \textit{Institutional Theory}, philosopher Alexandre Erler stated “the issue of what art is cannot be completely separated from the question of what the artworld \textit{calls} art.”\textsuperscript{61} In a circular process, authoritative figures in the artworld select, exhibit, write and produce discourse on art and this discourse in turn supports their selection and exhibition of individual objects as fine art.\textsuperscript{62}

The acceptance of Andy Warhol’s \textit{Brillo Boxes} as art and the discussion that their exhibition generated is an example of how objects become art (illus. 7). Their apparent replication of the manufacturer’s boxes caused art critic/theorist, Arthur Danto to question what art is.\textsuperscript{63} He concluded that the \textit{new} objects—the Brillo Boxes—were art because of their relationship to

\textsuperscript{57} Fry, R. 1968 [1927]: 68.
\textsuperscript{58} Morphy, H. 2007: 20.
\textsuperscript{59} Berger, J. 1975.
\textsuperscript{60} A line of argument pursued by Bourdieu in \textit{Distinction}. Bourdieu, P. 2004.
\textsuperscript{61} Erler, A. 2006: 114 (Erler emphasis).
\textsuperscript{62} Unless otherwise stated my references henceforth relate to art are as fine art.
\textsuperscript{63} Danto, A. 1964.
previous art discourse. However radical they initially appeared, the Warhol boxes represented new steps along a projected art pathway. Danto explained that there would be no art if there were no artworlds to theorize art into being. Art theory makes art, which is why Warhol’s *Brillo Boxes* is art, and the Brillo manufacturer’s boxes are not. Twenty-five years after his 1964 paper on Warhol’s *Brillo Boxes*, Danto wrote that with the benefit of hindsight he could not have theorized on what is art and what is real a moment earlier. Even with the prior appearance of Duchamp’s snow shovel, it was not until the artworld’s upheaval in the 1960s that Duchamp’s ready-mades and Warhol’s boxes were satisfactorily expressed as ‘fine’ art forms. Similarly, the *New York Times* art critic John Canaday acknowledged that public acceptance of Asian art was enhanced by the advent of American abstractionism in the late fifties and sixties. Such shifts in art paradigms produced a new vocabulary and way of seeing, which influenced the re-evaluation and transformation of previously overlooked objects, such as Tibetan art.

Nevertheless, the art critic’s opinion is not in itself sufficient to transform the object. One requirement included that the objects have a durable physical presence capable of storage, either as a recorded event, such as an installation, or as three-dimensional objects such as sculpture and paintings. A second requirement was the development of a secondary market where objects are exchanged between consumers, thereby engaging an art market and developing an artworld. Activity in the market place validates and re-evaluates the categorizing and status of objects. Public presentation and discourse, through exhibitions, advertising, catalogues, newspaper reviews or

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64 Interestingly, in a book on the connoisseur Bernard Berenson and the twentieth century, Mary Ann Calo states that Berenson used a similar strategy. He linked aspects of past and present in order to evaluate art and/or artists, thereby theorizing the focus of his research into being. Calo, M.A. 1994: 44.
65 Danto, A. 1964. Alsop recognized five rare art traditions which developed fine artworlds as experienced in the western twentieth-twenty-first centuries. He argues that it is because these cultures developed an art discourse. The five rare art traditions are: the [Greek/Roman] classical; the Renaissance; the Chinese; the Japanese; and the Islamic world. Danto, A. 1964: 580-581.
66 In the 1960s there was a proliferation of new art forms, such as conceptual art, performance art and installation art. For an overall view see Crow, T. 1996.
tourist souvenirs, negotiates a homogenous view of which objects become art. Serious collectors and connoisseurs aspire to own objects equal to those exhibited in art museums or have their collection exhibited in museums.

Tibetan objects had been on continuous public exhibition in New York from the early twentieth century attracting sporadic attention, but not authoritative art discourse. Why was this transformation institutionalized in 1969? In that year, the New York Asia Society, an elite institution founded by John D. Rockefeller 3rd, hosted the exhibition, The Art of Tibet. Art historian Dr Pratapaditya Pal curated the exhibition and compiled a catalogue which described the aesthetic merits of 119 Tibetan objects. This catalogue was an important catalyst in the transformation process. It is not today's glossy publication. However, it was an invaluable resource for identifying Tibetan art—on what to look for and how to talk about it. The 1969 Tibetan art catalogue introduced a Tibetan art vocabulary and harmonized western aesthetic principles by describing unfamiliar images in terms of form, line, colour and movement. The mostly black and white photographs are an important visual introduction to Tibetan art. Philosopher Walter Benjamin and author Andre Malraux both recognised the importance of visual reproduction in the acquisition of art knowledge. The reproduction of individual images for each object in the 1969 exhibition catalogue assisted in the institutionalization of Tibetan artefacts as a valid fine art category.

Institutions, such as art museums, play an influential and authoritative role in representing the Other and their cultural identity. Authority and who controls knowledge production is pivotal in cultural representation, nationhood, and identity formation. In the creation of new art categories, such as Tibetan art, selected historical facts customarily validate the revaluation of objects. Art historians re-interpret the past to support their ideological shift and facilitate the transformation of artefacts once categorized as exotica. For

71 John D. Rockefeller preferred 3rd than the usual Romanized numeric of III.
73 The differences between the 1969 and the 2003 Chicago catalogues will be discussed in the chapter on catalogues.
75 Gordon, C. 1980: 133.
instance, art history discourse encapsulates and incorporates the popular western imaginings of Tibet by giving titles and character to what were previously referred to as the ‘devil’s idols.’ This re-naming process gives new meaning and normalizes the idols into art objects.

In addition to re-naming, western art historians constructed their Tibetan descriptions from such factors as: the physical data of the Tibetan images, interpretations of Tibet’s indigenous history, Tibetan Buddhist stories, and interpretations of the objects’ artistic merit in line with western aesthetics. The piecing of the past with the present results in the rewriting of history.  

History is episodic and discontinuous but because historians select moments in time and edit out repetitive or uneventful moments, their product appears well-crafted and seamlessness. Similarly, historian Michel De Certeau noted that historians do not make history. Rather they stage the past to fit the immediacy of the present.  

For example, one constructed Tibetan art history is the transformation of the devil’s idols into symbols against the evils of Communism.

To (re)present stories is to take an authoritative stand, which does not necessarily reflect objective or natural realities where truth can be automatically assumed. Foucault wrote, “Truth is linked in a circular relation with systems of power which produce and sustain it.” He considered this relationship to be ‘a regime of truth,’ such that, the rule of truth is not just ideological, but is constituted by the relational forces of institutions, politics and the market economy. Western (re)presentations of the indigenous are often associated with the portrayal of unchanging tradition. The stereotyping of truth is located in timelessness. Representation is closely associated with the concepts of universalism, stereotypes, nation and identity. In the Tibetan case, western institutions (re)present the Tibet nation through the exhibition of its material culture. But this (re)presentation is not neutral. Western museum and collectors (re)present Tibetan art as cultural remnants of a Tibetan nation whose culture is dead, dying or lost, and they [the west] are

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76 Foster, H. 1985: 1-5.
78 Gordon, C. 1980: 133.
the keepers of this lost culture. Geopolitics author Dibyesh Anand noted that Tibet’s claim to ‘nation’ status is constructed on political notions of a Tibetan government-in-exile than on historical truths.\textsuperscript{79}

\textbf{The Discourse of Consumption}

The rise of Tibetan art since the initial institutionalization of Tibetan artefacts in 1969 suggests the activation of the ‘informational’ cascade phenomenon.\textsuperscript{80} Economists Sushil Bikhchandani, David Hirshleifer and Ivo Welch wrote that an “informational cascade occurs when it is optimal for an individual having observed the actions of those ahead of him, to follow the behaviour of the preceding individual without regard to his own information.”\textsuperscript{81} Sociologist, Sarah Thornton in her book on the contemporary western artworld noted that the artworld “relies on consensus.”\textsuperscript{82} She further noted that what is defined as art is stereotyped by expectations, the curators are aware of these expectations and act accordingly, while critics want to be seen ‘getting it right’ and the majority of collectors will ‘run with the herd.’\textsuperscript{83} Thus, the internal nature of the art industry predisposes its actions to the ‘informational’ cascade response. I argue that this was in evidence when art enthusiasts followed the lead of the elite collectors and their association with New York Asia Society and re-evaluated their position on collecting Tibetan art despite the possibility that they may have previously dismissed these objects.\textsuperscript{84}

\textsuperscript{79} Anand, D. 2007: 274.
\textsuperscript{80} Walden and Browne define the cascade phenomenon as the influence of another’s action on an individual causing them to act contrary to their private or previous beliefs. Walden, E. and Browne, G. 2002: 437. The term was coined originally by Bikhchandani, S. et al. 1992.
\textsuperscript{81} Bikhchandani, S. et al. 1992.
\textsuperscript{82} Thornton, S. 2007: xiv.
\textsuperscript{83} Thornton, S. 2007: xv.
\textsuperscript{84} For example, Mr Zimmerman, an important collector of Himalayan art was inspired to collect when he visited the New York Asia Society’s Nepalese exhibition a few years earlier than the Tibetan exhibition. He had not been aware of Himalayan art. He went on to build an important museum-quality Tibetan and Nepalese art collection. Pal, P. 1974: 44-46.
The first English language reference to a Tibetan ‘art’ exhibition that I have found to date is at Mr John Baillie’s gallery in Bayswater, London in 1905. An anonymous art critic for The [London] Times wrote a detailed review of this Tibetan exhibition.\(^{85}\) The exhibition was held a year after the British Mission into Tibet. The reviewer noted that “interesting paintings and other works of art” have recently arrived from monasteries in Tibet. The early twentieth century anonymous reviewer struggled with how to express what he/she saw. The reviewer attempted to describe the paintings, but did not have a vocabulary available, nor did he/she have the poetic and aesthetic discourses that are available to today’s reviewers and curators. Devil imagery peppered the review signifying the strangeness of these foreign objects. Apart from the Buddha, no other deities are named—they are saints, skeletons, devils, lamas, priests and worshippers (illus. 8a-b; 9).\(^{86}\) The reviewer did mention the two central ritual implements by name—the Tibetan term, “dor-je” for the sceptre and the English vernacular for bell.\(^{87}\) Undeterred by lack of language the reviewer endeavoured to anchor the Tibetan “works of art” to familiar western fine art referents (illus. 10). The reviewer wrote,

The colours, as a rule, are harsh and crude, though age has lent them certain richness; but in one or two cases more delicate effects may be seen. Now and then we are strangely reminded of early Italian work, particularly in a painting in which Buddha is surrounded by a narrow ring of small heads of saints. There are a great number of very interesting points in these paintings, such as the use of the halo, which deserve fuller notice; and the exhibition, which is unique, will no doubt be visited by experts in Tibetan art.\(^{88}\)

Despite the flood of Tibetan curios onto the market at the time and the fact that daily newspapers such as The Times had special correspondents sending

\(^{85}\) Anon. “Art exhibition.” 1905: 3. Concurrent with the Tibetan exhibition was two small water-colour exhibitions.

\(^{86}\) Using the descriptions given in the article, I have selected examples of thangkas to represent those that may have been on view in 1905.

\(^{87}\) Refer to illus. 2a-b.

\(^{88}\) Anon. “Art Exhibitions.” 1905. The Younghusband Mission to Tibet had been widely reported in London newspapers. In addition a number of books on the Mission was quickly published, such as Waddell, L. Lhasa and Its Mysteries with a Record of the Expedition of 1903-1904, 1905; Millington, P. To Lhassa at Last, 1905; Landon, P. Lhasa: an account of the country and people of central Tibet and of the progress of the mission sent there by the English government in the year 1903-04, 1905.
back reports from Tibet, a Tibetan artworld did not eventuate. The academic interest in Tibetan material culture was focused on the consumption of the written word. Waddell and Landon were instructed to concentrate their official collecting on manuscripts. The early twentieth century western emphasis was on the pursuit and intellectual conquest of indigenous Tibetan knowledge not the study of Tibetan material culture as an art form.

The desire to publicly collect Tibetan artefacts as anything other than curiosities in 1905 was challenged by the fact that these artefacts were identified as belonging to a race of devil-worshippers. The Times review did little to dispel that notion, nor did the articles and stories written by men returning from the British Mission. For instance, Waddell used the term devil to describe various Tibetan monks and practices (illus. 11). Just months before the exhibition, a book review also in The Times, quoted from Perceval Landon’s book “a system of devil-worship pure and simple reigns in Tibet.” Landon considered that the monks kept the peasants ignorant, enslaved and terrorized by religious threats. A consequence of this view was the use of the term ‘Lamaism’ to identify Tibetan Buddhism as a degraded form of Buddhism practiced elsewhere. This sentiment echoed an earlier eyewitness account given by Jesuit John Grueber in 1661. He concluded that the devil had taken control in Tibet. Grueber wrote, the devil has “had the malice to transfer and usurp all the other mysteries of our faith to his own worship.” If, as I discuss in later chapters, consumption is an important indication of status and identity, consuming Tibetan art in 1905 was not a hallmark of taste or success, which it was to become in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries.

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89 One of the earliest books published in English on Tibetan artefacts was American-born, Alice Getty’s book, The Gods of Northern Buddhism, 1914.
92 Western authors indicated the perceived similarities of Tibetan Buddhism to Catholicism through the frequent use of the term Lamaism. Waddell used this term to imply a relationship with the excesses of Roman Catholicism and in particular ‘Papism’ compared to Protestantism. See Donald Lopez Jr for a discussion on the term Lamaism. Lopez Jr, D.S. 1998: 15-17; Lopez Jr, D.S. 1996.
93 Lowndes, S. 1676: 109. Jesuit Grueber also acknowledges the similarity of ritual, dress and hierarchy to the Pope of Rome.
Throughout the centuries, the act of consuming particular types of goods and services was identified with status, such as royalty and aristocracy. Ownership of scarce resources and art are typical status-markers.\textsuperscript{95} To be seen consuming announces wealth and, in most cases, taste. Historian Gary Cross stated that "Modern people, especially Americans, communicate to others and to themselves through their goods."\textsuperscript{96} The modern usage of ‘consume’ signifies an individual’s freedom of choice in the act of consuming. Personal choice over which products and services are consumed creates a personalized identity, indicating their position within society.\textsuperscript{97} The emphasis on consuming in the west is not based on the necessities of survival, rather what is consumed is a sign of status, taste, education or group membership.

But in the act of western consuming, indigenous resources are used up. The act of consuming, that is, the exchange of goods and services, whether legal or illegal, alienates the object from its original purpose. The artworld overlooks the potential destabilizing relationship of their consumption on Other cultures in the transformation of indigenous artefacts into art commodities.\textsuperscript{98} Malraux noted that early twentieth century western collecting zeal for the exotic often had the effect of bleeding colonized sources dry of selected artefacts.\textsuperscript{99} Zealous collecting continues into the twenty-first century, for instance, American collectors Donald and Shelly Rubin have brought together over 1,700 Tibetan works, particularly thangkas in the last 25 years.\textsuperscript{100} Western discourse legitimises the artworld’s consumption practices through the actions and performances at such artworld activities as exhibitions, auctions and fairs.

The late twentieth and twenty-first century emphasis on consumption, and the large sums spent on artworks, recalls Joseph Alsop’s by-products of a collecting society. In his book,\textit{ The Rare Art Tradition}, Alsop identified these

\textsuperscript{95} Pomian, K. 1990; Alsop, J. 1982.
\textsuperscript{96} Cross, G. 2000: viii.
\textsuperscript{97} See appendix A.2 for how the meaning for consuming has shifted over time.
\textsuperscript{98} Richins, M. 1994: 532.
\textsuperscript{99} Malraux, A. 1954: 527.
\textsuperscript{100} Doran, V.C. 2004.
by-products as: the creation of collections, art history, art markets, art museums, art faking, revaluations, antiques, and super-prices. Alsop argued that art collecting was not universal across all cultures. He stated that when it did develop it was "highly idiosyncratic, exceedingly complex and in some degree, quite irrational."\textsuperscript{101} Alsop considered that the vulnerability and volatility of collecting is bound to the vagaries of taste, fashion, desire and the demands of a competitive market. Such elements prompt institutional and private collectors in the twenty-first century to purchase Tibetan art.

Today, Tibetan art is attracting record prices at auction. A “monumental” gilt bronze figure of seated Buddha realized over USD3,500,000 dollars in 2008, while a thangka of \textit{Vairocana} realized almost USD1,500,000 (illus. 12a-b). Both these artworks were highlighted in auctions promoted as \textit{Masterpiece} sales. The auctions were: \textit{Masterpieces of Himalayan Bronzes}; and \textit{The Ideal Image: Eight Masterpieces of Indian and Southeast Asian Art}, respectively.\textsuperscript{102} Once objects attract super-prices, then collectors, museums and investors compete to own similar masterpieces. The heated desire to own \textit{museum-quality} objects exerts pressure on supply chains to meet this increasing demand.

The issues of caretaking, repatriation, appropriation and the right to represent prompt questions of looting, pillaging and provenance. Indifference to these initial concerns with the Tibetan artworld has been justified under the western positioning of the Chinese as villains and the need to salvage relics of what was once a ‘timeless’ culture. Because of this, there are few questions asked in respect to Tibetan art collection practices. Nor is there pressure to document Tibetan art provenance in the same way that affects collectors of Pre-Columbian or Roman sculptures. There are questions to be addressed regarding the blurring of legal ownership and the right to represent Tibet and its material culture. The answers to these questions are problematic due to the interest of three parties which contest their right and the right of the other parties to ownership and knowledge. The three parties

\textsuperscript{101} Alsop, J. 1982: 1.
\textsuperscript{102} Christie’s Press Release. 2008.
are: the People’s Republic of China (PRC); Central Tibetan Administration of His Holiness the fourteenth Dalai Lama (CTA); and the western constructed Tibetan art world. Each party has differing political motivations either to raise questions or deny the existence of problems.

The fortunes of Tibetan art have relied on a trajectory mapped by western observations and actions. Now that Tibetan art is ‘worth a fortune’ and carries prestige, the significance of legal ownership and access to knowledge (which ownership brings) is increasing. To understand the history of western ownership of Tibetan art and how and why it was transformed from artefact into art sheds light on historical socio-political motivations and perhaps more importantly, sheds light on the present manoeuvrings, such as the PRC involvement in the major art exhibition, Tibet: Treasures from the Roof of the World. The objects for this exhibition were drawn from the personal possessions of historic and the current Dalai Lama. While there were protests outside every exhibiting day across the many venues, this did not deter the public. The PRC tested the market and discovered that the American public was enamoured by Tibetan art. But how much of the American love affair was with Tibetan art and how much with the charismatic H.H. the fourteenth Dalai Lama and the myth and magic which still exists in the western imaginings of Tibet? History reveals that the west was intrigued by Tibet, its customs and rituals when Tibetan art was still the devil’s idols.

Chapter summaries
By the end of the twentieth century, the devil’s idols were global objects of desire. To explain this transformation I present six chapters, plus an introduction and conclusion. The dissertation is in two volumes. The text is in Volume One, while the accompanying illustrations, maps, figures and appendices are in Volume Two. The illustrations support the argument of this dissertation and function as visual aids to understanding Tibetan art and its transformation, particularly for those readers less acquainted with Tibetan
art. Cumulatively they also provide an overview to the written thesis in the form of a visual narrative.

After the introduction, the dissertation is divided into three parts. Part One titled *Historicizing Transformation*, charts an historical trajectory for Tibet as seen by the west in three chapters. The chapter, *Tibet-making*, maps an historical series of western imaginings of Tibet. I use mapping in a metaphorical sense, a process that inscribes surfaces onto people and locality. The act of inscribing reflects unequal power relations. The western centre wrote and the peripheries to the east were written. Tibet was essentialized, historicized and revealed by western authority. These revelations continue to influence western imaginings, especially in relationship to Communist China and the *lost world* of Tibet.

Chapter three, *Materializing Tibet*, considers the American public museum representation of Tibetan artefacts prior to their transformation into art in 1969. The chapter focuses on museums collecting Tibetan objects and is divided into three sections. The first, *in the field*, discusses how American museums acquired Tibetan objects early in the twentieth century. Museums used such collection strategies as enlisting missionaries as collectors and museum-sponsored expeditions. At the same time, some individuals became personal crusaders and spent personal resources to build and display Tibetan collections. The second section, *Museum Acquisitions, Tibetan objects: 1955-1973*, presents the data on the acquisition of Oriental art by American museums. Collating this data reveals the trends, range and shifts on collection emphasis towards all oriental art and Tibetan objects in particular. The final section, *Why was Tibetan Art Not Tibetan Art prior to 1969*, discusses the shift in perception of Tibetan objects leading into the NYAS exhibition, *The Art of Tibet*.

The fourth chapter, *1969*, examines the socio-political nature of the year, which was pivotal in the transformation of Tibetan artefact into art. It is also divided into three sections: *Swinging sixties; New York Asia Society; and The Art of Tibet exhibition*. The chapter locates the time and place of the
transformation and asks why 1969? It also discusses what motivated the elite New York Asia Society to host an exhibition of Tibetan art at this time. It considers how the institutional display of Tibetan artefacts as art offered a vehicle of social containment and political propaganda at a time when the American nation felt threatened.

Part Two, *Key Mechanisms in the Transformation Process*, consists of two chapters, which examine the commodification process of this transformation from artefact into art. Together the two chapters discuss the value creation process within the artworld. Chapter five, *Art exhibition catalogues*, discusses the importance of art discourse in establishing and maintaining a Tibetan art market. The chapter is two sections. The first discusses the important role of art exhibition catalogues in creating value. The second section discusses how the catalogues evolved to encourage and support the commodification of Tibetan art. Understanding the evolving nature of the catalogue in a world which increasingly pursues visual stimuli explains how Tibetan art exhibition catalogues currently dominate the issue of Tibetan art discourse and contemporary western imaginings of Tibet.

Chapter six, *New York Asia Week*, discusses the performative nature of Asian art fairs and auctions in setting the price and the value of not just Tibetan objects but also the status of the collectors. NY Asia Week brings together international dealers, collectors, connoisseurs, museum personal, academics and enthusiasts. Brought together, a small proportion contest for a limited supply of masterpieces, while the larger proportion validate these purchasers by witnessing and consuming on a lesser scale. Asia Week is a consuming spectacle where collectors have the opportunity to purchase an identity or higher status and at the same time, increase the worth of those objects.

Part Three, *Effects of Transformation*, explores the effect of the value creation processes on the artworks themselves. Chapter seven, *Aestheticization: (Re)presentation dilemma*, examines the consequence of transformed Tibetan artworks, particularly in the current late twentieth and early twenty-first century cult of masterpieces. Increases in status and price
attract what Joseph Alsop refers to as by-products. I explore four of these: art faking, re-evaluations, antiques and super-prices through the alleged practice of overpainting. This practice also calls into question the relationship of authority to the authenticating process.

In the conclusion, I summarize the dissertation research and findings by returning to the “greatest show on earth,” *Himalayas An Aesthetic Adventure*. Subtitled *Consuming dilemma*, I use exhibits from the 2003 Chicago exhibition to review my argument and the matters arising from my research, such as the impact western the transformation of Tibetan artefact into art and its continued consuming is having on Tibetan art.
The empty spaces on early world maps were designated as *mare incognito* [unknown sea], *terra incognita* [unknown land] or *terra nullius* [nobody's land or empty land]. The imaginings of what filled the blank or empty spaces of *mare* and *terra incognita* authenticated many unsubstantiated stories.¹ By late nineteenth century these cartographic voids had all but disappeared from maps, replaced by names of towns, roads and boundary lines demarcating nations. However, these blank spaces were never empty, they operated on two levels—western projection and indigenous reality.

This chapter focuses on western historical projections onto Tibet—what was seen, how it was experienced and expressed. In his article, *Blank Spaces on the Earth*, cartographer Alfred Hiatt noted how blank spaces incite the development of fanciful imaginings.² He wrote that the blank spaces on maps are “imbued with glory, glamour” and invite self-projection of sameness or difference onto the blankness.³ Overtime the understanding of the Other shifts, sometimes positive, sometimes negative and almost always attracting stereotypical images. Historical archives are filled with sea monsters, fire-breathing dragons, and humanoid-abominations living ‘out there,’ ‘over there.’ Science has now filled in most of these blank spaces and unknowns but popular imaginings continue to inhabit the modern imagination. Monsters are still reported to lurk in the unfathomable depths of Loch Ness, the yeti still hunts in isolated Himalayan canyons⁴ and in the still blankness of space unidentified objects are reported to fly (illus. 13).

² Hiatt, A. 2002.
³ Hiatt, A. 2002: 223.
The lands were unknown because they were not civilised or populated in a similar manner to the west. While this difference makes people and culture exotic, it may equally make the inhabitants invisible upon the landscape. In *Ways of Seeing*, art historian John Berger argued what is visible and understandable depends on what we see, and we only see what we know, or care to know. How visible and what stories endure depend upon the dispersal of knowledge, which is also dependant on what is remembered. Authority and who controls knowledge production is pivotal in cultural representation, nationhood and identity formation. The making of Tibet was initiated and maintained by the telling and re-telling of traveller’s tales—western travelling tales. Even now, in the twenty-first century, Tibetan stories, facts and figures remain fragile, contested by separate parties who claim to represent Tibet.

Tibet’s construction as a geographical space and cultural identity is a discussion about western geopolitics. This chapter introduces the ways the western world represented Tibet before Tibetan art became a representational vehicle and Tibetan voices began to be heard. Throughout this chapter, I discuss the western imaginings of Tibet as a product of western socio-political ideologies. Historian lain Higgins’s notion of worldmaking informs this discussion. Higgins defined the concept of worldmaking as “the discursive construction of a specific geographical, natural, human and theological world out of already existing worlds.” The way Tibet is experienced and consumed today, reflects earlier historical imaginings that were built on western travel tales and imperialist ideals. Anthropologist Jack Goody argued that western ethnocentricity has “imposed” historical notions onto Asia by writing European history as central and dominant, while Asian history is peripheral and stereotyped by perceived differences.

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5 Berger, J. 1975.
A late nineteenth century example of seeing and knowing Tibet is provided by British Captain Hamilton Bower’s book, *Diary of a Journey Across Tibet*, published in 1894. The *New York Times* review stated that Bower had trekked across *terra incognita*—an unknown land.1 While Tibet was isolated behind its mountain range and was inhospitable to strangers, Tibet was not unknown.2 At the time of Bower’s travels, Russia and Britain were manoeuvring for political ascendency within this region, in what was known as the *Great Game*.3 Their strategic rivalry generated territorial rumours, desires and projected fears, which were written onto the seemingly politically barren landscape. For these two powerful nations the Himalayas and the Caucuses was *terra incognita*—the indigenous population were rendered invisible. Both sides published voluminous accounts on the contested areas—particularly adventure stories of hardship, survival and meeting the opposition out there in the wasteland.4 Mapping was a priority as these adventurers searched for mountain passes and advantages over their rivals. They recorded near death experiences as they (re)wrote existing indigenous trade routes as the result of hard-won western knowledge. The locals appeared within the pages as cooks, muleteers and baggage carriers.

The mapping of unchartered territory implied a claim of ownership. Maps, texts and images construct knowledge. Whoever writes knowledge holds the socio-political tools of power. The collection of knowledge by the west is a form of conquest—an intellectual conquest in which data is tabulated, catalogued, historicized and mapped. Maps are authoritative textual documents, naturalizing and legitimizing knowledge.5 Furthermore, the present markings on maps

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1 Anon. “In Unknown Thibetan Lands.” 1894.
2 Tibet may have been known to some during the medieval period. Kaschewsky noted that Klaudios Ptolemaeus (90-180 C.E.) uses the terms *Hai Bautai* and *Ho Bautisos* for a tribe and river in Tibet. Klaudios compiled his *Geografike hyphegesis* from older references. *Bautai* is thought to be derived from the Indian term *Bhota*, a derivative of the term Tibetans used for themselves *Bod*. Kaschewsky also noted that Ptolemy was familiar with Tibetan customs. Kaschewsky, R. 2001: 4. In addition, Beckworth noted the historical connection of the terms *Bod* to *Baut* for the Central Tibetan region of Ü-Tsang. Beckworth, C. 1987: 7, 16.
4 Examples of British adventure tales were the explorer meets the Russian foe: Bower, H. 1976; Wellby, M. 1898; Younghusband, F. 1904; Younghusband, G. and Younghusband, F. 1895.
assemble the future by offering the present map as a data base on which to plan. Philosopher, Michel Foucault stated “No knowledge is formed without a system of communication, registration, accumulation, and displacement ... No power, on the other hand, is exercised without the extraction, appropriation, distribution, or restraint of a knowledge.”\textsuperscript{14} Authorities record, reprint, practice and perform according to current knowledge. Embedded in the narratives, whether text or visual, are the values that confirm and authenticate the status quo—us and the Other.\textsuperscript{15}

When western travelers and explorers were writing about geographical blank spaces, they were also writing to their reader’s knowledge base. Their stories shifted boundaries, opened territory, constructed cultural stereotypes and exoticised material culture. Anthropologists James Clifford in his books, \textit{Predicament of Culture and Routes}, and Mary Louise Pratt in her book, \textit{Imperial Eyes},\textsuperscript{16} discussed the global processes that exoticize the Other in relationship to who is recording and who is writing history, ethnographic reports, art critiques, scientific papers or mapping. Clifford and Pratt’s books critique how knowledge is written and processed—how narratives invent and/or (re)invent the Other and their culture. These same narratives effortlessly cross borders to describe places and spaces. They also textualize contact zones, depict spatial practices and translate exotic cultural performances.

As European travellers pushed east, their imaginings were transferred further and further east. European travellers wrote for a European audience. Literary theorist Edward Said remarked on how the west constructed regional identities opposite to itself, this then permitted the west to juxtapose its civilized trappings and customs against the defined uncivilized Other.\textsuperscript{17} The essentializing

\textsuperscript{14} Foucault, M. 1997: 17.
\textsuperscript{15} Jacob, C. 2006: xv.
\textsuperscript{17} Said, E. 1995: 3. This juxtapositioning has led to the dichotomy of east versus west. In reality east and west is relative to one’s position at any one time, not to stereotyped images that have arisen according the west as the central point and east situated on the periphery. However, the terminology of east continues to be associated with Asia and West with European origins. This dissertation continues the dichotomy, which in itself critiques the western construction and
of the Other reflects the location of the writer—that is, external to the Other. However, history is meaningless without knowledge of place to anchor it to reality. Here, now, before, over there. History fixes time and place in relation to the location of the reader. Place, and how to read place, are learned. Place is realized and identified in stories. Place is also contextualized in exotic objects. For medieval Europeans, the touch of silk and the aroma of spices were evocative of the east.

The world is too often ordered into dichotomies—those that write and those that are written about—those that make and those who are made. The dichotomy of them and us directs the western gaze across their known world to the unknown world. At the same time as they gaze, they construct maps of what is within this unknown world. Maps locate place, identity and culture, producing histories. But on maps, histories are reduced to dots or lines. Maps are physical tools, which silence, forget or leave unrecorded multiple lived histories. Bold or dashed lines on maps demarcate the spread of power, of knowledge and possession. Cartographer Christian Jacob equated maps to telescopes. He wrote that the map “is a technical prosthesis that extends and redefines the field of sensorial perception, or, rather, a place where ocular vision and the mind’s eye coincide.” Maps are experienced as fixed entities, even though they are (re)presentations of space written by world dominating forces. For example, on historical British Commonwealth maps a swathe of pink represented the British Empire, just as contemporary mapping witnesses the loss of Tibet’s independent nation boundaries under the dominance of China’s might.

Maps also represent contested spaces. These spaces are outcomes of war, political negotiations and sometimes reflect natural barriers. The authority of
individuals and institutions legitimise maps. The maps’ authority appeals to, and is written onto layers of knowledge already extant. Public acceptance acknowledges the validity and fitness of these maps. Said noted that geographical references imbue cultural identity, they map our position in the world. Maps carry identifying cultural messages, which are capable of essentializing and stereotyping.

To show how Western history has recorded, imagined, remembered, desired, and forgotten Tibet, I have selected several historical episodes that illustrate how the West has learned to see and know Tibet. The first episode describes how medieval Europe mapped the lands to the east, initiating the process of Tibet-making. The second presents early Western observations of Tibetans as seen by three independent travelers: Marco Polo, John Mandeville and Johan Nieuhoff. The third reports on Tibet as a news story in the U.S. between 1875 and 1885, illustrating the stories circulating in the late nineteenth century. The fourth episode examines the importance of knowledge gathering to conquering empires, such as Britain when they sent a British expeditionary force into Tibet in 1905. The last discusses current regional geo-politics, specifically the loss of the China-Tibet border.

Mapping medieval imaginings
By the first century BCE, the classical philosophers such as Pythagoras, Aristotle, Hipparchus and Ptolemy recognized the world as a sphere, identified five climate zones, calculated the circumference of the world, incorporated latitude

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24 Said, E. 1997. In this article, Said noted the power of discourse, especially fiction, to carry messages of representation and identity. He argues that the position of fictional characters and the position of the reader are practiced unconsciously as if natural, thereby reinforcing/repeating dominate ideologies, such as one’s position in the world—either at the centre or marginalized.
25 Medieval dates c.500-c.1400 (from approximately the fall of the Roman Empire to the loss of Christian Constantinople).
26 Ptolemy (90-168 CE) influenced maps resurfaced after his *Geographia* was published in Latin c.1406-7. Hiatt, A. 2002: 236. Although, Davis noted that Cresques (1325-1387) used Ptolemy’s circumference when making the Catalan map, 1375. Davis, H. 2009.
and longitude and created an eight volume world atlas (illus. 14).\footnote{27} However, the ascendency of Christian ideology eclipsed and displaced this knowledge. This ecumenical hiatus admonished all secular thought which did not reinforce Church doctrine.\footnote{28} Hiatt wrote that Augustine’s “cartography of Christ excludes that which [Christ] has not saved, that in which there is no reason to believe.”\footnote{29} The aura of divine purpose permeated the entire physical medieval world.\footnote{30} Because the Bible was vague in regard to physical geography, medieval cartographers mapped the world around places of spiritual significance.\footnote{31} Many of these were located in the east.

The Archbishop of Seville, St Isidore (560-636) in his influential illustrated encyclopaedia of the world, The Etymologies, popularized the T-O map, which dominated much of the medieval period.\footnote{32} In an introduction to a recent reprint of The Etymologies, historian Stephen Barney wrote that, “It would be hard to overestimate the influence of The Etymologies on medieval European culture.”\footnote{33} All the knowledge contained within The Etymologies was considered a proper ‘Christian’ survey of “what ought to be known.”\footnote{34} The Christian T-O map was adapted from early Roman maps (illus. 15).\footnote{35} The Don and Nile Rivers form the T of the horizontal bar, while the Mediterranean forms the vertical axis. At the centre was Jerusalem. The O represented the world known as Terra, which was

\footnote{27} By the fourth century BCE Pythagoras had speculated that the world was round. He also conceptualized the world within five distinct zones—an uninhabitable intensely heated central equatorial zone, flanked by habitable temperate zones and the pole zones, made up of cold deserts in which nobody lived. Aristotle had calculated the circumference of the world. By second century BCE, Hipparchus had divided the circumference of the earth into 360 degrees. Ptolemy had illustrated the known world in eight volumes of maps. Phillips, J. 1988: 4.
\footnote{28} This did not mean that the earlier world knowledge was lost. Rather the knowledge was forgotten on bookshelves, displaced from contemporary medieval memory. Phillips, J. 1988: 15.
\footnote{29} Hiatt, A. 2002: 227.
\footnote{30} Edson, E. 1999: 40. Higgins also noted that the majority of writers readily acquiesced to the “presumed expectations of their readers about the nature of sacred geography” even though many were aware of alternative readings. Higgins, I. 1998: 36. Furthermore, maps other than the biblical-styled maps were used for travelling and navigating. Tooley, R. 1949: 12.
\footnote{31} Edson, E. 1999: 9.
\footnote{32} Nebenzahl, K. 2004: 26. According to Isidore, Asia was to the east and is named after a woman that had an empire in that direction. It is made up of many provinces and regions, the first and most important is Paradise—The Garden of Eden. Barney, S. et al. 2007: 285.
\footnote{34} Isidore quoted in Brehaut, E. 1964: 45.
\footnote{35} While the T-O maps provided the general shape to maps, each map was individual—produced for particular occasions or purpose. Gillies, J. 1996: 28.
surrounded by the Ocean Sea.\textsuperscript{36} The T-shaped body of water divides Terra into three sectors. The names of the three sons of Noah are marked on the map: Sem (Shem) the first born is identified with Asia; the second born, Lafeth (Japeth) is identified with Europe, and the youngest, Cham (Ham) was identified with Africa (illus. 16).\textsuperscript{37}

The T-O map directed the gaze onto a Christianized world. Jacob noted, maps “project an order of reason onto the world and force it to conform to a graphic rationale, a cultural grid, a conceptual geometry.”\textsuperscript{38} Maps are convenient (re)presentations of human experiences upon the physical world. Geographer Alan MacEachren stated, that “When we build these abstract representations ... we are not revealing knowledge as much as we are creating it.”\textsuperscript{39} The simplified elegance of T-O maps demonstrates the geographical desire of medieval cartographers to illustrate the unified harmony of a world under the watchful and benevolent gaze of their Christian God.\textsuperscript{40} There was also a concern to fill in blank spaces in the fear that they would appear ignorant if they did not.\textsuperscript{41}

The surviving medieval maps are either manuscript illustrations or altarpieces,\textsuperscript{42} locating the glory of God’s work in everything and everywhere. A large altar map, such as the Hereford map illustrates how the Bible fitted onto a medieval map. It condenses aspects of medieval history, concepts and imaginings and set them all inside the same frame. These maps were instructive, even for those who could not read. They included stories from the Bible and events from the Crusades, along with the feats of Alexander the Great, monstrous races, mythical

\textsuperscript{36} The O formed by the Ocean Sea acted as a shield, such as Achilles shield described by Homer. The T was highly symbolic, representing such things as the wooden cross, the tree of life. Olsson, G. 2007: 58.

\textsuperscript{37} The tripartite division of the world is explained in the Bible as the expulsion of Ham and his son, Canaan, to Africa as a consequence of Ham witnessing Noah’s state of drunkenness and undress. When Ham told his brothers, they walked backwards and covered their father. Shem and Japeth were rewarded with Asia and Europe respectively, while Ham and his sons were banished to Africa. Bible 1952 (Genesis 9: 18-27).

\textsuperscript{38} Jacob, C. 2006: 2.

\textsuperscript{39} MacEachren, A. 1995: v.

\textsuperscript{40} Tomasz, S. 1998: 3.

\textsuperscript{41} Tyner, J. 1987: 458.

events and beasts (illus. 17). Time and space were condensed onto a one
dimensional space which existed in the present. Because spiritual and physical
destinations were included on the same map, historian Evelyn Edson suggested
that T-O maps were for contemplation rather than travelogues. Even so,
subsequent traveller’s tales were repositioning the world, changing boundaries,
realigning territorial mass and re-centering the world’s navel away from
Jerusalem. It was the medieval cartographer’s role to accommodate the new
knowledge along with the expected. As geographer Gunnar Olsson noted, the
medieval cartographer had to make the “incredible credible by turning the
invisible visible.” The cartographers of the Hereford and Catalan maps did just
that (illus. 17; 18).

The sacred east was typically orientated at the top, where cardinal North sits in
current cartography. This meant that heaven and paradise were on the eastern
horizon. Higgins stated that for medieval Europe, the gap between
Constantinople and the Garden of Eden was “a kaleidoscopic theatre filled with
the most remarkable props and scenes of wonder and terror.” On the one hand,
Shem had travelled to the east. The Garden of Eden was located in the east.
Jesus returned from the east. Reportedly, St Thomas died in the east after
converting thousands to Christianity and the powerful king Prester John
was also thought to live in the east. While on the other hand, bloodthirsty
infidels were arriving from the east attacking pilgrims and sacking Christian

43 Tooley, R. 1949.
44 T-O maps did attempt to incorporate this shift in knowledge. See discussion and maps in
incorporates information from Marco Polo’s travels along the Silk Road (illus. 18). Note the
kingdom of Gog and Magog, Alexander’s gate and the black angels sounding the trumpets of
doom.
46 Gillies, J. 1996: 28. The maps orientation was repositioned after the magnetic compass came
into wide use.
47 Higgins, I. 1997: 3.
48 In c.1162 a letter arrived in Europe purported to be from Prester John. At the time the
enthusiasm for the Crusades was flagging and the Moslem army was gaining the upper hand. Later
the letter was declared a forgery. De Rachewiltz, I. 1971: 33-40. See also: Beckingham, C. and
Hamilton, B. 1996; Silverberg, R. 1996; Ullendorf, E. and Beckingham, C. 1982; Tomasch, S. and
Gilles, J. 1998. As Asia became better known Prester John’s whereabouts also manifested in the
vastness of unknown Africa.
towns. Gog and Magog\(^49\) and The Antichrist lived in the east, as did the Ten Lost Tribes of Israel, not to mention numerous abominations, cannibals and the performers of unspeakable sexual acts.\(^50\)

The variations and repetitions of the Gog and Magog stories and their shifting associations reflect the contradictory and ambiguous representation of the east in medieval thinking. Historian Peter Bietenholz explained that by throwing together different combinations of characters, such as Gog and Magog, from different times illustrate the medieval need to identify and explain events, even if this necessitated fusing mythical with historical characters.\(^51\) Historian Scott Westrem argues that Gog and Magog were the medieval "bogeymen" fitting in with various Christian agendas.\(^52\) For example, Bietenholz notes that they are at times associated with Prester John, a Christian king believed to live in the east. However, he is never tarnished by their immoral reputation.\(^53\) Westrem also noted that a growing medieval awareness of the Islamic tale of Gog and Magog stabilized their kingdom on the north-eastern rim of later medieval maps, such as shown in the Catalan map by Abraham Cresques (illus. 18). A constant in all the versions of Gog and Magog is Alexander the Great. He banished Gog and Magog, the Ten Lost Tribes of Israel, The Antichrist and his hordes to a mountainous pass. Here Alexander built an iron gate to prevent their escape until the coming of Armageddon.\(^54\) The location of this gated-mountain pass shifted according to the writer\(^55\) with the Caucuses Mountains as the common designation. However, historian Andrew Runni Anderson related a ninth century Islamic tale that has Alexander building the Iron Gate specifically in Tibet.\(^56\) The

\(^{49}\) The biblical story found in the *Bible*, 1952 (Revelations 20: 6-10).

\(^{50}\) For discussion on the history and myth of the Ten Lost Tribes of Israel see Parfitt, T. 2002.


\(^{54}\) Briefly the biblical apocalypse tale stated that Gog and Magog will break out and after wreaking havoc they will be destroyed by a heavenly host. However, the wheel continues to turn eventually bringing Antichrist, whose short rule will be cut when Christ descends from Heaven. Cohn, N. 1957: 17. See also Bietenholz, P. 1994: 118-145.

\(^{55}\) Andrew Runni Anderson, an acclaimed authority on Gog and Magog, summarized these locations. See Anderson, A. 1932.

\(^{56}\) Anderson is referring to Islamic scholar, Tabari (839-923 CE), who in interpreting a passage in the *Koran* locates Alexander's gate in Tibet. Anderson, A. 1932: 97.
association of Gog and Magog with Tibet remained in European imaginings into the twentieth century.  

The fragility of world order in the medieval world is evidenced in the local proximity of damnation (The Antichrist and his hordes) to lost paradise (the Garden of Eden). Both were located on the eastern horizon. They sat on the edge of the civilized world (illus. 17; 18). While Thomas More popularized the concept of Utopia in 1516, medieval imaginings proffered a pre-cursor to his Utopian musings. Utopia lay on the horizon, that gap between the seen and the unseen, the known and the unknown. Medieval Utopia was constructed on regaining lost paradise, the world of innocence and abundance. Paradise was imagined and mapped but inevitably, paradise remained distant and unreachable. Utopia became the dream of starting out again and terra incognita—blank spaces—the backdrop for these dreams. In the twentieth century, Tibet represented the same-styled blank backdrop for James Hilton’s Utopian novel, Lost Horizon. Utopias are imagined according to preconception and desires. 

57 Gog and Magog were associated with both Germanic and Semitic progeny. Bietenholz, P. 1994: 127. For example, some writers continued to believe that Moses descendants live in Tibet. Parfitt, T. 2002: 129. The Hungarian linguist, Alexander Csoma de Koros (c.1787-1842) pursued Tibetan language in the hope that he might find the origin of the Hungarian race, somewhere on the Tibetan plateau. An official Hungarian biography stated the following "perhaps hoping to find new sources about the history of ancient Hungarians in the Tibetan literature that was an absolute terra incognita at that time, unable to continue his journey to Central Asia [he] stayed in Leh and began to learn Tibetan with the help of Persian as an intermediate language." Anon. “The life of Alexander Csoma de Körös.” Nicholas Roerich was another that kept the idea that Tibetans were descendants from Europe, in particular the Goths. Anon. “Black Bon Po Rites.” 1928. Anon “The life of ....” 2009. Similarly, Heinrich Himmler sponsored an expedition to Tibet to find the origins of the Aryan race in the lofty spiritual Himalayan Mountains. Hale, C. 2003.  


59 Olsson noted that Isidore was aware of this dilemma when he positioned paradise to the Far East, a point of no place (eu-topos) but a place of happiness (eu-topos). At the same time he walled this far-off paradise against fortune seekers. Olsson, G. 2007: 58.  


61 It is interesting to note that Thomas More’s Utopia copied the travel tales of the day by including maps and a foreign language. Utopia was an ideal state juxtaposed to the reality of the non-ideal Renaissance Europe. Sherman, W. 2002: 32-33. Hilton’s Shangri-La followed the same travel-story format. Today, the Tibetan Buddhist message of peace, wisdom and compass is seen by a number of westerners as a Utopian bridge to a better world. Historically there have been many flirtations with establishing a Utopian settlement. See Kumar, K. 1991.  

62 Marin noted the paradox of Utopias. On the one hand “a free play of imagination in its indefinite expansion measured only by the desire, itself infinite” but on the other, to ensure harmony rigorous coding and legislation was necessary. Marin, L. 1993: 403-404.
beckoned to some travellers in the same way as Lhasa was to become a magnet for late nineteenth and early twentieth century explorers.

Early observations of Tibetans: Polo, Mandeville and Nieuhoff
The accounts of the following three travellers are stories of early glimpses of Tibetans and their culture. Marco Polo began his journey to China with his father and uncle in 1271. He returned to Italy twenty-four years later and was to record his story, Il Milione in 1298-99. John Mandeville claims he left England in 1322 and returned thirty years later. He released his manuscript, titled The Voyage and Travels of Sir John Mandeville circa 1356. Both manuscripts were popular and a number of different copies survive today. Historian John Larner stated that Polo enjoyed contemporary success and was translated into Latin, French, Franco-Italian, Tuscan, Venetian and probably German. Mandeville’s manuscript was also popular and translated into French, Czech, Dutch, English, German, Italian, Spanish, Latin, Danish and Irish. Their popularity highlights their appeal to western imaginings of the Other. The third traveller, Johan Nieuhoff was acting secretary for the first embassy of the Dutch East-India Company to the Chinese Court in 1655. He kept, and later published, a diary of this journey, which included 150 illustrations. I will be discussing in particular one Nieuhoff illustration of Tibetans after discussing Polo and Mandeville’s tales of Tibetans.

63 Nebenzahl noted that until the advent of the printing press (1477) only manuscript copies of Polo’s tales circulated, restricting access to the educated ranks. Nebenzahl, K. 2004: 38.
64 Questions continue as to whether either of these men actually travelled to China. Larner suggest that many of the anomalies found in Polo may be the result of copyists or translators. Larner, J. 2001: 177. In contrast to this, Frances Wood’s research led her to suggest that Polo collected all his travel tales along Black Sea trading posts and in Constantinople. Wood, F. 1995: 150. Mandeville is shrouded in mystery, who was he and where did he travel? There is no definite date for Mandeville, or an author. Research into Mandeville’s identity over the years has ostensibly ruled out that an Englishman named John Mandeville existed. The original manuscripts were in French, and it is generally believed that whoever wrote it was French and had access to a comprehensive Northern European ecclesiastical library. Seymour, M. 1993. Tzanaki, R. 2003.
65 Larner, J. 2001: 44.
Historian Zweder Von Martels noted the intricate relationship between observation and expectations. He wrote that “our reality is built up out of fiction.”

Throughout history, there has been a thirst for tales of adventure. Travellers such as Polo and Mandeville began their journeys with a lens already prejudiced by their preconceptions. These writers were aware that their audiences wanted to be entertained by the new, but they still needed the reassurance that the world ‘out there’ conformed to their expectations.

Historian Rudolf Wittkower argued that Mandeville was extremely popular because he played to his medieval ecclesiastic and aristocratic audience expectations, while Polo was not as constrained. Mandeville presented the cosmological and physical medieval T-O map in words. His journey was a pilgrimage across the known world, travelling to Holy Sites, passing by strange beings and other curiosities. In contrast, Polo’s Venetian-born trade focus habituated his experiences, which did not always fit medieval expectations.

Audiences wanted to believe, no matter how incredible the stories, because after all, it confirmed their own perceptions of the uncivilized Other. Historian Tudor Parfitt considered the creation of myth as a western mechanism for understanding the Other. The genesis of myth-making and subsequently, Tibet-making incorporated imaginings, fears and expectations fused with travellers’ observations.

How do travellers interpret something they have never seen before? Especially when the travellers’ language did not have readily available textual concepts for the new experiences they were witnessing. In travelling to foreign lands, the

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68 Higgins is of the opinion that Mandeville was aware of maps other than the Christian T-O. He was also aware that the world was a sphere. Higgins, I. 1997.
69 Before setting out travelers would have accessed whatever information was available. Or, perhaps it was the stories that initially inspired them. Brauen, M. 2004: 12.
71 Gosman considers that rather than a hoax, Mandeville was undertaking the scientific process of gathering and summarizing all available known facts. Furthermore, his tales were seen as trustworthy because they conformed to public opinion, Polo’s did not. Gosman, M. 1989: 373.
73 Gosman, M. 1994: 81. It is reputed that on his death bed he was asked to repent his stories, he replied that he had only told half of what he had to tell.
travelling-self is decentred and exposed. Historian Mary Campbell suggested that to interpret the foreign, the traveller applies a scale of familiarity.\textsuperscript{75} She noted how Polo, who reached the Chinese court in 1275, overcame this difficulty by relying on similitude of known objects to describe what he had no words for. With the intention of telling the truth, his descriptions represented an exotic truth, which bore witness to his alienating experiences.\textsuperscript{76} For example, Wittkower discussed how Polo used his audience's knowledge of a dragon to explain a crocodile and the knowledge of a unicorn to explain a rhinoceros.\textsuperscript{77} Subsequent re-telling serves to normalize the alien by tabulating its characteristics and thereby negotiating the tension between fact and fiction.

It was common medieval practice to borrow, rewrite and repeat earlier authors' tales. By c.440 BCE, when Herodotus wrote his history, the topical accents of the Other had already been defined as contrary and uncivilized. Stories of cannibalism, sexual depravity, outrageous wealth and hominid deformities, such as a race of hermaphrodites confirmed difference (illus.19). Both Mandeville and Polo used such stories and conceivably Herodotus had borrowed them from writers before him.\textsuperscript{78} For example, almost 1,000 years after Herodotus, John Mandeville borrowed the gold-digging ant story. Herodotus had written, "Northward of the rest of India... There are found in this sandy desert, ants not so big as dogs but bigger than foxes; ... the sand that they carry forth from the holes is full of gold." Mandeville changed the location from northward of India to Taprobane (Sri Lanka), and ants to pismires (dogs).\textsuperscript{80} Perhaps Mandeville thought these changes were in keeping with contemporary medieval thought of what lay to the north and south of India.

\textsuperscript{75} Fehling, D. 1994: 10.
\textsuperscript{76} Campbell, M. 1988: 3.
\textsuperscript{77} Wittkower, R. 1987.
\textsuperscript{78} Fehling, D. 1994: 10, 14. Some stories were repeated as moral/ethical instructions or warnings against certain behaviours such as those practiced by the uncivilized world over there. Fehling, D. 1994: 8-9.
\textsuperscript{79} Herodotus 1971: Book iii, 102, 129, 131. Herodotus' northward of India is conceivably Tibet, which was known during his time, see footnote 10 in this chapter.
\textsuperscript{80} Mandeville, J. 1964: 198-199.
In addition to authors borrowing from earlier tales, copyists of manuscripts also appear to have added embellishments or made corrections. Such as, the illustrator of the 1481 version of Mandeville’s voyages who appears to be aware of Herodotus’ tales and attempted to harmonize Mandeville’s story with Herodotus by producing a woodcut, which illustrates both ants and the dog-like *pismires* (illus. 20).\(^1\) Wittkower confirms that medieval illustrators occasionally interpreted texts according to their own knowledge and imaginings independent of the text.\(^2\) Early travellers’ stories of gold encouraged Columbus to set a western course in the belief he would find Cathay and the gold.\(^3\) The early twentieth century British Mission to Tibet was also keen to discover where the gold was and how much.\(^4\) Novelist Lobsang Rampa [aka Cyril Henry Hoskin] continued this myth in his popular novel, *The Third Eye* (1956). He wrote that “There are hundreds of tons of gold in Tibet, we regard it as sacred metal.”\(^5\) The prospect of discovering gold was a strong incentive to face the unknown.\(^6\) Tibet’s isolation nurtured the fusing of myths, fact and fiction.

The apparent inaccuracies or oversights found in both Polo and Mandeville’s accounts have raised questions as to whether the authors ever actually visited the Far East. Campbell warned that while early travellers’ facts appear to be exotic truths, they are also carriers of knowledge.\(^7\) An example of this is the following excerpt from Polo’s diary featuring Tibetan Buddhists at the royal court of the Great Khan. This tale reveals the dilemma of contextualizing historical texts, especially by later historians. Polo introduced the Tibetans as “wise

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\(^1\) Mandeville, J. 1964: 209.


\(^3\) Higgins, I. 1997: 2. Cathay was the medieval name for China.

\(^4\) In 1775, the Panchen Lama had presented British representative Warren Hastings with some gold dust and nuggets. In 1867 the British sent one of their clandestine cartographers, ‘the pundit’ to the gold mining region of Tibet. Hopkirk, P. 1995: 37-41. Early in the twentieth century the Rothschild’s were rumoured to be interested in establishing gold mines in Tibet. McKay, A. 1997: 158. The 1903/04 Younghusband-led British Mission, which crossed the Himalayas into Tibet, had instructions to search for signs of gold. Brauen, M. 2004: 18. Even after this in 1930s, Gordon B. Enders who had become an adviser to the Panchen Lama on westernization was traveling America describing “the Grand Lama’s plans to make use of the gold found in great quantities in Tibet.” Anon. “To tell of Tibetan customs.” 1937.

\(^5\) Lobsang R. 1956.


\(^7\) Campbell, M. 1988: 4.
astrologers and enchanters” because they have the ability to scatter the bad weather above the palace, while it continues to rage in the nearby countryside. Polo continued,

There are two races of men [Tibetans and Kashmiris] who practice idolatry. They know more of diabolic arts and enchantments than any other men. They do what they do by the art of the Devil; but they make others believe that they do it with great holiness and by the work of God. For this reason they go about filthy and begrimed with no regard for their own decency or for those who behold them. These men have a peculiar custom of which I will tell you. When a man is condemned to die and is put to death by the authorities, they take his body and cook and eat it. But, if anyone dies a natural death, they would never think of eating him.88

Polo’s report on the cannibalizing of a condemned man and not the one that died a natural death looks to be exotic truth. However, some aspects of his observation have relevance to Tibetan Buddhist practices. The tantric object used in weather changing rituals is a trumpet-like instrument, made from a human thigh-bone (illus. 21a-c).89 Tibetan Buddhist tantric practitioners consider the trumpet, known as rkang gling in Tibetan, to have greater powers if it is made from a condemned man. A trumpet made from a man who died of natural causes has only limited ritual power. According to Tibetan Buddhist art researcher Robert Beer, the rkang gling’s consecration involves the ritual eating of flesh from the hapless thigh-bone donor.90 Polo also claimed that these same monks levitated cups of wine over ten paces. He assured the reader “those who are skilled in necromancy will confirm that it is perfectly feasible.”91 Here Polo is contrasting the civilized practice of levitating (however improbable) against the barbarous practice of cannibalism.

To construct authenticity, Polo used literary devices to assimilate difference and engage the reader, such as the rhetorical authoritative eyewitness assertion. He

90 Beer, R. 1999: 259. The Chod (cutting through the ego) practitioner cuts through their attachment to the body by offering their body to the demons as food. They usually meditate in cemeteries at night with the rkang gling and Chod drum. While every Tibetan Buddhist sect has Chod practitioners, they are particularly associated with the Kagyupa. See Lin, Y. 2001.
91 Polo, M. 1982: 110.
also appealed to assumed collective European knowledge, as in the levitating illustration. Other examples drawn from Polo included, “let me tell you of a strange thing which I had forgotten” or “those who will confirm.”92 Although these devices may have been fashionable embellishments added by Polo’s ghostwriter, Rustichello, a romance writer “of some repute,”93 they do represent the authorizing textual methods of the day.94 Historian Martin Gosman noted that Polo’s travel tales were formulaic and fitted the historiographic and epic medieval texts, at the same time Polo appealed to and confirmed the superiority of Europeans over the Other by affirming their difference.

Three generations later, in c.1360, John Mandeville wrote his travel story, in which he mentions a country called Rybothe [Tibet] some “ten journeys throughout the land of the great Chan.” Here people pay the same reverence to Lobassy [Dalai Lama] “as men do here to the Pope of Rome.”95 In this same land, Mandeville speaks of a custom where the son gives his deceased father what is today known as a sky burial, in which, the corpse is cut up and fed to the birds.96 According to Mandeville, the son takes his dead father’s head home and after sharing small morsels of the skull’s flesh with his closest friends, he makes a skull-cup (ills. 22). Mandeville stated, “And of the brain pan, he letteth make a cup, and thereof drinketh he and his other friends also, with great devotion, in remembrance of the holy man, that the angels of God [birds] have eaten.”97 The skull-cup and the thigh-bone trumpet were not the only human bone objects used in the practice of Tibetan Buddhism. The fierce protectors of Tibetan Buddhist dharma (law) wear and/or use accessories made from human bone.

93 Rustichello and Polo were both prisoners of war during 1298-99. Polo, M. 1982: 16-17.
95 Mandeville, J. 1964: 156. Higgins stated that the Tibetan stories are borrowed directly from Friar Odoric of Pordenone’s Relatio (1330). Higgins, I. 1997: 9. Also at Mandeville’s hand were copies of Polo’s travels and Friar William of Rubruck, the later also discusses gold and skull cups. Komroff, M. 1928: 213, 117. For Odoric’s text on Tibet see Ashton, J. 1887: 255-256; and Komroff, M. 1928: 244-45. See Appendix A.3 for a time line of travel dates for the adventurers under discussion.
Continuing today, certain Tibetan Buddhist rituals also require the same human bone accessories as the deities (illus. 23a-f; 24a-b).  

However, improbable Polo’s and Mandeville’s tales may seem to the twentieth century reader, their influence on the medieval mind and beyond was lasting.  

Their travels authored a route, which closed soon after, making them authorities. By the mid 1300s, the nearby presence of Tamerlane’s Moslem armies was making travel difficult. In addition, the collapse of the Yuan [Khan] dynasty and the rise of the Ming dynasty closed European access to the east.  

A European maritime route was only established, more than a century later, after the discoveries of Christopher Columbus proved viable passages eastward in 1492. Historian Valerie Flint documented that Columbus owned both a Latin version of the Travels of Polo and a lightly annotated copy of the Geography by Ptolemy. She also noted that Columbus’s writings suggest he was familiar with John Mandeville’s travels.  

The next popularized glimpses of Tibetans under discussion appear in the chinoiserie craze and were drawn by Dutchman Johann Nieuhoff. This decorative movement was popular in Europe from the early seventeenth century and peaked in the mid-to-late eighteenth century. To meet the chinoiserie appetite for imagery, European publishers borrowed illustrations from previously published material, reworking them into design templates. One such borrowed

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98 For detailed discussions on specific human bone accessories or attributes see Beer, R. 1999: 263-267 (skull cups); 259-261 (thigh-bone trumpet); 258-259 (skull-drum); 311-336 (assorted wrathful offerings of human body parts, blood, limbs etc).  
99 For example, two hundred years later the two renowned seventeenth century cartographers, Ortelius and Mercator, acknowledged their debt to Mandeville. Milton, G. 2002: 197.  
100 Honour stated that “Sir John Mandeville enjoyed the good luck which so often attends the barefaced mountebank. No sooner had he imposed his fiction on the public than the doors of the Far East began to close against the European who was soon excluded altogether from China.” Because of this, Mandeville was an authority for another two hundred years. Honour, H. 1973: 15 (Honour emphasis).  
102 Flint, V. 1994: 96. Furthermore, Flint noted that Columbus and his brother were trained cartographers and would have been aware of many different maps.  
104 Honour, H. 1973: 1. Myer stated that chinoiserie was borne on half knowledge and half imagination. Its popularity waned with the increase of stories from first hand experience. Myer, P. 1961: 209.
illustration was a group of four Tibetan lamas drawn by Nieuhoff in 1655 (illus. 25). Although he did not visit Tibet, Tibetan lamas were resident in Peking during his visit. Nieuhoff was acting secretary to the first embassy of the Dutch East-India Company to visit the Chinese court. The Dutch were attempting to negotiate a trade concession with China. Nieuhoff later published his illustrated diary. Like Polo and Mandeville, his book was influential because few Europeans had opportunities to travel so far or the knowledge to contradict him. 105

The Nieuhoff Tibetan lama drawing was re-worked into a late 1600 Chinoiserie template design for lacquer work and embroidery by architect and engraver Paul Decker the Elder (illus. 26). The template is suited to a large decorative plate or an embellishment on lacquered furniture. The design harmonizes eight figures into a watery backdrop. The figures appear on insubstantial floating islands, while the outer rim design of astrological symbols is framed with I Ching notations and Chinese characters. Under a tree in the centre of the design stands a Chinese couple with an attendant holding a parasol above them. They look left upon two performing men, while to their right is a group of three men. The man closest to them is lying down with a large block around his neck. Two other men stand together and appear uninterested in the surrounding events. The two men on the left and the three on the right are figures taken from Nieuhoff. The performing men and the man with the block around his neck are from an illustration of beggars performing stunts (illus. 27). 106 Whereas, the two uninterested men are borrowed from Nieuhoff’s illustration of the four Tibetan lamas (illus. 25), engraver Decker reduced and realigned the Nieuhoff’s lama group to create a pleasing design within the oval shape.


106 Nieuhoff wrote that “There is another sort of beggars here, who set fire to a combustible kind of stuff upon their heads,” while Jarry in her book on Chinoiserie, noted that Nieuhoff’s beggars are monks praying. Nieuhoff, J. 1673: 163. Jarry, M. 1981: 233, pl.250, pp.234.
Europeans had difficulty in observing, writing and illustrating sameness and difference between them and the exotic Other. This western struggle is demonstrated in Jesuit Athanasius Kircher’s influential book, *China Illustrata.* He reproduced a Chinese illustration of *La Cybele* and a western facsimile (illus. 28a-b). The western illustrator could not copy the Chinese original without adding ships and a headland to give a western-style perspective. The illustrator also changed the harmony and balance of the Chinese illustration to fit western stereotyping, such as the menacing sharp points, the exotic flaming headdress—even the waves seem ominous.

Two further illustrations from Kircher (illus. 28c-d) demonstrate the way in which the representational process can misrepresent or transform indigenous imagery. These illustrations were produced from the descriptions given by Jesuit Johann Grueber, who along with fellow Jesuit Albert D’Orville visited Lhasa in 1661. The interest in these illustrations concerns the western difficulty in interpreting the exotic. While the drawings were reliant on Grueber’s notes, verbal accounts and perhaps sketches, the isolated pedestal arrangement of each sculptural deity is more reminiscent of twenty-first century art exhibition treatment than representative of indigenous or Tibetan altars. Nor were the Grueber idols-on-pedestal arrangements reminiscent of any contemporary European ‘wonder museums’ such as Kircher’s who was responsible for publishing the story and images (illus. 29).

Returning to Nieuhoff’s group of four monks (illus. 25) where he identified the party of four men as *Ambassador of Lammas.* He wrote,

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107 Kircher is portrayed by historian Timothy Billings as an eccentric celebrity-polyhistor of the Jesuit world. Kircher knew no Chinese, but he published an “Illustrated curiosities from the Orient.” He summarized the Kircher’s book as a “spectacle-filled compendium ... a project of self-illustration—in this the providential saga of carrying the gospel into Asia, its Jesuit heroes, and what they found there.” Billings, T. 2004: 2-4.

108 The Chinese goddess is *Kuan Yin.* Kircher uses the term *Pussa,* which in English is translated to *Cybele,* the Roman fertile earth goddess.

109 Kircher used Grueber’s notes and conversations to put together this travel account.

110 There is a possibility that Grueber had made sketches. In addition, Grueber died in 1680, more than ten years after Kircher first published Grueber’s journal.
The Ambassadors of the *Lammas* was clothed in yellow; his hat much like the cardinals, with broad brims; at his side hung a crucifix, which these Church-men commonly carry with them, by which they sat their devotions after the manner of the *Roman Catholics*. Those of the *Lammas* are a sort of religious people, who have lived a long time in China; but the last Emperor of *China*, before the Tartars conquered it, had banished them from his country, from whence they went and settled themselves in Tartary, where they had the free exercise of their religion. Now these banished people had sent this ambassador to the *Great Chan*, with the request that they might be able to return and exercise their devotions as formerly. What success he had in his business I could not learn, but his reception at the Emperor’s court was very friendly and civil.\textsuperscript{111}

To our twenty-first century eyes the costumes and general demeanour of the lamas drawn by Nieuhoff do not tally with what we considered typical Tibetan Buddhist dress. The lama dress illustrated by Nieuhoff is reminiscent of travelling European missionaries, in broad brimmed hats, flowing robes and telling their large rosary beads.\textsuperscript{112} Perhaps, the similarities are due to the fact that Nieuhoff did not recognize difference between Europeans and the elite Chinese.\textsuperscript{113} Historian Peter Burke suggested that such obvious (mis)-constructed illustrations were an attempt to assimilate the unknown with the known.\textsuperscript{114} The exotic is made intelligible, in the same way that Polo and Mandeville both used similitude to authorize their own gaze. Nieuhoff’s gaze may have also been distracted by the fact that the European priests were adopting native Chinese dress (illus. 30a-
c). Nieuhoff’s image of Tibetan lamas is in stark contrast to Polo’s Tibetan priests described by him to be dressed in dirty rags and careless of personal grooming.

In a 2004 publication critiquing western illusions of Tibet, ethnologist Martin Brauen drew on an engraving from Bernard Picart’s book *Ceremonies et Coutumes Religieuses de tous les Peuples du Monde Representées* published in seven volumes from 1723 to 1743 (illus. 31a). Brauen employed a similar argument to mine about the stereotypes when he introduced the Picart engraving of Tibetan Buddhist lamas. The Brauen caption for Picart’s illustration of Tibetan monks reads,

The partly incomprehensible unknown that the missionaries encountered in Tibet had to be translated into the familiar. They compared Tibetan Buddhism with Catholicism and thought they found traces of the Christian religion in it. Among other things, they were of the opinion that the clothing of the Apostles in old paintings was not dissimilar to that of the lamas. This overlooked two points: that the depiction of both the Apostles’ clothing and the lamas’ arose from the artists’ imagination. This is confirmed, for example, by the depiction of lamas.

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115 A chinoiserie tapestry made by the Royal de Beavais factory in early eighteenth century features the Jesuit mathematician Johann Schall von Bell, who looks more like a Chinese than he does European (illus. 30a). Schall wears a Chinese styled imperial silk gown with a traditional Chinese scholar’s hat. Schall’s efforts to reform the Chinese calendar earned him a position as a confidant to the young Emperor and a rank equal to the Emperor’s chief councillors, that of First Order Mandarín. He wears this insignia in the tapestry. Kircher, A. 1987: 104. Severin, T. 1976: 76. Markley, R. 2006: 121. The Jesuit adoption of Imperial Chinese dress at court irritated powerful European Church officials and was one reason given for the Jesuit suppression (1750-1773). The Jesuits were seen to be too accommodating, allowing converts to keep rituals that did not conflict with Christian practices, such as ancestor worship. Another example of compromise was painting shoes on the crucified figure of Christ. Severin, T. 1976: 91. While the Jesuit Society condoned a Chinese-style of dress, the adoption of silk gowns with wide sleeves, growing their hair and beards was a deliberate move, an attempt to appear as equals at the Chinese court. Hsia, F. 2004: 395.

116 Picart (1673-1733) also known as Picard. There is little published on Picart, however, that is to be rectified with the forthcoming publication of *Bernard Picart and the First Global Vision of Religion* edited by Lynn Hunt, Margaret Jacob and Wijnand Mijnhardt. Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, available in 2010.

117 Picart died ten years before all the volumes were published. He produced 250 etchings to accompany a text prepared by Jean Frederic Bernard, a fellow French compatriot who was also living in self-exile in Amsterdam.

118 Brauen, M. 2004: 12 (Brauen emphasis).
Picart published his seven volumes on the religious customs of the world almost eighty years after Nieuhoff had visited China.\textsuperscript{119} Picart did not travel to the exotic locations he described and illustrated, rather he freely borrowed illustrations from those that had, such as Nieuhoff.\textsuperscript{120} Looking at the earlier Nieuhoff image and the later Picart image (illus. 31a-b) the imitation is obvious. Four of the figures and the background are almost identical. The difference is that Picart has extended the image on the left by adding two more figures. He borrowed these two figures from another Nieuhoff illustration titled \textit{Priest and Monks} (illus. 32a).\textsuperscript{121} Picart borrowed a further three images from the same Nieuhoff \textit{Priests and Monks} illustration and mounts them as separate illustrations. He referred to these as a Chinese begging friar, a black friar,\textsuperscript{122} and a poor devotee with an “artfully formed” sugar loaf head (illus. 32b-d). For the fourth drawing, \textit{Chinese Friars} (illus. 32e), Picart returned to the Nieuhoff illustration of the four Tibetan lamas (illus. 31b). Here is another case of repetition, but this time Picart used the Tibetan images drawn by Nieuhoff to illustrate Chinese and perpetuate the (mis)representations already made.

As with textual commentaries, the importance of illustrations and their repeated reproduction cannot be overestimated. Art historian Mary Anne Staniszewski wrote, “The most powerful and obvious \textit{truths} within cultures are often the things that are not said and not directly acknowledged.”\textsuperscript{123} Book plates and illustrations are equally silent messages. The depiction of the Other and the employment of images are not necessarily innocent representations or

\textsuperscript{119} Nieuhoff was in China from 1655-1657.

\textsuperscript{120} Baskind wrote that when Picart was putting together his book on religious customs, especially those distant, such as the Chinese, Picart relied on “observations from afar and even hearsay.” Baskind, S. 2007: 44. He also appear to have read widely, for example he repeats Grueber's story printed in Kircher on the importance of the Grand Lama's urine and excreta as relics to be worn around the necks of those so blessed to have acquired such sacred objects. Kircher, A. 1987: 67.

\textsuperscript{121} Nieuhoff, J. 1673: 190.

\textsuperscript{122} A Black Friar belonged to the Dominican Order, identified by their black robes. Friars, while belonging to an Order, were not attached to a specific community. They were therefore free to individually roam. It is possible that a Black Friar was present in China. It should be remembered that Picart is not representing his own observations of China. Although, there is a possibility that Picart was referring to Tibetan Black Friars, the Tibetan Buddhist Kagyupa sect. Picart also mislabelled the sugar loaf head illustration. In the Nieuhoff illustration the sugar loaf is a hat.

\textsuperscript{123} Staniszewski, M. 1995: 1 (Staniszewski emphasis).
misrepresentation of the Other. Western consideration and/or interests may sometimes collapse the representation of the other into an ambiguous statement which can be read in the light of contemporary western politics rather than as solely a statement on the Other.

Could both the Nieuhoff and Picart drawings be early Protestant propaganda tools against Catholicism? Was Nieuhoff intentionally drawing a comparison between the heathen idolaters [Tibetan Buddhists] and Catholicism? Perhaps. Nieuhoff as official secretary to a Protestant Dutch embassy had every reason to feel thwarted by the Catholics. The Jesuits were established familiaris at the Emperor’s court and held privileged positions. Jesuit Johann Schall von Bell was appointed the Dutch embassy’s interpreter (illus. 30a). However, he was not only a Catholic but also a Portuguese national and the Portuguese were fierce trading competitors of the Dutch.124 The Dutch embassy spent almost ten thousand pounds of which more than half was in bribes. To counter this Jesuits were also spreading money and propaganda around the Chinese Court to sabotage the Dutch efforts.125 Historian Robert Markley commented that trade disappointment was not a familiar situation for the Dutch.126 Did Nieuhoff take out his frustrations in visual and textual allusions of the similarities between the Jesuits and the devil-worshipping Tibetan Buddhists?

What about Picart? He also had reasons to either perpetuate Nieuhoff’s subtlety, if he was aware of it, or propagate the same intimate relationship of Tibetan idolaters to Roman Catholic priests. While Picart was French by birth, he converted to Calvinism in a predominantly Catholic France.127 In 1696, Picart and his family fled to Holland to avoid persecution.128 They returned to Paris two years later, but after his wife died in 1708, Picart returned to Holland and eventually settled permanently in Amsterdam. He was also a member of a secret

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125 Kops, H. 2002: 554.
126 This Nieuhoff estimate was reported in Markley, R. 2000: 78.
127 Picart had converted to Protestantism after developing an intellectual curiosity into paganism and philosophy, particularly Descartes. Jacob, M. 1981: 164.
128 Jacob, M. 1981: 44.
society for French Protestant refugees known as the Knights of Jubilation.\textsuperscript{129} Based in the Netherlands, this society had links with the British Radical Enlightenment movement and Freemasonry. They were also an anti-French organization.\textsuperscript{130} All the members of the society were active in the book trade, where Picart was regarded as the finest European engraver. Historian Margaret Jacob stated that Picart was “explicitly cynical about the evils of religious practice and graphically illustrated barbarous religious practices, with much emphasis on human sacrifice.”\textsuperscript{131} She argued that because of his enlightenment beliefs he deliberately used his illustrations to indoctrinate the absurdity of religion.\textsuperscript{132} As a persecuted French Protestant living in self-exile, he too had reason to portray the similarities of Tibetan Buddhists to Catholic Priests.\textsuperscript{133} 

Supporting this argument is the observation that other early commentators of Tibetan practices had also noted parallels with Catholicism, in particular dress, ritual, ecclesiastical furnishing and the privileging of text. Both Polo and Mandeville noted similarities. But it was not until 1661, when Jesuit missionaries Johann Grueber and Albert D’Orville, entered Lhasa that the similarities were fully appreciated. Grueber suggested that Tibetan Buddhism must have begun as an early type of Christianity and that its development had since been corrupted by the Devil.\textsuperscript{134} These apparent similarities reinforced the rumours that later generations of St Thomas’s converts or Prester John’s community were secluded

\textsuperscript{129} His official position in the Knights of Jubilation was “Dauber and Engraver of the Order.” Jacob, M. 1981: 269.
\textsuperscript{130} Jacob, M. 1981: 118-119, 144, 162.
\textsuperscript{131} Jacob, M. 1981: 247.
\textsuperscript{132} Jacob, M. 1981: 247. In an article on etchings of Amsterdam’s Jews, Samantha Baskind stated, she does not find enough evidence to support Jacob’s claim of Picart’s bias against religion. Baskind, S. 2007: 57.
\textsuperscript{133} Furthermore, the relationship of Catholicism to Tibetan Buddhism was institutionalized by the western invented term Lamaism for Tibetan Buddhism. Tsering Shakya wrote, “Protestant chauvinism chose the term to demonstrate the corrupt priestcraft [of the Tibetan’s] in a way similar to that in which European Protestants or Anglicans viewed Catholicism.” Shakya, T. 2001: 184. The parallels drawn by Protestants between the devil worshipping Tibetan Buddhists and Catholicism were characterizations made during the Enlightenment’s frustration with the superstition, sentiment and the obstructive nature of Pophis Rome. Vidmar, J. 2005: 260, 261, 268. The term Lamaism evolved from this characterization, an association which accompanied the British Mission into Tibet. The use of the term Lamaism continues. For discussion on this term, see Lopez Jr, D.S. 1996 and Lopez Jr, D.S. 1998: 15-45.
\textsuperscript{134} Kircher, A. 1676: 109. Grueber’s letters were edited by Kircher.
in sheltered mountainous valleys in Tibet. Grueber’s observations are unlikely to have influenced Nieuhoff’s diary entries because the latter was in China at the same time Grueber was in Lhasa. Furthermore, Kircher published Grueber’s observations in 1667, whereas the first print run of Nieuhoff’s was 1665.\textsuperscript{135} Nonetheless, the interpretative possibilities must remain open.

The Nieuhoff and Picart examples demonstrate how texts and illustrations are repeated over time providing impressions of the Other and reinforcing stereotypes of the exotic Other. The original stories drawn from western observation and experience are in themselves exotic truths, which have as much in common with myth as fact. When searching alien spaces the observer seeks the familiar. The process of recognizing the familiar is at the cost of the unfamiliar, resulting in exotic truths. Both the textual and the visual represent the observer’s personal account of the real. However, the authority of observations authenticated their stories until a time when they can be proved exotic truths. Importantly, all these distortions were happening outside of Tibet. The western gaze and the western imagination constructed Tibet. The Nieuhoff and Picart illustrations conformed to this western stereotyping, and this may have been further compromised by another story at play—the western-based relationship of Protestantism versus Catholicism. Tibet remained an unterritorialized and distant blank, but by the late nineteenth century stories of strange customs appeared in newspapers on both sides of the Atlantic.

\textsuperscript{135} Printing dates and editions are numerous for popular books during the 1600-1700s. There appears to be urgency to print translations and pirated copies of texts. Szczesniak, B. 1952: 388-392. Furthermore, I am beholden to translations and reprints of Nieuhoff’s text and must assume that they are fair facsimiles, a faith that Umberto Eco noted is not without danger. Eco, U. 2003. Markley pointed out that Nieuhoff had augmented his notes by borrowing from the journals of Jesuit Ricci, which were published in 1615 and widely available in Europe. Markley, R. 2000: 64, 86, fn.86.
Chapter Two · Tibet-making

Tibet as a News Story in America: Sample 1875-1885

Over the centuries western attitudes towards Asia has been ambivalent and often dependent on contemporary political and trade concerns. In 1853 an anonymous *New York Times* correspondent wrote that any Asian region

> Those areas not invaded by Europeans, and actually appropriated or in the course of appropriation (will cause the reader to form some idea) of the minuteness and worthlessness of all that is still aboriginally Asiatic.\(^{136}\)

Tibet was ‘unappropriated’ and remained so until the mid-twentieth century when China assumed governance. Tibet’s distant geography and harsh environment curbed western powers from appropriating Tibet. But this did not mean that the west was uninterested. On the contrary, Tibet held a fascination for the west and many tried vainly to enter. Increasingly the west ambiguously imagined Tibet either as the devil’s playground or as a spiritual utopia.

The American public had access to miscellaneous stories of Tibet through their daily newspapers, such as the *New York Times*.\(^ {137}\) During the late nineteenth century, American newspapers borrowed heavily from British publications.\(^ {138}\) The American papers provided an important mechanism for distributing information. Historian Henri-Jean Martin noted that unlike the French who desired to read about politics, the Americans preferred variety, ranging from sensationalized accounts of ‘bloody’ domestic dramas to instructive articles. Another historian Graeme Davison noted that early newspapers were important in shaping national

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\(^{136}\) Anon., “The Fate of Asia.” 1853 (the bracketing in the quote is Anon. emphasis). In the same year, American Commodore Matthew Perry had forced Japan to begin negotiations to open trade and Britain was forcing China to open its borders to trade. Almost all the Asian region was undergoing European domination. Tibet was one of the few regions yet to be pursued by western powers. The British began negotiating with China for access to Tibet in the late 1800s. This was after the Opium Wars had been completed. First Opium War (1839-1842), Second Opium War (1856-1860). By the turn of the twentieth century, the Japanese had “earned bemused respect” for their transition from feudal to a modern state, and China was struggling to maintain any positive image against the perception it was moribund. Christ, C. 2000: 675. A century earlier, the Jesuits preparedness to see similarities rather than difference in the Chinese had encouraged Benjamin Franklin to write positively on Confucius and later Thoreau wrote essays on Chinese philosophy and religion. Aldridge, A. 1993: 45.

\(^{137}\) In 1850 there was an estimated 240 daily newspapers with a circulation of 750,000. By 1910 the number of daily newspapers had increased to 2,340 with a daily circulation of 24,000,000. The *New York Times* was established as daily paper (except Sundays) in September 1851.

\(^{138}\) Aldridge, A. 1993: 8. Almost all the stories on Tibet had already been published in Britain, which suggests the production of similar knowledge for the general audience across continents.
attitudes and opinions. Furthermore, early news stories, particularly about reports on exotic locations such as Tibet, provided a ‘did you know’ levy or were simply page fillers. Rarely topical, these stories provided an opportunity to mediate the exotic Other and confirm western imaginings of Tibet.  

A sample of newspaper articles on Tibet appearing in the *New York Times* over a ten year period from 1875 to 1885 demonstrate some of the sources for American attitudes and imaginings towards Tibet, which subsequently influenced how Tibetan artefacts were later received. Reviewing this period also demonstrates the peripheral interest Americans had in Tibet at that time. Interestingly, of the almost dozen articles from this period, only one is focused on providing a general picture of Tibet—its geography, climate and customs. It is also only one of two articles that do not acknowledge a British source. The article has no title and began,

Several Russian travelers who wished to go through Tibet, and make themselves acquainted with its customs and manners, and who carried letters from high authorities in their own country, were recently turned back on the frontier. China, in whose confines Tibet is included, has long exercised imperial sway over the country, and been unwilling that outside barbarians should have access to it. Less is known generally about Tibet today [1880] than about any Eastern region, Corea excepted. It is a very peculiar country in nearly all respects.

The story is familiar and reflected the intrigues of the ‘Great Game,’ except that the nationality turned back from Tibet was Russian rather than British. The article acknowledged China’s sovereignty over Tibet and continued on to describe its terrain and climate, which is so dry that wood does not rot but breaks and the air so dry that long electric sparks fly between individuals wearing sheep-skin and conducting surfaces. Also mentioned is the value judgment concerning the Tibetan degradation of Buddhism, which the article refers to as Lamaism and the custom of polyandry, where one woman marries

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140 Anon. “No Title.” 1880.
two brothers.  

This mention of marriage customs provided the anonymous reporter with the opportunity to comment, "[polyandry] was probably customary among the earlier races of men, and the non-advancement of Tibet explains its continuance there." With these words the article further entrenched another prejudice held by western imaginings—Tibet as an uncivilized backward country.

The exotic behaviours of the Tibetan Other presented many story opportunities, in particular their eating and marriage habits. For instance, early in 1875 the New York Times reported that the Tibetans have strange eating habits, especially their fondness for "still meat," a claim which poses a certain irony, since it was in fact alive with maggots. Reading further the article also noted that the Chinese do not drink milk because they believe it makes people stupid. The anonymous reporter stated "I fancy there is some truth in the assertion, but possibly the Chinese may have got the idea from the fact that the Tartars [Tibetans], who are necessarily milk drinkers and eaters of dried milk and buttermilk, are very stupid people." Here again there is a certain irony, although the anonymous reporter appeared to be ambivalent towards milk, the western reader ‘knowing’ the nutritional benefits of milk could consider the Chinese ‘stupid’ for not drinking it, rather than the Tibetans.

This theme of knowledge and irony is maintained in another 1875 article, where the French missionary, Father Remy, returned from Tibet after allegedly surviving a drawn and quartering sentence on his life by the Tibetan authorities. The New York Times article is borrowed from the London Daily Telegraph, which reminds the reader of similar historical incidents in Europe. But instead of cheating death because the body did not pull apart quickly, the European authorities made incisions at the joints and the body was successfully quartered.

141 The article refers to the corrupting element as Livaism, which may be a reference to Shivaism, especially as many Hindu symbols appear in Tibetan Buddhism. The usual corrupting influence given is the earlier Tibetan animist religion of Bon.

142 Anon. "No Title." 1880.

143 On January 10, the New York Times republished a story from the Blackwood Magazine, which begins "Ferocity is much admired in Chinese Tibet; and in order to create it, the people are fond of eating what they ironically call 'still meat,' or meat with maggots in it." Anon. "Articles of Food in Chinese Tibet." 1875.
The article concluded in a flourish of irony and scepticism over the truth of Remy’s tale and stated, “surely, they should be aware of the process of incision in Tibet!” There is also a hint of anti-Catholicism in this article as there appears to be in another article almost two years earlier, which is in praise of Buddhism. With no title or acknowledged source the article opened, “We hear, not infrequently, the age of a creed and the number of its believers used as an argument for its truth. The Roman Catholics are much addicted to this logic and some of the Protestant sects try to lord it over others for a similar reason.”

Contrasting to this the article remarked that the “Buddhist faith has more to commend it than Christian form of worship,” especially as it is 2,500 years old and more than a third of the human race are devotees. The reporter also noted that with recent research and the translation of Sanskrit manuscripts, that Buddhism is better known in the late nineteenth century than “many of the more modern creeds.”

Moving from religion to the domestic life of Tibetans, another reporter referred again to the ‘strange’ Tibetan marriage custom of polyandry and then proceeded to note the duplicitous nature of Tibetans. According to the 1885 article, ordinary Tibetans disguise his or her laziness, by appearing absorbed in spiritual devotion, when in reality they were avoiding work, indulging in idleness and waiting for someone else to cook. In a similar tone, another anonymous writer “wonders” at the hard working Tibetan women and how dirt is the “ruling feature everywhere in Tibetan households.” The reporter continued with the same unflattering tone by suggesting how the Tibetan housewife’s heavy physical proportions, her wit, audaciousness and bargaining accomplishments, resemble the “typical Billingsgate virago, [and who] if massive enough, would pass as a Venus in Thibet” (illus. 33a-b).

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145 Anon. “No Title.” 1878.
146 Anon. “No Title.” 1878.
147 Anon. “Polyandry in Thibet.” 1878. This had been previously published in the British Cornhill Magazine.
In addition to their religious observances, the other activity reported as important to Tibetans is trade. An anonymous reporter wrote in 1885 that “Every [Tibetan] family trades; the Lamaseries trade; the officials trade,” although the Tibetans are reliant on the “peddler” because shops are almost unknown.\textsuperscript{149} The article reported that the general method of shopping is barter. For example, if a cooking pot is required “the purchaser appl[ies] at the house of some one who has just returned from Yunnan, from whence he knows they are usually brought.\textsuperscript{150} This “primitive system of trade” crosses great distances from Kashmir in the west to Burma, China and India to east and south of Tibet.\textsuperscript{151}

Another article noted that the important item of trade in Tibet is ‘brick tea,’ while another article mentions how the Borax trade is only possible because sheep are used to transport it across the mountains (illus. 34).\textsuperscript{152}

The use of sheep, goats, horses and yaks as transport throughout Tibet and not the wheeled cart was an enigma to westerners. The existence of the prayer wheel fascinated westerners because the Tibetans had not adapted the wheel concept to transport and industry, but rather devoted this precious mechanical device to inexhaustible prayers.\textsuperscript{153} As discussed previously, Europeans used imagined sameness and/or difference to explain the appearance and customs of Tibet. It was difficult for Europeans to believe that the Tibetans did not use the wheel for transport, which may explain why the earliest western drawing of the Potala in Lhasa has a horse drawn cart in the foreground (illus. 35). However, the Tibetan terrain was for the most part, especially the trade routes, unsuitable for a cart or car (illus. 36a-b).

Despite the western cultural relativist outlook on Tibet’s ‘shortcomings’ as emphasized in the newspaper stories, Tibet also offered a unique opportunity for

\textsuperscript{149} Anon. “Trade in Thibet,” 1885. Borrowed from the British journal \textit{The Nineteenth Century}.
\textsuperscript{150} Anon. “Trade in Thibet” 1885.
\textsuperscript{151} Anon. “Trade in Thibet” 1885.
\textsuperscript{152} Anon. “Sheep as Beasts of Burden.” 1879. Article drawn the journal, \textit{Nature}.
\textsuperscript{153} Anon. “The Prayer Barrel.” 1884. Borrowed from the British journal \textit{The Contemporary Review}. The anonymous reporter also noted that certain religious traditions are repeated across cultures. For example, the Tibetans continue the abandoned British pagan ritual of circumambulated monuments in ‘sunwise’ (clockwise) direction.
exploration. While scientific endeavour had re-written Mandeville’s lost tribes and evaporated Prester John’s kingdom, a further article wrote that Tibet remained “one of the few regions left on the earth which still affords legitimate scope for romantic conjecture.” Scientists and geographers were not the only westerners interested in ‘knowing’ and experiencing Tibet. Tibetan Buddhism fascinated small groups of westerners outside of academic professionals and those involved in the intellectual conquest of Asia. The most influential group was the Theosophists. Russian-born Madame Blavatsky and American-born Colonel Henry Olcott founded the Theosophical Society in New York City, 1876. Theosophy pieced together mystical symbolism, historical events, snippets of popularized wisdom, pseudo-science, borrowings from pagan ceremonies, occultism and the charismatic performances of the Theosophical leaders, including messages from the dead and the Ouija board. This was attractive formulation to a general population traumatized by a Civil War.

The Theosophists approached Tibetan Buddhism as a lost ‘pure’ and ancient wisdom. This lost knowledge was revealed to Blavatsky by the ‘Masters,’ who were also known as Mahatmas. These revelations were delivered by various means, such as the magical appearance of letters, mental transference, research and living gurus. Historian Paul Johnson pieced together the identities of the Masters and their influence on the leaders of the Theosophical Society. He noted that the Masters known as the Mahatmas Koot Homi and Morya were respectively the historical figures of Ranibi Singh from Kashmir and Thakar Singh

154 Anon. “Unexplored Thibet.” 1883. Article was taken from the *London Daily Telegraph.*
155 Harold Isaacs noted that the Theosophical Society reinforced the Asian spirituality already promoted by American transcendentalists, such as Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry Thoreau Emerson. Isaacs, H. 1958: 256-257
156 For a biography of Blavatsky (1813-1891) see Fuller, J.O. 1988. Olcott (1832-1907) was a Civil War veteran. He was selected to a three-man special committee to investigate the murder of President Abraham Lincoln. He went on to study law and was appointed to the bar in 1868. Prothero, S. 1988. For a Theosophical history of their Society see Blavatsky. “Blavatsky and Buddhism.”
157 For discussion on the attraction of spiritualism and contact with deceased loved ones see Winter, J. 1995.
158 Theosophy popularized borrowed spiritual wisdom from a variety of ancient religions, including Egyptian, Hindu and Tibetan Buddhism. Gomes, M. 2005.
159 For biographies of the many individuals associated with Blavatsky and Olcott see Johnson, K.P. 1994.
an important Sikh reformer in Punjab.\textsuperscript{160} There were many others who provided Blavatsky with information and texts to study, one of interest was Sarat Chandra Das.\textsuperscript{161} He was in the employ of the British government and had secretly entered Tibet on their behalf to gather information. Aided by the Tibetan lama Ugyen Gyatso, Das spent time studying at the Tashi-lhunpo Monastery at Shigatse under the protection of the Tashi Lama.\textsuperscript{162} Das returned with many Tibetan and Sanskrit manuscripts, which he researched and wrote about, in addition to compiling a Tibetan-English dictionary. While based in Darjeeling, Das met with Blavatsky and Olcott, and like the Master Singhgs mentioned above, provided esoteric knowledge, which Blavatsky used in her Theosophical articles.\textsuperscript{163}

Blavatsky was a prodigious writer of letters and articles. She also published versions of the ancient wisdom transmitted to her in two major books \textit{Isis Unveiled} in 1877 and her seminal esoteric work \textit{The Secret Doctrine} in 1888. In the later book, Blavatsky wrote,

\begin{quote}
The secret doctrine was the universally diffused religion of the ancient and prehistoric world. Proofs of its diffusion, authentic records of its history, a complete chain of documents, showing its character and presence in every land, together with the teaching of all its great adepts, exist to this day in the secret crypts of libraries belonging to the Occult Fraternity.\textsuperscript{164}
\end{quote}

From this statement, there is a sense that her disclosure of this secret wisdom is democratizing knowledge, which until now had been available to a select few. Her exposure of Buddhism coincided with European scholars translating Sanskrit texts. Blavatsky synthesized and popularized this material in \textit{The Secret Doctrine}. An important figure in the translation and editing of the Sanskrit texts

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item[\textsuperscript{160}] Johnson, K.P. 1994: 120-175.
\item[\textsuperscript{161}] Johnson, K.P. 1994: 191-194. These relationships were also taking place during the British-Russian Great Game era and the British were suspicious of Blavatsky and the activities of the Theosophical Society in India. For further information see Fuller, J.O. 1988.
\item[\textsuperscript{162}] Gyatso was also in the employ of the British government. He was based in Darjeeling and taught Tibetan at the same boarding school to which Das was appointed as headmaster. Johnson, K.P. 1994: 195-197.
\item[\textsuperscript{163}] For a list of books available to Blavatsky, see Blavatsky "My books" and "Tibetan source list."
\item[\textsuperscript{164}] Blavatsky, H. 1888.
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was Oxford Professor and philologist Max Müller.\textsuperscript{165} He wrote that *The Secret Doctrine* was “simply a medley of well-known though generally misunderstood Brahmanic or Buddhistic doctrines ... everything is muddled or misunderstood. If I were asked what Madame Blavatsky’s Esoteric Buddhism really is, I should say it was Buddhism misunderstood.”\textsuperscript{166} Blavatsky’s biographer Jean Overton Fuller stated Blavatsky would have retorted that her version was “Buddhism corrected.”\textsuperscript{167}

An example of Blavatsky’s borrowings from Tibetan Buddhism can be found in her book *The Secret Doctrine*. She introduces the Dalai Lama as a reincarnation of the lotus-bearing god, *Chenrezi* (Skt *Avalokitesvara*). She noted that a manifestation of *Chenrezi’s*, *Padmapani-Chenrezi* has eleven faces (illus. 5a-d). These are organized into four rows of three, except for the top row, which only contains two faces—the third face is blank. According to Blavatsky, the missing black-brown face symbolizes the “untimely end” of the *Atlanteans*.
\textsuperscript{168} Blavatsky projects back onto Tibet a western perception of Tibet’s spiritual power and wisdom. Like the Nieuhoff and Picart illustrations, the dialogue was not Tibetan but framed in the terms of western politics. In addition, while Blavatsky promoted the wisdom of Tibetan Buddhism, she like many other interested parties, believed recent Tibetan Buddhism was degraded.\textsuperscript{169}

The propriety and genuineness of Blavatsky’s popular spiritual movement was questioned in August 1884. A letter from London to the *Liverpool Mercury*, published in the *New York Times*, reported a quarrel amongst Theosophists over

\textsuperscript{165} Max Müller (1823-1900), a naturalized Briton of German birth. He was a Sanskrit scholar, who founded Indology and the discipline of comparative religion. He was the chief editor of the 50 volumes series, *Sacred Books of the East*. From 1817 to 1890, an estimated 250 major works on Buddhism were published. Many of these were treatises on Tibetan, Pali or Sanskrit texts by such linguists as Csoma de Koros (Hung.), Rev. Samuel Beal (Br.), Max Müller (Br.) and David Rhys (Br.). For a list see Blavatsky “Tibetan source list.” 2009.

\textsuperscript{166} Fuller, J.O. 1988: 215.

\textsuperscript{167} Fuller, J.O. 1988: 215. This attitude of realigning Buddhism to its authentic historical form preoccupied many westerners. Foremost were the Theosophists Colonel Henry Olcott, Annie Besant and Christmas Humphries. For histories of these crusaders and their impact on indigenous Buddhism see, Humphries, C. 1958; Gombrich, R. and Obeyesekere, G. 1988; Prothero, S. 1998.

\textsuperscript{168} Blavatsky, H. 1993: 178-179.

\textsuperscript{169} Blavatsky, H. 1888: xxii.
the authenticity of letters received by Blavatsky from Koot Hoomi, which the
newspaper stated was “one of the Masters of Thibet.” The letter claims that
his ‘ethereal’ message was a fabrication. In fact, the letter alleges that the
‘Masters’ message was “a mutilated edition” of a speech already recorded in a
New York paper by non-Theosophist Mr Kiddle. The controversial Koot Hoomi
message was also said to have been published in the “American papers.” The
disgruntled London theosophist, Mr C.C. Massey is said to have “surrendered
Esoteric Buddhism and is coming back to common sense.” The Theosophist
explanation for the similarities was that the telepathic message from Koot Hoomi
had been mis-scribed. In addition, because Hoomi had earlier “made a
clairvoyant survey of American Spiritualism,” he may have unconsciously
selected phrases from Kiddle. Ironically, the Kiddle speech was promoting his
book on spiritualism titled, Spiritual Communications, 1879, but his approach
was from a different perspective to Theosophy. A letter following the same
pathway as the Kiddle controversy from London to the Liverpool Mercury to the
New York Times newspaper, denounced Blavatsky’s miraculous letters as a hoax
and without them, the anonymous letter concluded, Theosophy “is certain to
fade away.”

As previously noted a factor in western imaginings was the view that Tibetan
Buddhism was a consequence of the devil’s foul play, a belief that is reiterated
by another anonymous article in the New York Times. The article observed how

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171 Mr Kiddle gave his lecture in August 15, 1880, he wrote to the London Light (as yet, I found no
reference to this publication apart from this, I assume that it is some small spiritual or Church
publication) stating that the Theosophical publication Occult World had plagiarized his U.S.
lecture. On July 5, 1884, Light published Koot Hoomi’s explanation of the ‘Kiddle incident’
through an article written by M.A. See reference under Blavatsky archives.
174 Fuller, J.O. 1988: 120.
175 Anon. “Mr Kiddle on Spiritualism.” 1880. Henry Kiddle was an educator and held the position
of NYC superintendent of common schools from 1870-1879. He was forced to resign because of his
spiritualist ideas. He had been deputy superintendent from 1856.
176 Fuller, J.O. 1988: 120.
177 Anon. “Theosophy without Miracles.” 1885. The letter is from London to the Liverpool
Mercury, the same communication noted Mr C.C. Massey disaffection with Theosophy. Anon.
“Theosophists in a Quarrel.” 1884.
178 Anon. “Om Mani-Padme Hum.” 1885. Taken from the National Review.
the early Lazarist missionaries to Tibet, Évariste Régis Huc and Joseph Gabet were envious of the dutifulness of all the Tibetans arriving to evening prayers and once assembled they all chanted *Om mani padme hum* \(^ {179} \) while telling the rosary. Huc and Gabet are also reported to have believed that the great Tibetan Buddhist reformer, *Tsong Kappa*, had actually been a Christian teacher. \(^ {180} \) But his teachings and reforms had since been corrupted by the devil, who is now the custodian of the Tibetan religion. According to the anonymous author, the *black arts* of Tibet continue their corruptive influences upon Christianity. The writer concluded that Madame Blavatsky’s Theosophist Buddhism and modern *spiritualism* are at the forefront of this latest attack on Christianity. \(^ {181} \) However, almost ten years later the Theosophical Society was invited to participate in the Parliament of Churches conference held during the Columbian Fair in Chicago, 1893. \(^ {182} \)

The conflicting news reports some times negative and at other times positive, were consistent with the contradictions of the popular western imaginings surrounding Tibet. Over the next 20 years, similar news stories are encountered, however, from the beginning of the twentieth century there is a gradual shift in the representation of Tibet from remote stories to the public exhibition of Tibetan artefacts, an issue discussed in the next chapter. This early materializing of Tibet in the west was in part a consequence of American missionary activities in China and museum-sponsored expeditions, a shift that is discussed in the next chapter.

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\(^ {179} \) The article concludes by explaining the meaning of this term. Anon. “*Om Mani-Padme Hum.*” 1885. For a recent discussion on this term see Lopez Jr., D. 1999: 114-134.

\(^ {180} \) There were some westerners that believed the lost years of Jesus were spent to the East, in India and possible even Tibet. In 1894 the *NYT* reports that the Russian Nicholas Notovitch had discovered a Pali text which supported the notion that Jesus went to Tibet, where he was revered. The text referred to Jesus as the prophet *Issa*. The location of the monastery where the Pali scripts were said to be found was Hemis, Ladakh, sometimes called ‘Little Tibet.’ The Hemis monastery, even then, was famous for their ‘devil dances.’ Furthermore, there had been a Moravian mission there from the mid nineteenth century. Anon. “*Ancient Life of Christ.*” 1894.

\(^ {181} \) Anon. “*Om Mani-Padme Hum.*” 1885.

\(^ {182} \) Theosophical Society. 1893. For a view of the activities of the conference, albeit a Japanese perspective, see Snodgrass, J. 2003.
Territorializing Tibet: The 1904 British Mission

By the nineteenth century, the blankness of Tibet and its closed borders were attracting western explorers. This section acknowledges the importance placed by the west on gathering information, especially on unmapped territory close at hand. The British Empire sat on Tibet’s doorstep unable to enter. But wherever possible the British had begun to gather information and data. Acquiring knowledge was paramount to an Empire’s occupation and the Sanskrit scholar Max Müller encouraged the idea of intellectual conquest. In his view material conquest was not in itself sufficient knowledge. \(^{183}\) The west had already written Tibet, along with the rest of Asia into an inferior, child-like position, which ranged from naivety, superstitious, gullible, uncivilized, dirty, lazy and stagnating to exotic, mythical and spiritual. \(^{184}\) An example of this earlier attitude is the comments made by the permanent undersecretary of the state for India Sir Arthur Hirtzel. He was commenting on the controversy generated by an alleged troupe of Tibetan lamas performing in London. Hirtzel wrote, “the performance did not shock me in the very least. It was unspeakably boring—more so than most things Oriental—but not, I should have thought, capable, even in its lightest moments, of causing anything more than that smile of kindly superiority which we generally assume when we see or hear of strange customs.” \(^{185}\)

For centuries, some of the highest mountains in the world had kept prying eyes out of Tibet. But a trade hungry colonial empire was keen to secure commercial interests and markets for their products. For empires, commercial interest is

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183 Müller, M. noted in Sugirtharajah, S. 2003: 40.
184 The leader of the British Mission Colonial Younghusband routinely makes child-like references to Tibetan’s, such as, “The Tibetan officials, in fact, appear to be childishy impotent and terrified of their own Government, whilst at the same time they are deliberately obstructive in every matter, great or small, in which the British are concerned, and are quite ready to use the Chinese as a very convenient scape-goat whenever it suits them to do so.” London Stationery Office 1999: 19-21. In contrast to this attitude was the Theosophical Society, who was promoting the spiritual wisdom of the Tibetans. Blavatsky, H. 1952.
185 The performances were held before John Noel’s silent film, The Epic of Everest. However, Sir Arthur Hirtzel did sympathize with Tibetan authorities over the unauthorized and sacrilegious nature of the performance. For the controversy caused see Hansen, P. 1996.
national interest and the perceived Russian interference in Tibet was a threat.\textsuperscript{186} Not because Britain feared Russia would invade India, but a Russia-Tibet pact could lead to hostile border encounters, distracting the British from Russian overtures elsewhere, such as in Afghanistan and the Balkans.\textsuperscript{187} The ideal solution for Britain was to create Tibet as a buffer zone.\textsuperscript{188} At the same time, the British saw Tibet as a ready market for their tea.\textsuperscript{189} They also thought that once they were established in Tibet, there was further opportunity to trade with China, through the back-door, so to speak.\textsuperscript{190} Although historian Alastair Lamb argued that, it was gold not tea, which was the motivating force to enter Tibet.\textsuperscript{191}

As the British focus shifted onto the Tibetan hinterland and trade prospects, the Tibetans attempted to isolate themselves further from external influence. Colonial powers such as Britain had a reputation for charting and then colonising.\textsuperscript{192} The 1800s had witnessed a scramble for colonies and the consolidation of imperial power, throughout Tibet had remained inaccessible.\textsuperscript{193} But by the late nineteenth century, Tibet was in reach, however the borders

\textsuperscript{186} Mehra, P., noted that Agvan Dorjief (a Russian-born Buryat monk of the Gelugpa sect) had led H.H. the 13th Dalai Lama to believe the Russian empire was a Shambala-like empire that could protect Tibet against British aggression. Mehra, P. 2005: 9.
\textsuperscript{187} Richardson, H. 1984: 83.
\textsuperscript{188} For British justification of a buffer state, see McKay, A. 2001: 68. Although the results of the Youngusband Mission, displayed in the Britain-Tibet Convention signed in 1904 at Lhasa, do not mention Russia directly, article IX (a-e) prohibits Tibet engaging with any foreign powers without prior British consent. For the Convention, see Richardson, H. 1984: 268-271.
\textsuperscript{189} The import of Indian tea into Tibet was prohibited. Lamb, A. 1986: 101. Rockhill estimated that Tibetans import approximately thirteen million pounds weight of tea per annum from China, which was imported in a compressed block form. Rockhill, W. 1891: 277-281. Whereas, Lamb estimated that in 1869 six million pounds of tea was consumed by Tibetans. Lamb, A. 1986: 97. As early as 1861 J.D. Hooker was writing to the editor of The [London] Times arguing for a trade relationship of India's burgeoning tea industry trade with the greatest consumers of tea—the Tibetans and the Russian. He noted that Tibetans could barter their "shawl wool, salt, borax, musk, flour, gold dust, amber, turquoise, copper, sheep and ponies of a breed which is invaluable both in the plains and the hills of India" for broadcloth, cutlery and many other English and Bengal produce. Hooker, J.D. 1861.
\textsuperscript{190} Norbu, D. 2001: 156. Three years after the signing of the British-Tibetan treaty, C.E.D. Black commented on a letter from Captain O'Connor who expresses that there is still a dire need for a trade route from India into Tibet, especially for the trade of wool and tea. Black, C.E. D. 1908: 87-104.
\textsuperscript{191} Lamb mentions the Rothschild's interest in the Tibetan goldfields. Lamb, A. 1986: 220-221.
\textsuperscript{192} Abe, S.K. 1995: 87.
were unmapped and unstable—an irritant to colonial empires.\textsuperscript{194} The ebb and flow of indigenous human activity along isolated mountain passes had no need for demarcations such as boundaries. Tibetan religious influence, authority and ethnicity stretched far across sketchily mapped borders (illus. 1). Summer pastures and monastery outposts did not establish a boundary. For the British, boundaries locked in ownership, commercial prospects, trade, taxes and identity. The indefinite claim of itinerant nomadic grazing fields and traditional Tibetan ways irritated the British need for title, certainty and security.\textsuperscript{195} Tibet's silent obstinacy towards acknowledging Anglo-Chinese trade treaties on behalf of Tibet and/or direct written representation also exasperated the British.\textsuperscript{196} While on the one hand, the British recognized Chinese suzerainty over Tibet, on the other hand, the mercantile desire to trade just across the border was overpowering.\textsuperscript{197} In 1904, the solution was to send a small armed Mission to broker a trade agreement directly with the Tibetan government in Lhasa (illus. 37).

By the time the decision was made to send the British Mission led by Colonel Younghusband, Tibet had been covertly mapped. Through the activities of British trained indigenous-born pundits,\textsuperscript{198} latitudes, longitudes, heights of mountains,

\textsuperscript{194} From as the early 1800s the British had been attempting to establish firm borders with Tibet. See Lamb, A. 1966.

\textsuperscript{195} Furthermore, the British Empire was always investigating potential opportunities for trade or colonization. For example, in a book of essays on Nepal and Tibet by British civil servant, Brian H. Hodges published in 1874, he writes that the highlands of the Himalayas would be suitable land to resettle the "starving peasantry of Ireland and of the Scotch Highlands." The result would not be wealth, but a comfortable living and the creation of a buffer zone affecting a stop to Russian influence, aggression and trade in the Himalayan area. Hodgson, B. 1971: 89.

\textsuperscript{196} By drawing up and signing the Great Britain and Tibet Convention (1904), British officials were aware of the Tibetan ambivalence towards the Chinese official (Amban) posted to Lhasa, especially in regard to internal affairs. Richardson, H. 1984: 93.

\textsuperscript{197} For the content of the British treaties and agreements by Chinese on behalf, or by Tibet, see Richardson, H. 1984: 259-302.

\textsuperscript{198} A pundit was an educated Hindu—someone who could read sacred Hindu texts and this name was adopted to describe the men secretly employed by the British to explore Tibet. British Captain Montgomerie selected and trained indigenous men on how to use the tools he had devised. All the men Montgomerie selected were in someway associated with Tibet or Tibetan Buddhism and therefore had reason to travel in Tibet and therefore avoid suspicion. The pundits demonstrated ingenuity, tenacity and fearlessness. They returned with accurate readings and everyday reports on activities they had observed or experienced. The pundits included Nain Singh Rabat, Hair Ram and Krishna Singh. See Montgomerie's report in \textit{Proceedings of the Royal
roads and lakes were secretly mapped using simple tools, such as the measured human-step, a Tibetan prayer wheel and rosary. This meant that when the British moved into Tibet, they had the knowledge where to locate base camps and decide which towns were necessary to occupy. The closer the British moved into Tibet the greater the desire for detailed knowledge. Historian Michael Carrington noted how the Younghusband expedition unleashed the “obsessive fascination” held by many Europeans for Tibet. There were many imaginings to be explored. Tibet had been blank for too long and too much had been imagined.

British officer Powell Millington, occupying “an inconspicuous single-fly tent in a back street of the brigade camp,” wrote that the 1904 British Mission marched with men who were already qualified to discourse on Tibet. There were men with butterfly-nets, geological hammers and the cartographers’ bicycle wheel. There was also a committee of “licensed curio-hunters, who collected curios with much enterprise and scientific precision for the British Museum.” Britain was putting Tibet on the map, it was also staking a claim of interest. Philosopher Michel Foucault noted how power, desire and knowledge are inextricably linked. Each feeds the other. He wrote, “Far from preventing knowledge, power produces it.”

Ownership and the display of knowledge maintain a world order, in which Britain played a central role. Not only was Britain advancing into Tibet to open dialogue and negotiate a trade agreement, they were also out to collect knowledge and treasure. Carrington noted that officially, the desired items were Tibetan Buddhist books and manuscripts for which western museums and universities had placed advanced orders.

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199 Montgomerie, T. 1868.
204 Millington, P. 1904: v-vi.
206 Carrington, M. 2003: 82.
The official curio collectors for Indian and British institutions were Medical Officer and Tibetologist, Lieutenant L. Austine Waddell, and The [London] Times correspondent, Perceval Landon. Waddell spoke and read Tibetan and had been studying Tibetan culture for many years. Waddell had learned that knowledge of the Tibetan language alone did not facilitate access to the secrets of Tibetan Buddhism. His solution to accessing knowledge was to buy a Tibetan Buddhist temple. In his words,

I felt compelled to purchase a Lamaist temple with its fittings; and prevailed on the officiating priest to explain to me in full detail the symbolism and the rites as they proceeded”. [He later adds] “Enjoying in these ways special facilities for penetrating the reserve of Tibetan ritual and obtaining direct from Lhasa and Tashi-Lhunpo most of the objects and explanatory material needed, I have elicited much information on Lamaist theory and practice which is altogether new.207

Access to knowledge and its interpretation were important endeavours for the architects planning British expansion. To the European intellectual community, Tibetan Buddhist images were cryptic—windows onto hidden stories.

Waddell sent over 400 mules loaded with Tibetan material to India. These contained two thousand Tibetan volumes, which he had `officially’ collected.208 This did not include the many curios that arrived on British soil once the Mission

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207 The quote above belongs to the first edition published in 1895. In the preface to the second edition, Waddell noted that he bought the temple to “more effectually penetrate the jealous reserve of the Lamas and gain an intimate knowledge of their mystic Buddhist ritual and beliefs.” Waddell, A. 1958: xxxvii-xxxviii. Philosophy and religion professor Harry Oldmeadow commented that Waddell’s book established much information but his “Protestant prejudices” dismissed Tibetan Buddhism, with its Popish similarities, as deviant and degenerate. Oldmeadow, H. 2003: 53. Even though Waddell was conversant in Tibetan, was studying their culture and religion, he was not generous to their wellbeing. For example, after a skirmish which left a 250 Tibetans dead or wounded, over one hundred prisoners and only three injured British soldiers. Waddell described the prisoners as “New-caught sullen people, half devil and half child.” Waddell, A. 1988: 193.

208 Carrington, M. 2003: 104. The 10,000 rupees allocated by the British Government for the purchase of manuscripts, translated to a cost of five rupees per book. Carrington, M. 2003: 106. Waddell, himself records that after a dispute at the private chapel at Changlo Maner, he secured 450 volumes for the British Museum and turned the chapel into the regimental officer’s mess. The troops also used the monastery’s giant prayer-wheel as a dumb waiter. Waddell, A. 1988: 205.
began.\textsuperscript{209} The 18,000 men on the Mission were consumed by the blankness of Tibet and succumbed to the exotic draw of the devil’s idols. Such obvious looting, while a traditional army diversion—the spoils of war—was losing public support. The British news reports at the time were less than favourable. But the government looked the other way because, as Carrington stated, “knowledge was thought to be the most important profit of the empire.”\textsuperscript{210} Consequently, Tibetan curios flooded onto the market and into museum basements. But as will be discussed in the next chapter, the objects remained curios, despite commentary, which praised them as very fine and rare examples. A British presence remained in Tibet until 1947 when India gained independence.\textsuperscript{211} Just three years later China entered Tibet claiming sovereignty.\textsuperscript{212}

**Mapping Boundaries and Recent Politics: China**

With the entry of China into Tibet, the Chinese-Tibet boundary was removed. Boundaries are an important political apparatus in establishing nationhood. They are enforced or negotiated across the globe. Bold and dotted lines scar the printed landscape. They are constructed by human intelligence. Maps change, as witnessed by the transience of the British Empire’s pink blush across the world—replaced by the landscaping greens and browns of nation-states. Before and after the pink faded, boundaries were fought over, landscape surveyed, resources tallied and territory consolidated. Within these constructed boundaries, subjects

\textsuperscript{209} For example, Captain Cecil Mainprise, the commander of the British Mission’s field hospital, in a letter home, wrote “P.S. I hear that Tibetan curios at Christie’s are fetching large prices. The Tibetan scroll like the one I have sent to you fetched £20 so you had better see what you can get for any of them.” Mainprise, C. 2009. Carrington estimated that many of the men accompanying the British Mission were involved in looting. Carrington, M. 2003: 104.

\textsuperscript{210} Carrington, M. 2003: 107-109. The British government did ask questions, but little was forthcoming. See also comments made by Mehra, P. 2005: 22-23.

\textsuperscript{211} McKay, A. 1997: 218.

\textsuperscript{212} The Chinese entered Lhasa with an expeditionary force in 1910. At this time H.H. the 14th Dalai Lama fled to India. With the collapse of the Qing dynasty in 1911, Tibet restored its independence. For Tibet’s history see McKay, A. 2003 (in particular, volume 3).
are rendered as objects\textsuperscript{213} numbered, measured, coloured and graphically portrayed as population densities, language groups, as a city, farmland, a memorial or ruins.

Geographer Andrew Boyd wrote, "Geography is about maps and chaps. Men make frontiers, cities—and canals. ... and their quarrels, like their creations, change the map."\textsuperscript{214} While the authority implicit on maps is compromised by this constant revision,\textsuperscript{215} past markings are quickly forgotten under the weight of contemporary repetition. Maps appear to be objective and outside of political machinations. But what constitutes a map, how it is presented and whom it represents, are selected and authorized by governing institutions.\textsuperscript{216} Marked locations are remembered and those unrepresented are forgotten. According to Foucault, maps marking boundaries and identifying space are "fundamental to any exercise of power."\textsuperscript{217} Maps naturalize boundaries. Once the line is drawn, it quickly appears as a legal imprint on the landscape.\textsuperscript{218}

In the 1960s when international lawyers were questioning the legality of Tibet’s cause after China’s (re)assertion of control, lawyer Surya Sharma wrote, "International law recognizes that boundaries are fundamental to the bases of national power ... By far the most important principle is that of prohibiting the use of coercion in reshaping boundaries."\textsuperscript{219} Against Tibet’s plea for international assistance was the fact that western powers had historically recognized China’s suzerainty over Tibet, despite the British Mission’s intrusion.\textsuperscript{220} In principle,

\textsuperscript{214} Boyd, A. 1957: 5.
\textsuperscript{215} Ryan, S. 1994: 117.
\textsuperscript{216} Harley, J. 1988: 278. Kenman Ferguson writes that "To map is to engage in a procedure of identity creation at the individual and group level; it is, bluntly, to produce the world." Ferguson, K. 1996: 167.
\textsuperscript{217} Elden, S. 2001: 119.
\textsuperscript{218} Harley, J. 1988: 283.
\textsuperscript{219} Sharma, S. 1965: 16.
\textsuperscript{220} In 1795 Britain and the United States considered that Tibet was a tributary state to China, when British Baptist Minister William Winterbotham writes, "The tribute which the sovereign of Thibet sends to the emperor of China consists of gold or copper statues of the idol Fo [Buddha], perfumes, amber, coral, precious stones, woollen stuffs, and sword blades. The emperor it is said also requires from the Dalai Lama a certain number of vessels, or small pitchers, filled with
international law prescribed the right of nations to protect their internal integrity and exclusive control of access. Sharma considered that the principles of international law articulated above, were sufficient to govern the establishment and application of China-Tibet boundaries. However, the case of Tibet highlights how problematic that assumption can be, especially if there is no political will to act on behalf of a weaker nation. Much has been written, and continues to be written on the legality or illegality of the Chinese actions towards Tibet and I do not intend to discuss this except in relationship to the authority of maps. The interest here is the making and unmaking of Tibet within the western imaginings.

A consequence of the (re)assertion of Chinese control over Tibet, is the production of two Tibetan maps—the official Chinese map and one produced by the Tibetans-in-exile and non-Tibetan sympathisers for the Free-Tibet cause. The former does not illustrate a Tibet-China border, while the maps produced by the Free-Tibet protagonists do illustrate a border. The official Chinese map has one border—the perimeter around all China (illus. 38). Nor does China stand idly by when other nations illustrate Chinese territory contrary to Chinese State policy. In August 2007, the Canadian newspaper, The Toronto Star, published a special section—one year out from the Beijing Olympics—they accompanied this with a small map of the region. China was shaded white, while Tibet and Taiwan were shaded light brown. Map war erupted. Chinese Canadians and the Chinese Consul protested. A correction was published. Other Canadian citizens reacted against the correction. The issue was further sensitized by the imminent meeting of H.H. the fourteenth Dalai Lama with the Canadian Prime Minister, against the

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223 China is vigilant in respect to maps which mark Tibet as if separate. As early as 1947 China was protesting over a boundary line being drawn. “Map of Asia changed in Delhi” 1947.
wishes of the Chinese government.\textsuperscript{224} China argues that Tibet is not a nation and therefore should not be accorded the status and courtesies ordinarily given to nation states.\textsuperscript{225}

China aggressively reinforces this message wherever they deem appropriate. According to philosopher Kathleen Kirby, reinforcement and repetition are essential in validating and legitimizing ownership claims. She wrote that “space persists only as long as the coordinates holding it open are deliberately maintained.”\textsuperscript{226} At the same time, the boundaries removed are in danger of being forgotten—relegated to history books gathering dust on library shelves. The official Chinese map presents an act of forgetting. For the Tibetans-in-exile, it becomes a case of remembering the border to the rest of the world, a difficult case when China has the political sway to censure counter activity such as seen in the case of The Toronto Star.

The establishment of boundaries transforms maps from just recording empirical geographical facts, which can be validated by re-measurement, into political and ideological broadsheets. Boundaries express a political unit, a nation state. According to geographer John Agnew, there are three broad characteristics of nation states. First, nation states are sovereign states and have exclusive power within their borders. Second, domestic and foreign affairs are separate domains governed by different rules. Third, a national character can be identified across the whole nation.\textsuperscript{227} In the process of China subsuming Tibet, the Tibetans lost their boundaries. They also lost their nation status and jurisdiction over domestic and foreign policy. Those that went into self-exile, such as H.H. the fourteenth Dalai Lama became stateless people. Under international law, the State grants or denies citizenship, in the same way that the State regulates entry and exit across

\textsuperscript{224} English, K. 2007.
\textsuperscript{225} This is an argument that China routinely uses to pressure national governments from meeting H.H. the 14\textsuperscript{th} Dalai Lama or showing him any official State privileges. For example, see Agence France-Presse (AFP), 2009; Agence France-Presse (AFP), 2008.
\textsuperscript{226} Kirby, K. 1993: 175.
\textsuperscript{227} Agnew, J. 2003: 51.
national borders.\textsuperscript{228} Tibetans have no separate nationality. They are foremost Chinese. In China, Tibetan identity is reduced to regional difference—an ethnic minority.

Further to loss of national identity is the potential for loss of cultural heritage and traditions. Within national borders, a nation is written as one people—a homogenized population standing under one flag—a political unit.\textsuperscript{229} Mapping is, according to political scientist Efrat Ben-Ze’ev, an efficient form of State control.\textsuperscript{230} The Toronto-China map war demonstrates how maps, while seemingly neutral statements, are in reality powerful political tools. By vigilant international surveillance, China attempts to control the representation of Tibet as inseparable from China. By controlling the production of maps, Tibet is subject to juridical control.\textsuperscript{231} Control and surveillance territorializes Tibet as Chinese.\textsuperscript{232} With vanished borders Tibet’s designation, the where and what constitutes Tibet, is controlled by the State. Tibet and its people are rendered ‘powerless’ or ‘powerful’ by their access to resources, which are controlled by the Chinese State.\textsuperscript{233}

China is also aware of Tibet’s historical identity within western imaginings and here too China is attempting to re-write or at least specify locations. For example, in western imaginings the mythical Tibetan \textit{Shangri-La},\textsuperscript{234} has taken on an almost tangible presence—an earthly paradise, at the same time its ‘reality’ is indelibly linked to Tibet. In 2001, the \textit{Zhongdian} County was granted a name change by the Chinese State to Shangri-La, despite the efforts of Tibetans to claim the name for a Tibetan region. The official Chinese site of Shangri-La is outside of the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR), in the nearby province of Yunnan.

\textsuperscript{228} Agnew, J. 2003: 61.
\textsuperscript{229} Gellner, E. 1983: 55.
\textsuperscript{230} Ben-Ze’ev, E. 2007: 117.
\textsuperscript{231} Harley, J. 2001: 165.
\textsuperscript{232} Ferguson, K. 1996: 168.
\textsuperscript{233} Allen argued in his thought provocking book, \textit{Lost Geographies of Power}, that power is not controlled or imposed upon or by, but power is mediated across time and space. Power is an association of appearances, of what is believed, imagined and/or witnessed. Allen, J. 2003.
\textsuperscript{234} The mythical \textit{Shangri-La} is in italics whereas, the Chinese location, Shangri-la is written in standard print face.
Chapter Two · Tibet-making

While there are rugged mountain ranges, indigenous Tibetans and monasteries, it is not within the Chinese designated region of TAR (illus. 39). China’s attempt to decentralize and spread Tibet’s mythology is an attempt to diffuse the centrality of Tibet in western imaginings. Identifying Shangri-La at a specific location is a useful mechanism for deflecting negative criticism of Chinese development in Tibet because Shangri-La is safe and pristine in its natural location. Furthermore, Shangri-La becomes a propaganda interface. While Shangri-La is mythical, the dot on the map and the name registration on the internet say otherwise, it is a tourist destination in China. Shangri-La is a real location validated by the State sanctioned map.

The removal and/or relocation of borders and regional tourism such as Shangri-La highlight Chinese governance over Tibet. The Chinese have the authority to monitor and control Tibetan behaviour and movement. The Tibetans are undergoing a crisis of representation, their land and lives are mapped by non-Tibetans. They no longer control the authority to map their own lands. They have lost their independent voice. The establishment of an alternative Tibetan government-in-exile and monastery namesakes outside of Tibet is evidence of the self-exiled Tibetan grievances.

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235 The welfare of the environmentally fragile Tibetan plateau is an area set to become a political hot potato. Both China and the Tibetans -in-exile have begun to use environmental concerns for Tibet in their rhetoric. For example, H.H. the 14th Dalai Lama stated no more wild animal fur is to be used on their traditional costumes, the chuba. Within weeks of his announcement, Tibetans were publicly burning wild animal skins. This public demonstration on the word of H.H. was a concern for the Chinese government who had been ineffective at halting wild animal poaching. The Chinese concern over its ineffectiveness resulted in them criminalizing the burning of the skins. Ghosh, A. "Otters: Dressed to kill." 2005; ICT News Release. “Tibetans burn wild animal skins.” 2006. Powers, J. 2007: 211.

236 Using the internet, if ‘Shangri-La, Tibet’ is entered the majority of sites reference western imaginings, such as James Hilton’s Lost Horizon and Roerich’s Shambala; however if you enter ‘Shangri-La, China,’ the sites are predominantly the Yunnan tourist destination.

237 Ethnic Tourism to these areas is State controlled. Swain, M. 1990.


240 For example, the Nyingmapa sect has re-established their Mindrolling Monastery (Drachi Valley, Central Tibet) established in 1676 to Clement Town, India in 1965. The Gelugpa sect (the yellow hats of the Dalai Lama) re-established the Sera Jey Monastery founded in 1419 at Bylakuppe, South India in 1970.
Borders and names are ephemeral designations.\textsuperscript{241} Their existence relies on usage or at least their currency in memory.\textsuperscript{242} Naming, as with borders, individualizes, gives identity and focuses attention onto place.\textsuperscript{243} Looking at the map of China without the guiding lines of a Tibetan border (illus. 38) it is difficult to visualize the extent of what was once Tibet’s territory.\textsuperscript{244} The dot of Lhasa locates the region. But without the name Tibet and a border, how will the coming generations know or see Tibet? Furthermore, what of the increasing practice of substituting Tibetan, or other internationally recognized place names with unfamiliar Chinese names? Will the aura of western imaginings carry over from Tibet to its Chinese name \textit{Xizang}?\textsuperscript{245}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{figure.png}
\caption{A figure illustrating the map of Tibet.}
\end{figure}

\textbf{Conclusion}

This chapter highlights the making of Tibet as a product of western imaginings and more recently Asian geopolitics. This is not an original assertion, a number of recent publications present a similar argument.\textsuperscript{246} I have differentiated ambiguities and subtle socio-politically constructed interrelationships illustrated by how western history recorded, imagined, remembered, desired, and forgot Tibet. The five selected historical narratives—medieval imaginings; Polo, Mandeville and Nieuhoff’s observations; the \textit{New York Times} stories; the activities of the British Mission; and, the Chinese territorializing of Tibet—draws attention to themes which surface as the thesis unfolds, such as authority, authenticity, discourse, knowledge acquisition, location and looting. These themes re-occur in the western representation of Tibetan artefacts into the

\textsuperscript{241} An article in the \textit{Chinese People Daily} (2002) noted the artificiality of naming. Their example is the continued western use of Mt Everest rather than the Tibetan name \textit{Qomolangma}. Chinese People’s Daily Online. “No Longer Everest but Mount Qomolangma.”
\textsuperscript{242} Bamyeh, M. 1994: 52.
\textsuperscript{243} Jacob, C. 2006: 203.
\textsuperscript{244} For a reminder see introduction chapter (illus. 1) for faint lines marking the Chinese provinces).
\textsuperscript{245} Donald Lopez Jr noted that Chinese name for its Tibetan colony is \textit{Xizang} meaning western Treasury. Lopez Jr, D.S. 1998: 136.
\textsuperscript{246} Such publications as: Brauen, M. 2004; Bishop, P. 1989; and, Lopez Jr, D.S. 1988.
twenty-first century. Furthermore, these selected episodes also demonstrate over time how western imaginings of Tibet became stereotyped and variously used to support different socio-political agendas.

At the point at which the west was turning the key to open the Tibetan lock, China intervened and closed Tibet’s border crossings. At this critical juncture, the loss of cultural Tibet was institutionalised by western museums. This perception of loss was further heightened by the arrival into self-exile of the head of state and spiritual leader of Tibet, H.H. the fourteenth Dalai Lama, the flow of material culture into the west, and the later stories of widespread iconoclasm by Chinese Red Guards.\(^{247}\) In the discourse of cultural loss arose the desire to salvage, to collect and to preserve whatever entered the western arena.\(^{248}\)

In the promotion of Tibetan artefacts as art, the objects have become agents for a timeless Tibet—the Tibet which exists in western imaginings—exotic, ritualistic, mystical and spiritual. This timeless Tibet is represented in museums, in art catalogues and wherever Tibetan art is placed on display. The representation of Tibet, either at the hands of the Chinese or western imaginings has fractured and disconnected the Tibetan objects from their place of origin. The objects are disembodied and available for recontextualization. The meta-narrative of a *lost Tibetan world* permeates western discourse on Tibet. Such discussion has resulted in western authorities writing the authentic Tibet elsewhere—in Dharamsala, in western museums. Tibetan art is constructed and mapped outside of historical Tibet. The timelessness of salvaged relics act as agents, recalling western imaginings, they give authority to museums to authorize the object’s history and value to the global community. Recontextualized and disembodied from the Tibetan cycle of religious and everyday rituals, the objects are

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\(^{247}\) In 1966, 8,000 Chinese Red Guards entered the Johkang and set about destroying all religious artefacts. However, China has been ‘mining’ Tibet’s portable wealth by the truckload from the early 1960s. Historian Rebecca Knuth noted that in 1973 one foundry in Beijing alone melted down 600 tons of sculpture. Knuth, R. 217-218.

\(^{248}\) More recent history suggests that this is a perception and not necessarily the actual state of affairs. This is an issue that will be discussed in later chapters.
positioned according to western aesthetic values, a necessary requirement for
the transformation from artefact into art.

Tibet entered the twentieth century wrapped in western imaginings, since then
Tibet has undergone a representation crisis, uniquely illustrated on world maps
by the loss of its national borders. One result of this crisis is that three
interlocutors currently (re)present Tibet: the Chinese State; the Tibetan
diasporic community; and, western imaginings institutionalized by western
museums. In the following chapters, this dissertation narrows its focus to
western discourse and in particular Tibetan art discourse. An understanding of
the historical construction of western imaginings and the strategic importance of
Tibet’s representation crisis that this chapter provides is a necessary
underpinning to understanding the transformation of Tibetan artefact into art.

The current popularity of Tibetan art was not immediate upon the objects’
arrival in the United States. Tibetan artefacts were on public display in New York
some 60 years before their institutionalized transformation in 1969. The
following chapter surveys how Tibetan artefacts were represented in New York
prior to 1969.
Just as mountains can materialize from shrouds of mist, Tibet slowly took shape for the west through words, images and artefacts. The preceding chapter, *Tibet-making*, mapped how the west imagined Tibet from a blank space into an identifiable place and culture. This chapter examines the *materializing* of Tibet in the United States from the early twentieth century to 1969. Here materializing is defined as ‘coming into being.’ In the context of this study, materializing refers to objects becoming recognizably Tibetan rather than generically Asian. During this time of becoming known and valued, Tibetan objects had to overcome a scarcity of knowledge and reliance on historical western imaginings.

Knowledge of Tibet and its material culture until the Tibetan diaspora, which began in 1959, was what anthropologists George Marcus and Michael Fischer refer to as “armchair ethnology.”¹ That is, knowledge was sourced typically through second-hand accounts, such as published works—travel diaries, religious commentaries or text translations penned by western observers. Due to their extensive circulation, two books were highly significant in awakening the general twentieth century western population to Tibet. They were: *Lost Horizon* by James Hilton first published in 1933 and *The Third Eye* by Lobsang Rampa, which by 1975 had sold over 6,500,000 copies since it was first published in 1956 (illus. 40a-b).² Both these books capitalized on earlier western imaginings, revitalizing

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² Interestingly another book titled the *Lost Horizon* was published in 1921, authored by George Colby Borley. A short book announcement in the *New York Times* stated “A picturesque and stirring tale, of the kind which may fairly be called the [Joseph] Conrad “tropic” school, woven about a man who went to faraway places seeking adventure and romance, and found it.” Anon. “New Dodd, Mead Books,” 1921. From the dedication given by Borley, the gestation for the story surfaced in the tedious hours spent in the WWI trenches. He wrote, “To nearly every soldier of the rank and file of the British, French, and American armies in France and Flanders this tale of fortune is affectionately dedicated as a tribute of undying admiration respect and fellowship. By a comrade.” Borley, C.G. 1921: i.
the medieval dreams of finding lost paradise with the mystical exoticness of a ritualized Tibet. In addition to these books, the spectre of Communism and the flight into self-exile of significant Tibetans opened a western portal into a previously ‘closed’ world. The accessibility of leading Tibetan Buddhists, including His Holiness the fourteenth Dalai Lama, and the subsequent proselytizing of Tibetan Buddhism as a vehicle of peace and compassion were significant at a time when the world feared atomic war and was digging fallout shelters.³

The lack of Americans’ general knowledge about the Asian Other was highlighted in an extensive questionnaire and interview survey conducted by historian Harold Isaacs in the 1950s. In his book, *Scratches on Our Minds*, Isaacs concludes that even well educated Americans were ill informed about Asia.⁴ This ignorance resulted from a paucity of information about Asia, especially in American primary and secondary school curricula. However, America’s involvement in the Cold War (1945-1991), the Korean War (1950-1953) and the Vietnam War (1961-1973) pushed Asia into American newspapers and onto American television screens. More specifically in the case of Tibet, the forcible entry of Communist China into Tibet in 1950 and the flight of H. H. the fourteenth Dalai Lama in 1959, wrenched Tibet out of western imaginings and into the news headlines.⁵ The Asian scratches referred to by Isaacs were becoming gashes, especially under the extreme influences of post WWII *McCarthyism* (illus. 41).⁶

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³ An article on personal saving patterns highlights the instability caused by nuclear fears since the late 1940s in response to the perceived nuclear threat. Slemrod, J. 1984: 42-43.

⁴ Isaacs interviewed 181 selected individuals who were involved in the flow of ideas and information into the public arena. This included academics, government officials (current and ex), missionary groups, business and media representatives. For a comprehensive list, see Isaacs, H. 1958: 11-35. An earlier geography textbook survey in 1946 found that only 7% of the assigned school texts focus was on Asia, and most of that dealt with China. Committee on Asiatic Studies. 1946. The New York Asia Society still believes that American schools remain under informed and has developed specific programs which sponsor and encourage schools to prepare children by teaching them about Asia. Steinmann, N.K. et al. 2001.


⁶ Isaacs, H. 1956: 210. *McCarthyism* was an American anti-communist movement, which attacked many prominent Americans. It was beginning to wane by the mid-fifties.
Like maps, museums essentialize culture by delineating space and time into an instructive package. Museums present a condensed version of the geographical and cultural world demarcated by the frame in which the non-western objects sit. While maps trace out boundary lines, museums invariably (re)present cultures in an orchestrated sequence, which is suspended at a moment in time. Framed as static and timeless, in contrast to America’s progressiveness, the maps and museums harness western scientific and scholarly knowledge to write the Other into prevailing western socio-political ideologies. Social scientist Tony Bennett observed the interrelationship of power and knowledge in the exhibition of the Other. He noted that museums provide a ‘spectacle of power’ by ordering and positioning knowledge to appear both natural and permanent. The Other sits inside the glass case, while the western gaze outside the glass exoticizes and constructs the narrative for those inside.

Museums also use the gaze to construct and maintain identities which illustrate differences and sameness between ‘them’ and ‘us.’ Art historians Donald Preziosi and Claire Farago acknowledge this faculty of museums. They stated “museums are essential sites for the fabrication and perpetuation of our conception of ourselves as autonomous individuals with unique subjectivities.” The forming of the modern self juxtaposed against the representation of the Other is reflected in the development of museums as exhibition spaces. The modern nation was advanced by the socio-political ideologies of colonial and imperial governments (us) in contrast to less developed nations (them). By the end of the nineteenth century, the western world had ordered the world to position itself in the centre and the Other on the periphery.

This chapter is divided into three parts and is complemented by the illustrations in Volume 2. The first, Collecting Tibetan artifacts ‘in the field,’ provides four

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8 Bennett argued that museums were an early instruction for self-regulation, by demonstrating the power of knowledge and self-surveillance—to know is to act and control. Bennett, T. 1988: 76, 79.
brief encounters with how Tibetan artefacts were collected by museums and individuals. The first encounter, *Early contact*, features the American-born missionary Dr Albert Shelton and his role in introducing Tibetan objects to the Newark Museum. The second encounter focuses on *Museum-led Expeditions*. This example presents museum representatives Bernard Laufer and later Suydam Cutting, who both collected for the American Museum of Natural History (AMNH). The third encounter, *Personal Crusaders*, introduces Nicholas Roerich and Jacques Marchais and their fascination with the cultural world of Tibet, while the fourth encounter, *Shopping for the exotic*, illustrates that the collecting feat of American lawyer William Whitney was aided by the availability of Tibetan objects on the western market from early in the twentieth century.

The second part considers what Asian art was collected by institutions, how it was displayed, including institutional attitudes towards Tibetan objects prior to 1969. *Museum acquisitions of Tibetan objects: 1955–1973*, surveys the range of Asian art collecting prior to, and the ground work for, the 1969 transformation. This information is drawn from the published *Archives of Asian Art*, which lists the museums collecting Asian art and details what they were collecting.¹¹

The third part asks the obvious question—why was Tibetan art not Tibetan art prior to 1969? The term art was applied to Tibetan objects prior to 1969 but I argue that the application was in association with the broader generic category of art of which fine art is a subset. This chapter sets out to establish that there was no art discourse specific to Tibetan objects by which museum professionals and the marketplace could converse on their aesthetic merits and value as art objects. Such discourse is a prerequisite to the construction of an artworld, value creation and the evolution of masterpiece classification. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the American public was unfamiliar with Tibetan objects. The public had yet to see and therefore know Tibetan art.

¹¹ *Archives of Asian Art* began in 1945 as the *Archives of the Chinese Art Society of America* with the intention of promoting Chinese art. After 19 volumes, the journal changed its name to *Archives of Asian Art* in 1965 to incorporate all of Asia.
Collecting Tibetan artefacts ‘in the field’

Overview

From a Eurocentric perspective America was a cultural void—a new nation—that needed the ‘civilizing’ structure of taste and refinement. The British and European museums relied on the legacy of conquering empires to fill their museums (illus. 42a-b), whereas the American museums courted their travelling citizens. The MET curator of prints Hyatt Mayor noted in 1957 that American museum collections were built on the generosity of many American citizens. He noted that the industriousness of Americans had taken them all over the world and that collecting added “romance” to such ventures. Mayor wrote, “[American museum] art collections, like our industrial organization, are our heritage from the heroic age of American enterprise.” By the late nineteenth century, many wealthy American collectors were focused on acquiring European arts including armoury, musical instruments, fine furniture and ceramics. It was common practice for American collectors such as Andrew Carnegie (1835-1919), John P. Morgan (1837-1913) and J. Paul Getty (1892-1975) to cross the Atlantic on ‘buying’ visits (illus. 43). The obsessive American desire to build large

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12 For example, the British Museum was given a 17.8 in. (48.2 cm.) high gilt bronze standing figure of Vajradhara, two finely carved wooden book covers and a chased circular silver box. While a year later, Sir Charles Bell presented 68 printed books and 12 manuscripts, which included biographies of historic Dalai Lamas and an “inventory of the rare images in the great temple of Lhasa.” Joyce, T.A. 1932: 54-55; Barnett, L.D. 1933: 12-13. See also Carrington, M. 2003.

13 Mayor, H.A. 1957: 85, 88, 94. Mayor presents a brief history of important Far Eastern collections given to the MET prior to 1957. He does not mention Tibetan artifacts.

14 For an entertaining thumbnail portrait of over a dozen American collectors, including: Charles Lang Freer, J. Pierpont Morgan, Isabella Stewart Gardner, the Rockefellers, see Saarinen, A. 1968. Morgan was an important trustee and benefactor to the MET. For an outline of his largesse to the MET, see Strouse, J. 2000.
collections concerned the Europeans, who at different times contemplated export licenses.\textsuperscript{15}

These Americans had considerable resources and the need to fill the cultural void of their fledgling nation. Historian, Lillian Miller, reported American collectors were reluctant to take a punt on the unusual. They preferred the conservative safety of European art circles.\textsuperscript{16} The wealthy U.S. citizen was very conscious of being seen to demonstrate the right taste, especially as their nation was considered brash and uncultured. Social scientist Paul Mattick Jr noted that by the 1890s America’s “worship of art came to express the claim of capitalist society’s highest orders to transcend the confines of commerce as worthy inheritors of the aristocratic culture of the past.”\textsuperscript{17} The possession of the right art accentuated connoisseurship, moral correctness and economic strength.\textsuperscript{18}

However, this did not mean the Americans neglected to collect or were uninterested in Asian art. Early on, merchants from the eastern seaboard, particularly Boston and Philadelphia returned with Asian objects, in particular ‘chinaware’ teacups and textiles.\textsuperscript{19} For example, in the 1830s after 12 years trading in China, Nathan Dunn having left bankrupt and destitute, returned to Philadelphia a wealthy man. He also returned with a large collection of Chinese objects and natural history specimens. Dunn provided funding to build the Philadelphia Museum.\textsuperscript{20} He also rented the ground floor of the museum to mount

\textsuperscript{15} For a discussion on international art trade, see Frey, B.S. and Pommerehne, W.W. 1989: 119-133.
\textsuperscript{16} Miller, L. 1966: 225.
\textsuperscript{17} Mattick Jr, P. 2000: 66.
\textsuperscript{18} Miller, L. 1966: 219.
\textsuperscript{19} The importation of Chinese porcelain and curios was highlighted in a 1941 exhibition, The China Trade, at the MET. A cake plate on display was a gift to Martha Washington, the wife of George Washington by Dutch ambassador and member of a Dutch East India Company trading embassy to Peking in 1796, Andreas Everardus van Braam Houckgeest. He became an American citizen and exhibited a large collection of his Chinese curiosities at his Philadelphian residence, China Retreat. Downs, J. 1941. In 1954, another exhibition was curated specifically on Philadelphia trade with China from 1784 to 1844, see Lee, J. 1984.
\textsuperscript{20} The Philadelphia Museum also had formed an association with the Charles Wilson Peale Museum. When the new building was completed, a truncated Peale Museum was housed on the second floor, which by then was run by Peale’s son, Ruebens.
his numerous exhibits. Historian John Rogers Haddad noted that Dunn’s museum contrasted with the knowledge then circulating about the Chinese by displaying “authentic objects” which gave the viewer “a sense of immediacy and therefore the feeling that one had been transported to China.” Dunn’s fashioned scenes included life-like scenes of everyday Chinese activities, such as a Chinese citizen purchasing silk from a merchant and a street scene in which a wealthy Chinese gentleman was carried in a sedan chair. He set out to give Americans a rounded view of the Chinese (illus. 44). To this end, he produced a substantial catalogue to explain many of the exhibits. Demonstrating America’s intrigue with the exotic, Dunn sold 50,000 catalogues in just three years.

Since Dunn, other Americans have travelled and avidly collected Asian art. One such collector was Charles Lang Freer (1854-1919) who presented his collection to the American people in 1916. According to the Freer Museum digital collection currently available on the internet, he collected 17 Tibetan objects: 13 thangkas; 2 sculptures—one marble and the other ivory; a prayer-wheel; and, an amulet case (illus. 45a-q). Many less recognized American identities also built strong Asian collections, including Denman Ross (1853-1935) who gave almost 11,000 Asian objects to the Boston Museum in 1917. Mrs Henry Osborne Havemeyer’s bequest to the MET in 1929 comprised exceptional examples of Asian art and included 22 Chinese paintings, 11 Japanese screens, 820 Japanese prints, ceramics and lacquer. The Avery Brundage (1887-1975) collection of 9,000 Asian objects was acquired by the San Francisco Asian Art Museum in 1964.

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24 Mansfield, H. 1935.
25 Bearing in mind that not all the Freer collection may be available on the website. For a collection biography see Fisher, R.E. 1986: 9-28.
26 Dimand, M.S. 1930.
27 For a summary see, Pal, P. 1969a: 3-28. For the collecting biography of the leading early Asian Art collectors, see Pal, P. 1986. The Brundage collection included over 300 Tibetan objects of which 120 were thangkas. Shangraw, C.F. 29-52. See also Conn, S. 2000.
The stimulus to collect ‘fine’ Asian art was lead by the Boston Museum of Fine Art (MFA). The collecting motivations of the MFA under the guidance of curator Ernest Fenollosa were exhibited in the Japanese Hō-ō-Den at the 1893 Columbian Exposition (illus. 46a-d). He was asked by the Japanese government to select the art for the Hō-ō-Den.28 while holding a position at the Imperial University at Tokyo, he had helped found the Tokyo Fine Arts Academy and the Imperial Museum. Fenollosa returned to America to care for the large Japanese art collection the MFA acquired from him. In 1910, two years after Fenollosa’s death, the Boston Museum appointed his Japanese assistant, Okakura Kakuzo to care for the MFA Japanese collection. This appointment was followed in 1917 by another indigenous appointment, the Sri Lankan-born Ananda K. Coomaraswamy. Fifty years later Boston appointed Bengali-born Pratapaditya Pal as keeper of an extensive collection of Indian and Himalayan art built by Coomaraswamy.29 These men were important in focusing attention on their specialist fields, attracting external funding, gifts, and promoting their passion to their museum constituents and other institutions.

While Pal drew attention to Tibetan art in 1969, this did not mean that Tibetan art was absent from the American art market prior to this date. On the contrary, from early in the twentieth century there appears to have been considerable Tibetan objects available in the west for exhibition and collection. Within the vicinity of New York, there were five influential museums with holdings of Tibetan objects. The American Museum of Natural History (AMNH) was founded in 1869 and acquired many of its Tibetan exhibits from their ‘in the field’ expeditions. Two years later the Metropolitan Museum of Art (MET) was established using the British Museum and Victoria and Albert museums as

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28 For a biography of Fenollosa see, Brooks, V. W. 1962. The Japanese exhibit at the 1893 Chicago exposition had a marked effect of a number of Americans, including architect Frank Lloyd Wright, see Nute, K.H. et al. 1993.
29 Okakura wrote among other books The Book of Tea. For biographical details see Weston, V. 2004; Benfey, C. 2003. Ananda K. Coomaraswamy was also a prolific writer. See Lipsey, R. 1977 for a selection of his papers; and Kamaliah, K. C. 1977 for his biography. Pal also has numerous publications to his name, see bibliography. For an overview of Pal’s impact and opinions, see interview conducted by Casey Singer, J. 2000.
collecting models. The MET's intention was to collect and exhibit the world's artistic heritage. This inclusive aim was demonstrated in the development of a large plaster cast gallery featuring copies of classic sculptures and fragments of architectural monuments (illus. 47a-b).\textsuperscript{30} Across the Hudson River, the Newark Museum was established in 1909, with a focus on promoting the appreciation of the arts and sciences.\textsuperscript{31} Charismatic Russian-born Nicholas Roerich established the Roerich Museum in 1928 to promote belief in the universal beauty of art objects from all cultures. The Jacques Marchais Museum of Tibetan Art on Staten Island was founded in 1945, with the soul purpose of showcasing Tibetan culture.

\begin{quote}
\textbf{Missionaries: Shelton}

Notable early twentieth century importers of Tibetan material into the U.S. were missionaries.\textsuperscript{32} The historian Thomas Askew noted that Christian foreign missions were responsible for stimulating the popular imagination and wherever missionaries went trade followed.\textsuperscript{33} Curios were very often collected from the 'heathen' indigenous population, who proved their readiness for Christian conversion by relinquishing their personal talismans and other sacred paraphernalia. This material was either destroyed on the spot or sent home as curiosities. Biographer Douglas Wissing commented that collecting indigenous
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\textsuperscript{30} These casts were seen as an efficient way to acquire classic and famous works of art to educate the American public, design students and artists. Anon. "To have new treasures." 1891; Anon. "Sunday at the Museum." 1891; Anon. "Models as Teaching Material." 1915; Noble, J.V. 1959.

\textsuperscript{31} Founding director of the Museum, John Cotton Dana pushed to make the museum relevant to the public through exhibitions and education. Low, T.L. 1942: 9-12.

\textsuperscript{32} The American Protestant missionaries were active in China by the early seventeenth century. They focused on medicine and education as a way of gaining access to the Chinese population. Early missionaries were very often interpreters and political advisers to the U.S. government, facilitated trade and compiled books on Chinese language and customs. At the same time, Rankin noted that these missionaries were not motivated by personal gain. Rankin, H. 1907. The important role of missionaries in forming the Brooklyn Museum was recounted in a recent article celebrating the refurbishment of their Asian art collection. Poster, A. 2004: 59.

\textsuperscript{33} Askew, T. 2000: 148. The New Haven Oriental Society in their 1871 proceedings reports that during the summer their committee had sent out letters to all the American missionaries in the eastern countries "urging on them a continuance and increase of the active and fruitful interest which they had generally taken in the Society, from the time of its first establishment." Hadley, Prof. 1871: xxx.
cultural artefacts was almost a “cottage industry” for missionaries. He further noted that these collections helped missionaries to understand those who they were trying to convert. Missionaries such as Moravian Ladakh-based August Herman Francke spent their lifetime in the pursuit of indigenous knowledge. He published widely on folklore, music, art customs and archaeology, at the same time Francke translated indigenous texts and was involved in translating the *Old Testament* into Tibetan. In some cases, the collected artefacts “served as lurid attractions” at fund-raising meetings, where the proceeds of their sale supplemented the missionary’s sparse salaries or financed specific projects ‘in the field’ (illus. 48).

Co-operation between missionaries and American museums is evidenced as early as 1900 when the Foreign Missions Conference was held in New York. The organizers of this conference arranged for missionary curios, artefacts and photographs to be exhibited at the AMNH. The organizers of the missionary exhibit stated that “the object of the Exhibit was to convey through the eye some conceptions of the work of the Foreign Mission Boards.” To this end requested photographs, illustrations, data and examples of missionary work and their converts. The Ecumenical Conference attracted up to 200,000 attendees and 50,000 visited the AMNH exhibition over the two weeks. According to the AMNH manuscript catalogue, they received from the missionary exhibition at least one lot of almost 1,000 objects, which were notated in the catalogue as 1900-31. A small number of these were Tibetan (illus. 49; 50a-b).

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35 Smalley, W.A. 1999: 222-223. Francke resided in Ladakh during 1896-1908 and returned to research in 1909 and 1914. As a German national, he was interned by British authorities in 1914 and later refused permission to visit Ladakh. After the war, he became Professor of Tibetan Studies at the Berlin University. See also Francke, A.H. 1914-1926: Vol. 38.
Reynolds, V. 1999: 11.
38 Askew, T. 2000: 146, 148. For exhibit guidelines, see Anon. “Missionary Exhibit.” 1900. The dates of the Missionary Exhibition were from April 21st to May 1st 1900.
39 Smith, H. 1901. This letter discussing the sale of some Indian material notes that the AMNH is “certainly anxious to have the co-operation of all people interested in building up museums.”
The relationship between AMNH and missionaries did not finish with the 1900 Conference. In the introductory chapter, it was noted that the AMNH purchased over 400 objects from the Moravian missionary Herman Marx in 1921 (illus. 51; 52a-b; 53a-b). The New York Times announced this purchase with the headline *The Devil-Ridden People of Tibet*. Marx reported in the article that the Tibetans were "surpassingly ignorant and superstitious people." He is quoted to have said that the "rugged barrenness of the country has impressed its mark upon them" [and] "In regard to spiritual things they seem to be unable to help themselves. They live in constant fear of spirits, good and bad, powerful and weak." The dance, costumes and paraphernalia empower the performers to attract and entrap the evil spirits. Marx argued it was for this reason that ritualized devil dances are repeatedly performed.\(^{40}\) A set of costumes and ritual paraphernalia were secretly removed from the monastery and given to Marx, these were subsequently acquired by the AMNH (illus. 54).

Eleven years after the Ecumenical Conference, the two-year old Newark Museum, hosted an exhibition of Tibetan artefacts collected by the American missionary Dr Albert Shelton. He had been encouraged to collect Tibetan curios by AMNH curator Bernard Laufer, who was on a collecting expedition in China.\(^{41}\) Shelton and his family had a medical outpost in the Kham province on the Chinese-Tibetan border. This district was politically volatile with constant clashes between Chinese, Tibetans and bandit hordes in the hinterland. Many indigenous Tibetans were disadvantaged, their temples destroyed and their landholdings seized by the Chinese (illus. 55). The Tibetan objects offered to Shelton were either (dis)located or personal possessions sold in dire circumstances (illus. 56a-b; 57a-b; 58a-c).\(^{42}\) He reported that he could buy

\(^{40}\) Anon. "The Devil-Ridden People of Tibet." 1921.

\(^{41}\) At the time, Laufer was collecting for the Field Museum, Chicago. Wissing, D. 2004: 110. Shelton refers to the Tibetan artefacts as ‘curios.’ Shelton was regarded as the ‘David Livingston’ celebrity of America, especially after Chinese bandits kidnapped him. Wissing, D. 2004: 202-203.

\(^{42}\) Olson, E. 1950: 48.
bronze statues for USD12.00, copper statues for USD15 cents and charm boxes for 12 rupees.\textsuperscript{43}

In 1911, on the sea voyage home to America with his first collection of Tibetan artefacts, Shelton met on board a trustee of the newly formed Newark Museum, Edward N. Crane. A result of this chance meeting was a Tibetan exhibition shortly thereafter. It was a great success, attracting crowds of over 100 visitors a day.\textsuperscript{44} On Crane's unexpected death, his family purchased the Shelton collection and donated it to the Newark Museum as a memorial. Shelton sold a further three collections to the museum in 1914, 1918 and 1920.\textsuperscript{45} The Newark Museum maintained contact with missionaries and were to purchase collections from Robert Ekvall in 1928,\textsuperscript{46} Carter D. Holton in 1936 and Robert Roy Service in 1948.\textsuperscript{47} Since then the Newark has continued to expand its Tibetan collection and today holds an extensive collection of Tibetan art, built initially on the collections of missionaries.

**Museum-led Expeditions: The AMNH**

Museums did not leave the accumulation of their collections solely in the hands of their nations generous citizens. Museum trustees and curators were often keen to collect objects that belonged to particular categories or originated from specific regions. From the beginning, trustees were intimately associated with their museums. They very often provided funds to purchase specific item(s), initiated collection expeditions, or left large bequests. The AMNH was founded on the success of a three-year elite citizen funded expedition to the East Indian

\textsuperscript{43} Wissing, D. 2004: 110-111. USD12.00 in 1910 was worth just under USD240.00 in 2006. Calculations 2006. At today's auction prices a 17th century bronze statue about 7-8 inches high carries an estimate of USD8,000-12,000.

\textsuperscript{44} Reynolds, V. 1999: 12. From February to June, 1911, 17,724 people visited the exhibition.

\textsuperscript{45} Shelton was killed by bandits in 1922 on his way to negotiate the opening of a missionary hospitable in Lhasa.

\textsuperscript{46} Ekvall also had connections with the AMNH and the Chicago Field Museum. He alsohunted wildlife specimens. For a poignant tale of shooting rare 'eared' pheasants on the Chinese-Tibetan border see Ekvall, R.E. 1939.

\textsuperscript{47} Olson, E. 1950: 47-50.
Archipelago. Thereafter, mounting expeditions to venture ‘into the field’ became an important method used by the AMNH to build their Chinese and Tibetan collections.

At the instigation of AMNH curator Franz Boas, German-born Berthold Laufer joined the Jessup North Pacific Expedition (1898-1899) to Northern China to study indigenous tribes. After the material Laufer had collected was stored at the AMNH, he returned to China to lead the Jacob H. Schiff Expedition to China, 1901–1904. Boas instructed Laufer to document the every day life of Chinese and to assemble the sequential elements of Chinese manufacture, such as silk and porcelain. Laufer had greater success in collecting artefacts than he did in gathering step by step manufacturing processes. The Chinese were suspicious of his motives and hampered his movements. Further, to collect each step meant long term residency, which was not encouraged under the Chinese travel permit system. The collection emphasis prescribed by Boas was not on the oldest or rarest, but on inclusive and comparative collections. Laufer and Boas were in written communication over the collection focus and Boas reproached Laufer for

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48 The idea of a natural history museum in New York belonged to Albert Smith Bickmore. He purposefully set out to court the men that became the AMNH founders. Bickmore initially approached them for a small contribution towards an expedition he was planning to the East Indian Archipelago (Borneo, Java, Spice Islands and Malaysian Peninsula). On his return, he paraded the results of his three-year expedition. They were impressed and agreed to support the establishment of the AMNH. On April 6, 1869 Theodore Roosevelt Sr (philanthropist), William E. Dodge Jr (merchant and mining magnate), Joseph Choate (lawyer), Morris K. Jessup (banker and manufacturer) and J. Pierpont Morgan (financier and banker) signed the AMNH charter. Theodore Roosevelt Jr. and his sons, Kermit and Quentin, were to form strong attachments to the AMNH, as was Jessup, who funded Laufer’s long expedition to Asia. Haraway, D. 1984-1985: 20-64.

49 For a contemporary biographical memoir on Laufer see Latourette, K.S. 1936; see also Hummel, A.W.1936, for a list of Laufer’s research papers.

50 Industrialist Morris Jessup funded the Jessup expedition. He was a founder and appointed president of the AMNH. The expedition remains the most ambitious ethnographic/anthropological project, it was planned by Franz Boas and researched both sides of the Bering Strait—Siberia, Alaska and North-west Canada.

51 Jacob H. Schiff was a wealthy banker and colleague of Jessup. He had already helped fund U.S. diplomat and Tibetologist William Rockhill’s travels into Tibet. Adler, C. 3003: 39.

52 Laufer, B. “Dear Professor.” 1903. In this letter, Laufer noted the difficulties in obtaining sequential elements such as the time needed to wait for the silk worm to be made into silk. There was also reluctance on the part of the Chinese to divulge the manufacturing processes for such products as silk, porcelain and brick.
being distracted and collecting historical works.\textsuperscript{53} The Chinese material sent back by Laufer included Tibetan material.

It is interesting to view the examples collected, especially from the masterpiece-consciousness of the twenty-first century. The surprise is the quantity and quality collected. Illustrations 59, 60 and 61 consisting of 48 thumbnails of Tibetan objects collected by Laufer, including 17 black hats, six thunderbolts, and nine fans using the same material, colour decoration and folded in the same manner. The repetition of so many black hats highlights the disparate quality between them, such as the bent finials but workmanship and style seems unchanged. Similarly, all six thunderbolts appear to exhibit the same workmanship and design. Illustration 62 depicts eight thangkas collected by Laufer reflecting the emphasis placed on collecting comparative examples rather than unique or rare objects. The museums and their collectors were saving the past—even the mundane and damaged—for the future. Fluent in Chinese, Laufer was a prodigious collector. He built the foundations of the Chinese and Tibetan collections at AMNH and was to build an even larger collection at the Chicago Field Museum.\textsuperscript{54}

The wealthy banker, naturalist and explorer Suydam Cutting followed on from Laufer as a collector for the AMNH. With his travel companion Arthur Vernay, they traversed large areas of China and regional Tibet. This included a hunting trip with Kermit and Theodore Roosevelt on the western Chinese-Tibetan border in 1928 for a rare giant panda, which was to be a permanent exhibit at the AMNH (illus. 63).\textsuperscript{55} Three years later, Cutting concluded in a report on his travels to the Tibetan plateau, that “Foreigners as a rule should have no business in Tibet. It

\textsuperscript{53} Walravens, H. 1980: 519-522. Collecting rubbings of inscriptions and monument engravings was a common practice at the turn of the century. Laufer collected over 4,000 rubbings. Many of these were collected during his time at the AMNH.

\textsuperscript{54} Of the almost 24,000 Chinese artefacts in the Field Museum, Laufer collected almost three quarters of these between 1908 and 1923. Field Museum. “Press release: China at The Field.”

\textsuperscript{55} Roosevelt, K. 1930.
can never become a tourist route." To his mind, the land was too harsh and unproductive (illus. 64a). In that same year, Cutting was again given permission to travel within regional Tibet. All the while, he was courting good relations by distributing many gifts to Tibetan officials. For example, he mentions the gift of Hammacher Schlemmer aluminium wares to two head men; a cuckoo clock to the Gyantse Governor; he also sent a self-winding wrist watch to each of the five members of the Kashag at Lhasa; and he gave his last cuckoo clock to the Governor of Khampa Dzong (illus. 64b). Cutting's gifts to H.H. the thirteenth Dalai Lama included: a gold self-winding wrist watch, a pair of dachshunds, a long glass cocktail shaker (for mixing his buttered tea), books on American architecture, a chair with a folding canopy, silver plated polar bears on agate, an ornamental glass bowl, some fine woollen blankets and another pair of dogs, this time Dalmatians.

His Holiness the thirteenth Dalai Lama responded with the gift of five Lhasa Apso dogs and following his death the Regent sent Cutting another two Lhasa Apso (illus. 65a-c). The "temporary passing away" of H.H. the thirteenth Dalai Lama in December 1933 delayed Cutting's travel into Tibet (illus. 66). In 1935, he was given permission to travel as far as Shigatse. Once there he applied to visit Lhasa. He and Vernay gained permission shortly thereafter (illus. 67). Cutting noted that their "real objective" while in Tibet was to collect botanic specimens for Kew Gardens in England and ethnographic artefacts for AMNH. Cutting wrote,

As soon as the populace learned of the latter interest, masses of people congregated outside our house with many articles of

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56 Cutting was independently wealthy and funded his expeditions along with other philanthropic gifts. He was on the board of trustees for the AMNH. He was also an Honorary Member and Patron of the Chicago Field Museum and gave funding to their expeditions. In addition, Cutting was also a benefactor of Tibetan artefacts to the Newark Museum. After the first trip with Vernay, Cutting and his wife were invited to visit Lhasa in 1937, where again they were collecting artefacts, but also plant specimens for the Brooklyn Botanical Gardens. Helen Cutting is pictured with her husband in front of the Newark altar which was built in 1934.Cutting, C.S. 1931: 626.
57 The Kashag were the Tibetan civil administration council.
58 Cutting noted that while these dogs lived they were not reproducing unlike the Lhasa Apos that H.H. the 13th Dalai Lama had sent to him. As an aside, recent research suggests that introduced species to the altitude of Tibet, including humans, have difficulty in maintaining the placenta. Lapaire, O. et al. 2009: 276.
59 See bibliography reference, Lhasa Apso.
60 Cutting, C.S.1936b.
ethnographical value to sell. All the things which the Tibetans use in their daily life and the objects used ceremonially in the temples were offered for sale. This was exactly what we wanted.\footnote{Cutting, C.S. 1936b: 108.}

When they returned to America an exhibition of 161 Tibetan objects was held at AMNH from May 11 to May 16, 1936 (illus. 68; 69; 70; 71; 72).\footnote{This exhibition is discussed further in chapter five on art exhibition catalogues.} Again, these items demonstrate the desire to collect a sample of all types of everyday objects including comparative examples. Cutting published the story of his journey to Lhasa in the AMNH journal, \textit{Natural History}. This was the fourth feature article on the Tibetan region in the journal in almost as many years (illus. 73).\footnote{Cutting, C.S. "Among the Nomads of Tibet." (1931): 615-26. Cutting, C.S. "Agriculturists of Tibet." 32.3 (1932): 289-99. Morden, William J. "Beyond the Vale of Kashmir." (1932): 4-21. Cutting, C.S. "In Lhasa—The Forbidden." (1936b): 103-23. Ekvall, Robert B. "The Eared Pheasant." (1939): 47-51. Roosevelt, Quentin. "In the Land of the Devil Priests." (1940): 197-209. The latter article titled 'In the Land of the Devil Priests' was written by 20 year old Quentin Roosevelt II, grandson of President Theodore Roosevelt. He recorded his journey and collecting experiences whilst in the borderlands of China-Tibet in 1938. Quentin was in China to buy ancient Nashi scrolls for the MFA. Also in the 15 cases of artefacts he brought back from China were 1,073 Naxi (Nashi) manuscripts destined for the U.S. Library of Congress. Anon "Quentin Roosevelt back." 1939.} In 1937, Cutting was again invited to visit Lhasa, this time with his wife Helen (illus. 65b-c).\footnote{Helen Cutting was a trustee of the Newark Museum from 1943 to her death in 1961. She was a generous benefactor to Newark over those years. Gaskell, I. 2003: 152.}

**Personal Crusaders: Roerich and Marchais**

Some individuals find passion and strength in a cause. Both artist Nicholas Roerich and museum founder Jacques Marchais found their inspiration in Tibetan culture and strove to reach an American audience by sharing their understanding of Tibet and its cultural artifacts. Mattick Jr noted that collecting and displaying objects is not just exhibiting a "trace of the past" but also brings meaning into the present.\footnote{Mattick Jr, P. 2003: 113.} The personal crusade of both Roerich and Marchais echoed this sentiment as they sought to understand the present through an imagined Tibetan past. They believed Tibet held the keys to understanding the Other, to
promoting tolerance and compassion between all cultures. Roerich traversed areas of Tibet, while Marchais never left America.

Nicholas Roerich arrived in New York with his family in 1920 for an exhibition tour of 28 cities, beginning at the Kingore Gallery in New York (illus. 74a-b). His Russian reputation ensured a successful opening night. The excitement and his personal charisma appealed to New York's intellectual, political and artistic elite. Roerich quickly developed a following and in just three years, he had convened a number of cultural organizations, chief among them were the Masters Institute and Roerich Museum (illus. 75). To facilitate a community of like-minded people, a modern skyscraper was designed as the Roerich headquarters to house activities including music rooms, lecture halls, meeting rooms, a large performance hall, a restaurant, the Roerich Museum, a Tibetan altar, referred to as the Hall of the East and floors of apartments above (illus. 76a-b). Before the building was underway Roerich left on an expedition to Central Asia in 1925 until 1928. Nicholas, his wife Helen and their eldest son George travelled through Kashmir, the Gobi desert, Mongolia and Tibet undertaking research and collecting artefacts (illus. 77a-c). The scientific expedition was said to be searching for ancient material traces of man's first spiritual aspirations. However, Roerich was also following his own spiritual

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66 A Russian-born painter, scientist [archaeologist] and spiritualist Roerich was 46, when he arrived in New York, with his wife, Helena and two sons. He was a charismatic character with an established European pedigree in the arts, including designing sets and costumes for Stravinsky, Diaghilev and Nijinsky. For Roerich biography see Dexter, J. 1989; Drayer, R.A. 2004.

67 In 1923, the banker and businessman, Louis Horch invested USD1,000,000 for a permanent home for the Master Institute. Horch split with Roerich after the U.S. Internal Revenue Service filed a claim against Roerich for outstanding taxes. Horch successfully argued that the building and the art collections stored in America belonged to him. The original Roerich Museum changed its name to the Riverside Museum, while a reduced Roerich Museum continued nearby. Drayer, R.A. 2004: 245-270.

68 For journey details see Nicholas Roerich Altai-Himalaya: A travel diary or George Roerich Trails to Innermost Asia: Five Years of Exploration with the Roerich Central Asian Expedition. The eldest Roerich son, George, studied Eastern languages, including Sanskrit, Pali, Mongolian and Tibetan at the School for Oriental Studies, London; Harvard; and the Sorbonne. He published a book on Tibetan Paintings in 1925, while in 1949 he published Blue Annals, a translation of an historical text by Tibetan scholar Gos lo-tsa-ba gZon-nu cpal (1392-1481). The younger brother, Svetoslav, became an artist and lived much of his life in India.

69 Roerich was also keen to find traces of Christian Jesus in the Himalayas, where he was known as Issa. A fellow Russian, Nicolas Notovitch reported that a Tibetan lama had dictated to him an ancient Tibetan manuscript that told the stories of Issa in Tibet. The New York Times reports his
aspirations and searching for the Tibetan spiritual world of Shambala, where preparations were underway for the future apocalyptic event (illus. 78a-b).  

Reminiscent of western utopian ideals, Shambala would bring harmony to humanity and “All sinners against Shambhala will perish ... because they have exhausted mercy.” In the early 1930s, Roerich popularized this Tibetan mystical utopia of Shambala in publications and on a lecture tour in the States.

For Roerich, the spreading of culture was the key to understanding those who appeared alien to us. To this end, the Roerich Museum and the associated International Art Centre (IAC) continuously circulated ten exhibitions to other museums, universities, libraries, factory floors, schools and hospitals. The central focus of the Roerich phenomenon was the Master Institute skyscraper, which opened in October 1929. Attendance figures for February 1930 to 1931 were over 200,000 visitors, which included over 7,000 visitors in the last two weeks of that period. The inaugural exhibition was 150 Tibetan objects, titled a “Rare Series of Tibetan Banners, Paintings and Art Objects gathered by the Roerich Central Asia Expedition.” This exhibition also included thangkas discussed by George Roerich in his book on Tibetan Paintings published in 1925. He discussed 37 thangkas, 17 of these were illustrated in black and white and

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70 John McCannon noted that a personal goal of Roerich’s was to establish a “pan-Buddhist state”—a physical kingdom of Shambala, where humanity would wait for the coming of Maitreya, the future Buddha. McCannon, J. 2002: 168. Interestingly, Younghusband noted in a report on the results of the British Mission, that Waddell was also looking for evidence of Shambala and the Mahatmas. Younghusband wrote, “Colonel Waddell was unable to discover any secrets of the ancient world said to be hidden in Tibet” Younghusband, F. 1985 [1912]: 337.

71 Roerich, M. 1990 [1930]: 1-33; quote pp.5. Roerich’s Shambala is a possible inspiration for the Shangri-la in the novel, Lost Horizon.

72 Grant, F. 1931a: 6. The circulating collections consisted of: “Brazilian art; contemporary American art; paintings by Ramonde [De] Zubriaurre; Tibetan Banner paintings; Russian ikons; watercolours by American artists; paintings by Alexander Cheko-Potocka; watercolours and drawings by students of the Master Institute and the Roerich Museum, and reproductions of paintings by Nicholas Roerich.”

73 Grant, F. 1931a: 4. In that same year, the Master Institute hosted 85 lectures and held 20 concerts. Grant, F. 1931b: 14.

one as the frontispiece in colour.\textsuperscript{75} The book was available for purchase, along with a catalogue of the exhibition.

Like the earlier Theosophists, Roerich believed that ‘historical’ Tibet had important teachings for current humanity.\textsuperscript{76} While his wife maintained a Theosophical-styled ethereal relationship with the \textit{Mahatmas}, Roerich sought traces of Tibet’s wisdom in Tibet’s material culture. Roerich wrote “There still is left to us the interest in ikonography and the symbolism of images! To study it is highly instructive. You may find many forgotten occult laws.” Despite the current degradation of Tibetan arts, Roerich predicted that “The regeneration of Tibet will come” and “the appreciation of ancient Tibetan art will increase still more.”\textsuperscript{77}

The early twentieth century Tibetan representation was not without context. To enhance western appreciation the Roerich Museum featured a permanent ‘authentic-styled’ Tibetan altar. Opened in 1929, it preceded another Tibetan altar at the Newark Museum, which opened in 1935. And yet another Tibetan altar was opened in 1947 at the Jacques Marchais Museum of Tibetan Art on Staten Island (illus. 79a-b; 80 insert; 81 insert). All three altars used Tibetan Buddhist colour schemes and motifs to embellish the altar structures. Also reminiscent of Tibetan Buddhist altars were the tiered levels. Offering cups and ritual paraphernalia sat on the lowest tier and the larger important sculptures sat or emerged on the top tier. Behind the sculptures and around the walls

\textsuperscript{75} Roerich, G. 1925. At the time, there were virtually no books in English dedicated to the study of Tibetan objects readily accessible to an interested public. The Alice Getty book on the \textit{Gods of Northern Buddhism} was first published in 1914 and a second edition was published in 1928, which suggests that by 1925 it was out of print and unavailable.

\textsuperscript{76} Helena had translated Madame Blavatsky’s book, \textit{The Secret Doctrine} into Russian. More importantly, Blavatsky’s spiritual Masters, particularly Master Morya, had begun communicating with the Roerichs, and later exclusively with Helena. Early on in St Petersburg, Roerich experienced Tibetan Buddhism through Agvan Dorzhiev. Roerich was involved in designing the glass windows for the Buddhist temple that was built by Dorzhiev in St Petersburg. Drayer 2004: 29-30. Dorzhiev was an important player in the \textit{Great Game} between Britain and Russian during the late 1800s, culminating in the British Youngusband Mission into Tibet (1904-05). For the history of the Great Game see Meyer, K.E. and Brysac, S.B. 1999.

\textsuperscript{77} Roerich, N. 1990 [1930]: 76-77. Roerich, N. 1990 [1930]: 72. Roerich may have believed he would be the architect of this regeneration.
thangkas and wall hangings were arranged in a similar manner to the indigenous altars (illus. 82a-c). The Roerich and the Newark museums built adjacent alcoves to hold Tibetan manuscripts, whereas Marchais had a reference library of mostly western origin in another building. The display of Tibetan manuscripts in the Roerich and Newark museums reflects the fact that the curators were engaged in Tibetan research.78 Missing from all the museum altars were the signs of a living presence, such as the acrid fumes from lit butter lamps and the pungent and heavy pall of burning incense.

Jacques Marchais set about funding and building a museum of Tibetan art on Staten Island, New York in 1945. At the time she incorporated the Center as a private, non-profit educational organization.79 Marchais constructed her museum and library buildings out of local fieldstone and timber in the style of a Tibetan mountain temple (illus. 83a).80 According to the H.H. the fourteenth Dalai Lama, who visited the Jacques Marchais Museum in 1991, she succeeded.81 When the Jacques Marchais Center of Tibetan Art was opened in 1947, Life Magazine referred to it as the “New York Lamasery.” Under a photograph of Marchais standing behind a bank of prayer wheels, the caption reads, “probably the only lover of Tibetan culture Staten Island has ever had.”82 A full-page black and white photograph portrays Marchais seated on an ornate Oriental chair in front of a multi-tiered stone altar arranged with Tibetan sculptures and ritual objects, while behind the altar hangs three thangkas (illus. 83b).83 Apart from the altar

78 Both George Roerich and Eleanor Olson (AMNH) used the Newark texts. The Roerich Museum owned a complete set of the sacred Kanjur and Tanjur texts, which were later donated to the Columbia University. Decter, J. 1989: 130.
79 Marchais created substantial myth around her name, family’s origins and her interest in Tibetan art. Marchais Museum curator Barbara Lipton established Marchais was born Edna Coblenz. At the time of her Tibetan passion, her married name was Jacqueline Klauber. She adopted the man’s name, Jacques Marchais, because she believed she would be taken more seriously. Lipton, B. and Ragnubs, N. 1996: 3-11.
80 Lipton, B. and Ragnubs, N. 1996: 3-4. Marchais planned and designed the buildings and worked on construction it, with the assistance of a local stonemason and carpenter. She hauled the fieldstone up the hill in her car boot.
81 Lipton, B. and Ragnubs, N. 1996: 3.
room, commonly referred to as the “chanting room,” the Center had a large collection of over 2,000 Tibetan objects.\textsuperscript{84}

H.H. the fourteenth Dalai Lama noted that the determination and drive of Marchais created an important repository for Tibetan culture, before it came under threat. He stated,

\begin{quote}
In fact, there is a real danger of the disappearance of the unique Tibetan culture. So at such a time, this kind of work is very, very useful, very helpful ... I feel that I see part of a Tibetan antique collection, ancient Tibetan things. I find that the idea for setting up this kind of museum as early as the early 1900’s was quite remarkable.\textsuperscript{85}
\end{quote}

While Marchais’ life and her introduction to Tibetan art are enveloped in myth, the Marchais Museum curator Barbara Lipton noted that Marchais became interested in Tibet around 1933.\textsuperscript{86} This was the same year that the Chicago, Century of Progress International Exposition exhibited \textit{The Chinese Lama Temple: Potala of Jehol} (illus. 84; 85a-c).\textsuperscript{87} This original temple had been sourced by Sven Hedin, financed by Swedish-born businessman Vincent Bendix and documented by Swedish ethnographer Gösta Montell. Hedin arranged to have this ‘perfect’ small temple in the courtyard of a large complex of temple buildings in the north-eastern province copied.\textsuperscript{88} Chinese craftsmen meticulously reproduced the Jehol temple in more than 28,000 pieces.\textsuperscript{89} Montell purchased the furnishings and religious objects to decorate the temple.\textsuperscript{90} Lipton has traced a small number of

\textsuperscript{84} Lipton and Ragnubs noted that the current collection (1996) is close to 1,200 objects. In the years between Marchais’ death in 1948 and 1984 when the museum secured State funding, objects were sold for building upkeep or stolen. Lipton, B. and Ragnubs, N. 1996: 11. The lions pictured on either side of seated Marchais in illus. 83b have been on loan to NYAS since the late sixties.

\textsuperscript{85} Lipton, B. and Ragnubs, N. 1996: 12.

\textsuperscript{86} Lipton, B. and Ragnubs, N. 1996: 10.

\textsuperscript{87} This temple was relocated in 1939 to the New York World’s Fair, ‘Building the World of Tomorrow’ Fair and operated as a ‘girlie’ palace. This is discussed in chapter 6 on New York Asia Week.

\textsuperscript{88} Now known as the Hebei province.

\textsuperscript{89} The copied pieces did not include the larger columns, wooden structure and the roof tiles which were made in America. For the story of finding, replicating and its Chicago location, see Hedin, S. 1932a and b.

\textsuperscript{90} At the time Lamaism in northern China and Mongolia was in decline, the temples were abandoned and much of the original furnishings and ritual objects had been removed. In the same year as the Chicago exposition, the Japanese annexed the Jehol area. The \textit{New York Times}
Marchais acquisitions directly to a Parke-Bernet auction sale of the estate of Vincent Bendix (ills. 86a-e; 87a-f; 88a-f). Marchais was very aware of the Asian art market and to achieve her dream of a Tibetan art museum to "be a help to humanity," she opened a New York-based gallery in 1938 specialising in 'Buddhistic and Near Eastern art' (ills. 89).

Shopping for the exotic

The Jacques Marchais gallery was not an isolated example dealing in Oriental and Tibetan art. While Tibetan objects may not have carried the imprimatur of fine art, there appears to have been by the 1940s a consistent supply of, and demand for Tibetan objects. Marchais commented that in her gallery experience the clientele for Tibetan objects re primarily men. They become preoccupied with "the iconography of Tibetan Lamaism." One such man was New York lawyer William B. Whitney. In 1936, he donated almost 800 Tibetan objects to the American Museum of Natural History (AMNH). The collection included nearly 60 thangkas, 400 images and another 340 miscellaneous Tibetan artefacts and a large number of western-written books on Tibet and its culture. Whitney was an 'inspired' collector amassing his Tibetan collection in just twelve years. He also gave a veiled warning that collecting Tibetan art can be addictive. Whitney wrote, "The only danger is that, once started on the path here so attractively opened up [Gordon's book on iconography], one can never foresee to what lengths he, or she, may be led. Everybody, however, must at times take some risks."

Congratulations the existence of a duplicate temple because whatever happens to the original at the hand of the 'menacing' Japanese, history is preserved. The article recalls the Kalymks (Torgots) extraordinary flight from Russia and resettlement near Jehol. Anon. "Jehol that was." 1933.

91 For a discussion on Tibetan art sources for the Marchais collection, see Lipton, B. and Ragnubs, N. 1996: 13-16.
92 Lipton, B. and Ragnubs, N. 1996: 5.
93 Lipton, B. and Ragnubs, N. 1996: 5.
Whitney was protective of his collection and was a meticulous negotiator with the AMNH over the donation and display of his collection. Although Antoinette Gordon curated this collection, Whitney was intimately involved in the planning and design, not only of the department store-like display but where each artefact would hang or stand (illus. 90). He may have been influenced by the exhibition and sale of over 300 Tibetan bronzes at Macy's department store in 1930, from which he purchased at least one item. The Macy's advertisement featured in the *New York Times* and illustrated a green *Tara* enclosed in a museum case (illus. 91).

After long negotiation and small compromises, Whitney achieved his goal. The William B. Whitney collection was unveiled on December 14, 1936, just six months after the two week Cutting-Vernay exhibition. And while Cutting and Vernay had travelled to Tibet to bring back the collection, Whitney had collected all his Tibetan artefacts without visiting Tibet or Asia. He wrote, that images could be “picked up occasionally in almost any shop or auction room.” There was a well worn route for Europeans and Americans purchasing objects from dealers based in Asia. For example, in 1906 the curator for armoury at the MET, Bashford Dean, on his return from Northern India, noted that dealers in Darjeeling, Calcutta and Delhi are all dealing in Tibetan objects “extracted from forbidden Tibetan monasteries” by the British Mission two years before. He was also aware that these dealers had sold objects into foreign collections through their “foreign correspondents,” in particular scrolls to Paris and Berlin. Whitney’s collection strategies were to always be on the hunt, he noted that there were always items arriving in auction rooms and second-hand stores. He also used small advertisements in newspapers to elicit privately owned Tibetan objects. Neither did Marchais travel outside America. She also relied on local and overseas dealers. Lipton identified Cathay Crafts in Peking as an important

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96 Weyer, E. 1936: 397.
95 The cases desired by Whitney were donated by Cutting.
101 Dean, B. 1906: 97.
supplier to Marchais during 1940 and 1941. In New York, Marchais purchased from the Japanese company Yamanaka and dealers Roland Koscherak and Paul Wasserman.

The British Mission was not the only cause of socio-political upheaval responsible for flooding Tibetan material onto the western market. Other such events included: the 1860 sacking of one of the Emperor’s favoured summer residences by British and French forces and the sacking of the Summer Palace in Peking in 1900 during the Boxer Rebellion. The Chinese entered into Tibet in 1910-12 after the British Mission, they too sacked Tibetan temples. While much of the material was not referred to by its indigenous provenance, museums and individuals were not ignorant of the circumstances for the appearance of such objects. For example, the MET was aware that the three dark blue sacrificial vessels they acquired in 1925 were looted from the Temple of Heaven in Peking by foreign troops sent to guard foreign legations against the Chinese Boxers in 1900. The MET article noted the immorality of looting by westerners but justified it in this case, when it observed that on the other hand the objects were saved from destruction.

Oriental art market reviews written in the late 1920s provide evidence that New York had a dynamic trade in Oriental objects. H.H. F. Jayne wrote in 1929,

The Oriental art market is a delightful business, much to be preferred, on the whole, to its hectic counterpart the Western art market...We can accept the pleasant fact and rejoice that we are not often called to enter the maelstrom of the West, but can wander through the byways of the Orient-in-New York with considerable joy and almost unending interest.

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102 The palace sacked in 1860 is often mistakenly referred to as the Summer Palace was a favoured Summer residence of the Emperor. For reports on the booty and boon for western collectors, see Pierson, S. 2007; Bickers, R.A. and Tiedmann, R.G. 2007; Kraus, R. 2004.
The periodical reviews and articles on Asian art portray a developed relationship between museum curators and dealers. This may reflect the fact that Oriental art in the early twentieth century was a new field and it was the dealers who had access to the exceptional quality objects and not (as yet) museums. For example, in his article describing the Buddha image as the "common denominator of Far Eastern art, and the perennial ambassador of Asiatic culture," B.A. Devere Bailey uses five illustrations—two are from museums and three from dealers (illus. 92a-e). The borrowing of images from private dealers demonstrated the paucity of museum collections and reflected a close working relationship between museums and dealers. One of these dealers was Nasli Heeramaneneck, who dealt in rare examples of Far Eastern and Indian art (illus. 93a-b). He was building an enviable collection for himself, which included Nepalese and Tibet objects.

As previously noted the Boston Museum of Fine Arts (MFA) was a leader in defining what Asian art was collectible. Their impact on the commercial market is evidenced by the fact that within two years of a museum article appearing noting the singular rarity of a bronze jar from the early Han Dynasty (206 BC-220 AD) many more examples had surfaced in New York dealers showrooms. An arts reviewer noted that the Ralph M. Chait’s gallery had a collection of bronze jars rivalling the single example at the MFA. The reviewer wrote, “Usually when rare items of Far Eastern Art comes [sic] into the market, one may safely assume that in the course of a little time others like it will follow.” In quick succession, other dealers also advertised similar Han Dynasty bronzes (illus. 94). At the same time, the Chicago Field Museum curator, Laufer had researched the Chait objects and the reviewers drew on this research even though it was unpublished. For

Mark 106 An aside—note that at this time the preferred word designating objects from Asia was Oriental. An interesting point of research would be as to when and why the term Oriental changed to Asian. See also Appendix A.4 for a list of countries included under the term oriental art.
Mark 110 Eastman, A. and Chapin, H. 1932. Laufer had previously published on pottery in the Han Dynasty pottery.
museum curators such as Laufer, a dealer’s storeroom extended the research reach of museum collections. In exchange, the dealers gained valuable information about the objects, which added value to what they were selling.

When Marchais opened her gallery on 40 East Fifty-First Street, she joined a number of other dealers nearby. While her advertising in Parnassus did not feature Tibetan objects the advertisements noted her gallery stocked ‘Buddhist and Near Eastern Art’ (illus. 95). Her larger competitors regularly exhibited ancient Chinese steles, bronzes, jades, exquisite ceramics and paintings or sandstone figures from Thailand or Indian bronzes (illus. 96a-d; 97a-d).

An important Asian art gallery in New York was the Yamanaka and Company (illus. 98a-d). It regularly supplied institutions and individual collectors with rare works of art, such as sculptures from documented Chinese Buddhist caves. Asian art reviewer Helen Chapin briefly outlines the Yamanaka exhibition of T’ien-Lung Shan sculptures during December 1932. She wrote,

Although it is unfortunate that the fine sculptures from T’ien-lung Shan have not been preserved intact and in situ for the enlightenment of posterity, it is nevertheless of great advantage to lovers of beauty and to students of Chinese art in this country that they now have the opportunity of seeing at the Yamanaka Galleries, nay, of possessing, if they will, splendid examples of stone sculptures from these caves, dating from the golden age of Chinese Buddhist art.\footnote{Chapin. H. 1932: 24.}

However, the entry of Japan into WWII changed the New York Oriental art shopping scene. The American government board, the U.S. Alien Property Custodian under the Trading with the Enemy Act (1917) had the power to appropriate enemy assets.\footnote{This is known as ‘vested’ assets and gives the government 100% ownership over the company, although at the end of the war, the disposed alien can apply for return of property or compensation. If the alien proved they were not associated with or acted as an enemy they would be compensated. Engstrom, J. 1951. Anon. “Return of Property Seized during World War II.” 1953.} These could then be sold to finance war efforts against the enemy. The most significant art-related assets to be seized and
liquidated under these wartime provisions were those of the Japanese-owned Yamanaka and Company (illus. 99a-b). Because of the rarity and numbers of objects involved, the U.S. Alien Property Custodian proposed to sell these artefacts by private treaty, with final dispersal by private auction sale. This decision was taken to avoid disrupting of the domestic art market, and give an “unhurried” opportunity for American citizens and public institution to purchase. It was also thought that this method would provide the greatest return to the American government. The Custodian produced a catalogue of 1,600 illustrations to advertise the “notable” objects available. In just under two years, the Custodian sold an estimated 57,000 objects. In May to June 1944, the final Yamanaka stock was auctioned by Parke-Bernet. The five sales realized USD466,971.

During WWII China was a U.S. ally. However, WWII had disrupted the Chinese Civil War between Communist aligned forces whose eventual leader was Mao Zedong and the Chinese Nationalists (KMT) led by Chiang Kai-shek. By 1949, the Chinese Communists had secured the Tibetan region and claimed victory over the American-backed Kai-shek army which retreated to Taiwan. Tibet began agitating to be seen as independent from China in 1911 when H.H. the thirteenth Dalai Lama appealed to Britain for their intervention against China’s aggression. Britain refused because it, like America, recognized China’s suzerainty over Tibet. While the Chinese were distracted by their civil war Tibet claimed independence, but their actions garnered little international support.

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113 Yamanaka opened its first branch in New York, in 1895. They also had branches in Boston, Chicago, Washington DC, Atlantic City and seasonal branches in Newport and Bar Harbor. In 1917, they moved to the prestigious 680 Fifth Avenue, where the interior had been styled reminiscent of a Japanese temple. Fisher, S. 2006: 62.
114 Yamanaka and Company. Alien Property Custodian. 1943.
116 Anon. “Record Art Sales Marked Season.” 1944. Allowing for inflation, in 2010 the sale realized over USD5,000,000.
117 For discussion on Tibet’s geopolitical position, see Anand, D. 2009.
A year after the flight of H.H. the fourteenth Dalai Lama an exhibition of Tibetan objects was held at the NY Brentano bookstore. The AMNH curator Antoinette Gordon and private dealer Count Weleowski supervised the exhibition. A review by journalist Aline B. Louchheim reminded the reader that Tibet's spiritual and intellectual capabilities were under threat from the Communist invasion. She stated "One cannot view these religious objects without being aware of how dire a Communist invasion would be to a people dedicated to spiritual and intellectual qualities." Louchheim reinforced the artistic nature of these objects. Her descriptions were positive and enthusiastic. Louchheim uses such terms and phrases as: "the energy of its decorative boldness;" "unmistakable vitality;" forceful in handling, masterful in arrangement;" and, "knowledgeable works of art." At the same time, Louchheim recognized that very few Americans have seen or even know Tibetan objects. She concluded, "For most of us to whom Tibet is simply that strange land which contains the one 'l' lama [sic] such an exhibition is both instructive and entertaining." This exhibition review is evidence of a shift in attitude to Tibetan material culture now under threat from America's arch enemy, Communism. The representation of Tibet through its material culture was becoming a politicized arena—an issue I discuss in the following chapter, highlighting the 1969 New York Asia Society Tibetan art exhibition.

The aftermath of WWII, Communist expansion, the opening of Nepal in the 1950s, the Tibetan diaspora and the increasing spiritual attraction of the Indian sub-continent resulted in an increased awareness of Tibet. For some visiting the Indian subcontinent was a lifestyle choice, dropping out of society and living a carefree existence on the road. For others, it was a business or humanitarian choice, which brought them into contact with Tibetan material culture. A consequence of the Tibetan diaspora was that displaced Tibetans were very often forced to sell their personal belongings and this attracted opportunists. Mrs

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120 Louchheim, A. "Tibetan artworks placed on display." 1950.
Vivian Bose, American-born wife of an Indian High Court Justice, who was working with Tibetan refugees, complained in a letter to the AMNH director, that Tibetans were paid a meagre sum for their possessions. She wrote,

As usual, Governments wake up after the need is nearly over. There should have been buying agencies here under control so that the money for these lovely old things went to the people who brought them and not as in most cases, to the middle man who made a several hundred per cent mark up immediately. So I would like something to go back to the refugees and one must respect them as they are so unfailingly cheerful, even the ones working on the roads who have seen much better days in Tibet.\(^{122}\)

Bose had already put together Tibetan collections on behalf of the Brooklyn Museum and the Smithsonian, now she was negotiating a further collection for the AMNH.\(^{123}\) But by 1962, just three years after the flight of H.H. the fourteenth Dalai Lama, she noted the “growing scarcity” of Tibetan objects and as a result the “soaring prices” now asked by dealers. The Bose collection purchased by the AMNH in 1967 included 173 objects, 16 of these were Tibetan (illus. 100).\(^{124}\)

But not all the sales of Tibetan material culture were to museums, collectors or the current art market. Another market under development at this time was the Tibetan arts and crafts movement. While in New York with her husband, the brother of H.H. the fourteenth Dalai Lama, Mrs Gyolo Thondup, searched in the early sixties for opportunities to retail Tibetan crafts. She represented a group of 300 Tibetans who had produced a small range of objects, including rugs, carved tables, leather evening bags, and llama-wool sweaters.\(^{125}\) With 1,000 refugees arriving in self-exile every month, the development of cottage industries was important to Tibetan welfare. Within a few years a small souvenir and fashion market for jewellery and carpets had developed within India and Nepal, this was now spreading into the American markets.\(^{126}\)

\(^{122}\) Bose, V. AMNH, Division of Anthropology Archives, AMNH, 1962-36 Bose.
\(^{123}\) Wallace. AMNH, Division of Anthropology Archives, AMNH, 1962-36 Bose.
\(^{124}\) She and her husband sold another collection to the AMNH in 1970 of 388 items, most were Indian.
\(^{126}\) For the history of establishing a Tibetan carpet industry in Nepal see O’Neill, T. 2005; 1999.
The scarcity of Tibetan Buddhist representatives was, until the late sixties, an obstacle to promoting Tibetan-ness in contrast to the promotion of Indian culture.\textsuperscript{127} The American market had embraced Indian culture, everything from sitar music, chanting gurus, Indian fabrics and Nehru jackets. Beat poet and 1960s counterculture statesman Allen Ginsberg commented,

Many people in the middle and upper classes are dissatisfied with their lives and the world around them ... They are searching for their identity the same way young people are and, depending on their inclinations, this search takes them to Indian philosophy or, perhaps, textiles or music.\textsuperscript{128}

By 1968, it would be written that “Tibetan art, for 20 or more years hidden away in quaintly-off-beat museums, is coming back into vogue.”\textsuperscript{129} The reporter refers to a Tibetan exhibition assembled by the American Federation of Arts, which was about to undertake a world tour, and the up-and-coming 1969 New York Asia Society exhibition, \textit{The Art of Tibet}. Although the article uses the term Tibetan art, this is not a reference to fine art, but rather objects as symbols of mysticism and the occult as highlighted by the headline. The article states that those who want to keep up with the ‘London youngsters’ and can’t wait for the Asia Society exhibition next year could visit the Jacques Marchais and Riverside Museums (ex-Roerich Museum).\textsuperscript{130} The article not only acknowledges a shift in public perception towards Tibet but also legitimizes this shift by referencing the fact that museums had been acquiring Tibetan art over the years and these were on exhibit or soon would be.

\textsuperscript{127} In the 1950s, Buddhist scholar Edward Conzé had noted that the appreciation of Tibetan art and culture was hindered by the fact that Tibetans “remained inscrutably secretive and have consistently refrained from any kind of co-operation.” Conzé, E. 1957: 75-76.
\textsuperscript{128} The export of Indian crafts to the U.S. had risen from USD5,000,000 in 1965 to approximately USD8,000,000 in 1967. Anon. “That guru playing a sitar may be a New Yorker.” 1968. Also, Anon. “India gives culture, gets dollars.” 1968.
\textsuperscript{130} The article has two pictures, one showing the altar at the Marchais museum and the other from the Riverside Museum, a gilt bronze statue to ‘Queen Mayadevi giving birth to Buddha.’ Anon. “That Guru Playing a Sitar May Be a New Yorker.” 1968.
Museum Tibetan Acquisitions 1955-1973: A sample

Museum collections are acquired either as a gift/bequest or as a targeted museum purchase. A large bequest or the opportunity to purchase a superior collection may impact on the collecting focus of museums. There is no doubt that the original Shelton purchase as the Edward N. Crane Memorial began the Newark Museum on a Tibetan art collection trajectory that continues into the twenty-first century. Few other museums were presented with such a wholesale opportunity and consequently most American museum collections of Tibetan objects proceeded in a piecemeal fashion. A list of Tibetan objects held in American and Canadian museums in 1950 highlights the fragmentary and haphazard nature of institutional collecting. This list authored by the Newark curator Eleanor Olson featured 46 public institutions. The range of objects listed is diverse and sometimes specialized, such as the 122 Tibetan coins held by the American Numismatic Society. Furthermore, the list ranges from a single “piece of fine jewellery” held at the Baltimore Museum of Art to 1,200 objects held at the AMNH.

According to the Olson list the museums which held large Tibetan collections were: AMNH, Marchais, Brooklyn, Art Institute of Chicago and the Newark. All the institutional collections were either referred to in terms of specific objects, such as coins, or under inclusive terms such as Lamaist, ethnological, everyday or ritual. There was no reference to holdings of Tibetan art, despite the fact that the list included the MET, MFA, Philadelphia and Freer art museums. This, I argue, highlights the general attitude towards Tibetan material culture prior to 1969. Tibetan art as it is understood in the late twentieth century and early twenty-first century was yet to emerge. The vital elements missing were a specific art discourse relating to Tibetan objects. Discourse provides justification

131 For convenience the list, Tibetan Ethnological and Lamaist Material in Public Collections in the United States and Canada, is reproduced as appendix A.5 in Volume II. Olson, E. 1950.
for critical and aesthetic appreciation of objects as fine art. The Tibetan objects remained ‘artistic’ curiosities peripheral to their cultural neighbours—India and China.

Nor was there an established Tibetan artworld, which publicly consumed and exhibited Tibetan objects as witnessed in the late twentieth century. The Marchais Gallery and Roland Koscherak emphasis on Tibetan art would have been the closest to the twenty-first century dealers specializing in Tibetan objects, such as Carlton Rochell (New York), Rossi and Rossi (London) and Carlo Cristi (Milan). While Tibetan objects were not publicly recognized as ‘fine’ art prior to 1969, there were alternative reasons why individuals were interested in collecting. For instance, many Tibetan objects were not only artistic, but were made of costly metals—gold, silver, precious and semi-precious stones (illus. 101a). The exotic and erotic Tibetan imagery and narratives also attracted interest, such as the Kuvera (Jambhala), the god of wealth and his mongoose vomiting jewels (illus. 101b). There was also the magic and thrill at the idea of possessing an object that had been previously owned or used by the Dalai Lama (illus. 101c). Equally, there were other Tibetan objects, such as the ritual dagger (phurbu), that were affordable and could be collected in a variety of complexity, materials and sizes (illus. 101d).

Institutions also found precious metals and exotic narratives sufficient reason to collect. They were aware of their collection balance and the desire to represent all cultures. Longstanding Cleveland director Sherman E. Lee (1958-1983) gave this reason when Cleveland acquired a small number of Tibetan objects early in his tenure.\(^{132}\) There was an extra impetus for institutions to collect after China enforced sovereignty over Tibet in 1949-1950, especially with stories of the Chinese army desecrating monasteries and destroying artworks. A further stimulus was the flight of H.H. the fourteenth Dalai Lama in 1959. This later story captured global attention and the subsequent flow of Tibetan objects onto

\(^{132}\) Czuma, S. 2005: 82.
the global market resulted in both individuals and institutions to re-evaluating Tibetan objects.\textsuperscript{133}

Because of the interrelationship between museums and elite collectors, particularly in the latter's role as trustees, curators, financiers and donors, the attitude of American museums also provides evidence of collector attitudes towards Tibetan objects prior to 1969. These attitudes can be gauged by analysing the museum acquisition data in the \textit{Archives of the Chinese Art Society of America}.\textsuperscript{134} This publication released an annual list, which reported on the 'Oriental Objects Recently Acquired by American Museums,' including: university teaching museums such as the Fogg at Harvard and the Rhode Island School of Design; major American and Canadian museums, such as the MET, MFA, the Newark and the Canadian Royal Ontario Museum (ROM).\textsuperscript{135} In this section, I analyse these reports in order to discuss the significant trends in museum acquisitions of Oriental objects from 1955 to 1973. Particular reference is given to Tibetan objects prior to 1969.\textsuperscript{136}

There are two parts to the 'Recently Acquired Listing'—an illustrated survey of select items, followed by a comprehensive list. The initial illustrated section is described as a "pictorial" list of

some of the more important ... the selected objects are reproduced in order to illustrate the general trend of acquisitions, as well as to present certain objects of marked importance\textsuperscript{137}

\textsuperscript{133} In a 1958 book review for the reprint of Antionette Gordon's 1939 book, Margaret Gentles noted that the "recent happenings in Tibet which caused headlines in the newspapers around the world" had awakened a public interest in Tibetan objects. Gentles, M. 1960: 283.

\textsuperscript{134} An annual publication that began in 1945/46, its Chinese focus broadened in 1953 under the influence of Professor Benjamin Rowland Jr, Harvard. In 1966, the name was changed to \textit{Archives of Asian Art}. The pictorial section continues, however, the comprehensive list which began in 1955 ceased in 1978.

\textsuperscript{135} While these lists are dependant on museums reporting their acquisitions and potentially only include larger museums, their importance remains, because the centrality and status of the larger museums provided leadership and set trends for collectors and smaller museums.

\textsuperscript{136} The 1973 cut-off date has been chosen because that is the last year individual year data is provided. The 1974 data is included with the years 1975 and 1976. Eventually, the list is dropped altogether due to financial constraints.

The comprehensive listing is described as a “complete” list of Oriental objects acquired for the year by American and Canadian museums.\textsuperscript{138} By 1969, the following caution had been added to the acquisition lists introductory statement, “The dating, provenance, and descriptions are those supplied by the owners.”\textsuperscript{139} In 1974, the name of the curator in charge of the relevant museum departments was also added. Such modifications suggest an increasing engagement with Oriental objects and a growing awareness of potential problems in regard to liability and misrepresentation of identification and descriptive data.

I analysed the sum of the accession numbers for each museum according to grouped country categories. I discovered that I had to make adjustments for potentially confounding data and therefore I did not include the acquisitions of prints, rubbings, textiles, armoury (including sword fittings), Chinese blue and white export-ware. Too often, these items were indifferently recorded, if at all. These record-keeping anomalies and the large numbers involved conflated the data. Instead, I have concentrated on the core categories of Asian art, such as painting, sculpture, bronzes and ceramics. An example of the anomalies involved is the acquisition of Japanese prints in 1958: the Royal Ontario Museum (ROM) listed “some modern prints and etching, various artists, by gift and purchase,” while Yale University listed “a group of prints including a Kiyonobu I, six Masanobu, eight Harunobu and a Kiyonaga.” Yale gave an accession number for the whole group, whereas ROM did not give an accession number.\textsuperscript{140} In that same year, the Honolulu Academy of Arts received a gift of 155 Japanese prints from novelist James A. Michener, these were also not given accession numbers, whereas, the Philadelphia Museum gave accession numbers to 77 Japanese prints but not to an acquisition of 18 twentieth century Japanese prints.\textsuperscript{141} In addition, folios of twelve Japanese prints were at times counted as one acquisition, twelve or not at all.

\textsuperscript{138} Interestingly, the common term used to describe art from the large area known as Asia until the late 1970s (early 1980s?) was Oriental art, at some time and for some reason, this category was renamed Asian art.
\textsuperscript{139} Anon. “Oriental Objects Recently Acquired.” 1960: 86.
Between 1955 and 1973, 38 American and Canadian museums collected almost 13,000 Oriental objects. Only 330 of these objects were Tibetan. Tallying the raw data across five cultural categories, I collated total museum acquisitions for each year (illus. 102). The cultural categories are: Chinese, Indian, Japanese, Other and Tibetan. The Other Includes: the Indo-China countries such as Thailand and Burma, the Far East countries such as Egypt and Iran, and Korea. Overall, the number of Tibetan objects acquired during the 19 years remains small. Only (2.5%) of all the museums' Oriental object acquisitions from 1955 to 1973 were Tibetan, compared to (52.4%) Chinese objects, (18.7%) Japanese, (14.7%) Indian and (11.7%) Other. In general terms, from 1959 to 1973 acquisitions of Chinese, Indian and Japanese objects—while they fluctuated between years—remained relatively stable over the long term (illus. 103). In contrast, Tibetan acquisitions take a leap during 1959. From that year, the numbers remain significant when compared to those prior to the diaspora. The general trend of Tibetan museum acquisitions from 1959 to 1973 is slowly upwards. However, there is an escalation of acquisitions activity from 1969. This suggests that The Art of Tibet exhibition was a stimulus either for museums to purchase works themselves or for museum supporters and collectors to donate Tibetan objects to museums. This overall data sustains my argument that a shift in museum collecting attitudes towards Tibetan objects supported the transformation of Tibetan artefacts into art by the New York Asia Society exhibition in April 1969.

If Tibetan art is compared to the Other category, which is made up of smaller cultures, there is a similar acquisition activity. Tibetan acquisitions are mid-range (illus. 104). The Other category is sub-divided into: Far East, Korea, Thailand, Nepalese, and Few. The Few category includes areas such as the Philippines, Sumatra and Bali. Of the 1,029 objects museums acquired in the Other and Tibetan categories: (28.7%) are Korean, (27.2%) are Thailand, (17.8%)

142 For the composition of each of the culture categories see Appendix A.4 in Volume II.
are Tibetan, (14.1%) are Far East, (8.3%) are Nepalese, and (3.9%) belonged to Few.

The overall trend of museum acquisitions in the Other category demonstrated a similar increase to that found for Tibetan acquisition activity (illus. 104). This evidence suggests that Americans were becoming aware of material cultures outside of Europe, Japan and China. This data also supports for the Other categories similar socio-political arguments I propose for Tibet's transformation, and which I substantiate in the following chapter.\(^\text{143}\) For instance, the increase in acquisitions from Korea could be explained by the fact that these collections were built with objects emerging from the Korean War fought in 1950-1953.\(^\text{144}\) Another such instance is the Thailand category, which includes the Indo-China territory (Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam). This area was under conflict during the Vietnam War (1961-1973). Over 25,000 American troops were stationed in Thailand. During this time, there is an increase in museum acquisition of objects from this area. Viewed in this manner, museum acquisition of non-western art was a by-product of the American presence and the flow of American dollars into the non-western economy. This is clearly demonstrated by the appearance of Far East objects from Iran at the time America was supporting the Shah of Iran (illus. 104).

Returning to the Tibetan material, of the 38 museums reported acquiring Oriental objects between 1955 and 1973, only 23 collected Tibetan material. Just over half of the 330 objects were acquired by 18 museums on or after the

\(^{143}\) The exception to this may be the Few category, which might explain why there were few acquisitions from this category.

\(^{144}\) One of the first museums to open a Korean gallery was the Honolulu Academy of Arts in 1960. An important benefactor of Korean ceramics was the retired American Air Force Lieutenant General Oliver S. Picher who served in Korea and was later to become an acknowledged authority on Korean ceramics. A dedicated gallery appears to have attracted a continuous trickle of acquisitions to the Honolulu Academy. The Korean objects were (74.5%) of the Honolulu Academy Other acquisitions. In contrast, the Korean acquisitions was (14.9%) of all the Honolulu Academy Oriental art acquisitions, whereas, they were only (2.2%) of the MET's acquisitions over the same period. In the late nineteenth-early twentieth century, Hawaii had also been a destination point for Korean farm workers. Furthermore, Korea was a destination point for American Protestant missionaries.
NYAS 1969 exhibition (illus. 105). Furthermore, four of the 18 museums reported acquiring Tibetan objects for the first time. They were the Colorado, Herron, Minneapolis and Florida University museums. The figures provide evidence that the NYAS 1969 Tibetan art exhibition focused museum and collector attention onto Tibetan objects.

Looking closely at the acquisitions in and after 1969, six out of the 18 museums acquired 146 (84.9%) of the 172 Tibetan objects, they were the Brooklyn, Los Angeles County, MET, Newark, San Francisco Asian Art and Seattle museums. The acquisition story behind each of these six museums highlights general motivations and attitudes influencing museums to collect Tibetan objects. The Newark Museum had a history of collecting Tibetan objects and added several Tibetan objects to its extensive collection almost yearly. The Brooklyn Museum also held a large collection, but was not as consistent in acquiring Tibetan objects. However, the close proximity of Brooklyn to the 1969 NYAS exhibition may have encouraged the four donors who gave sixteen objects to the Brooklyn Museum in the last five years of the sample range (1969-1973). Before this, Brooklyn had only acquired one Tibetan acquisition between 1955 and 1968 and that was a gift of a gau, a small portable shrine designed to be worn on the body. Likewise, the MET may have been similarly motivated to purchase ten of the fifteen Tibetan objects it acquired in the five years from 1969 to 1973, whereas the previous 14 years the MET had acquired only seven Tibetan objects.

While the Seattle Museum acquired only five Tibetan objects from 1969 to 1973, this small number of acquisitions is significant because *The Art of Tibet* travelled to Seattle. According to the 1950 Olson list the Seattle Museum held a small collection of Tibetan objects and from 1955, they had added a further seven. Seattle Museum had also loaned three objects to the 1969 exhibition—a small

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145 172 objects were acquired on or after 1969 compared to the 163 prior to 1969.
146 They do not appear on the 1950 list prepared by Olson, E. See Appendix A.5.
147 The MET had also acquired some Tibetan textiles and costumes but as previously explained these were not included in my analysed data.
container, a water pot and prayer wheel. One of the Seattle acquisitions was a gift from another lender to the 1969 NYAS exhibition, the NY dealers Nasli and Alice Heeramaneeck. They lent nine thangkas and three sculptures to the NYAS exhibition. They gave the Seattle Museum a nine inch (22.9 cm) high seated Buddha. Also in 1969, the Heeramaneeck’s sold a large selection of their Indian and Himalayan art collection to the L.A County Museum (L.A.). This collection was acquired over several years. Between 1969 and 1973, the L.A. acquired 56 Tibetan objects, whereas in the previous 19 years they had not acquired one, nor were they included on the 1950 Olson list. Only six of the 56 Tibetan objects were from the Heeramaneeck collection. However, the announcement of this important purchase appears to have generated further gifts of Tibetan art to the L.A. Museum. For instance, collector Jack Zimmerman and NY dealer, Doris Wiener and husband Ed, gave Tibetan objects to L.A. after the Heeramaneeck purchase. Both Zimmerman and Wiener were important players in the Himalayan artworld and were in the position to know the Heeramaneeck collection and were (perhaps) motivated to fill the gaps in the L.A. Heeramaneeck acquisition.

Over the museum acquisition time range the San Francisco Asian Art Museum (S.F. Museum) had acquired Tibetan objects when they received the important Avery Brundage collection of Asian Art after agreeing to build a dedicated exhibition wing for the collection. The Brundage collection was purchased in 1963 and by 1968 eleven Tibetan objects from this collection had already been received by the S.F. Museum. From 1969 to 1973, the S.F. Museum acquired another seven Tibetan objects from the Brundage collection. Museum acceptance of such large collections as the Brundage and Heeramaneeck were important.

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150 The S.F. Museum secured the Brundage gift by agreeing to fund a dedicated wing for the collection. When the wing officially opened in 1966, a symposium of 90 leading Oriental art scholars and another 160 Orientalists were invited to discuss specifically the Brundage collection. Davies, L.E. “250 Orientalists to meet on Coast.” 1966.
indicators to the collecting public that museums were now shifting their focus onto Asian art. It is interesting to note that over the sample years of 1955 to 1973 the museum acquisitions by purchase were steady. Prior to 1969, museums purchased (40.8%) of the Tibetan objects acquired and after 1969 to 1973, the museums purchased (41.8%). This suggests that museums augmented their acquisitions through gifts with strategic purchases.\(^{151}\) It is also further evidence that there was a supply of Tibetan objects available for purchase by institutions and individual collectors prior to 1969.

**Why was Tibetan art not Tibetan art prior to 1969?**

Objects exhibited in museums at any one time are a fraction of the museums entire collections. Many more objects are stored in museum basements and warehouses. What is on display depends on many factors, such as: the museums engagement with particular categories; acquisitions, especially gifts; and/or public interest and notoriety, such as the value of a Rembrandt, the attraction of shrunken skulls or the exotic imagery of Tibetan thangkas. Unlike their European counterparts, which variously started from Royal or aristocratic collections, American museums relied on public gifts to build their collections. Inevitably, their initial desire to build collections entailed *carte blanche* acceptance. For example, the Hervey E. Wetzel bequest to the Harvard Fogg Museum in 1919 of 257 items, included fragments of textile (western and Asian), pages from thirteenth century Egyptian manuscripts, a fourteenth century Italian painting of *Christ on the Cross* by Simone Martini, in addition to three Tibetan thangkas (illus. 106a-d).\(^{152}\) American museums ready acceptance of all gifts led to broad

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\(^{151}\) Note that about (10%) of the objects did not stipulate whether the item was a gift or purchase.

\(^{152}\) Hervey E. Wetzel graduated Class 1911, Division of Fine Arts and was associated with the Boston, Museum of Fine Arts (MFA). He died in France in 1917 in the service of the American Red Cross. His collection was divided equally between the Fogg Museum and MFA. Forbes, E.W. 1918/1919. For collection details see bibliography entry Fogg Art Museum. It could be argued that
organic collections, which assisted museums for the future in two ways. First, the focus of the collections was wider than if left to individual curators, which tended to focus on their specific fields of study. Second, unfashionable objects were collected, which later proved to be of great value or significance, even though they may have initially gathered dust in basements.

Early twentieth century museums did not necessarily group objects into discreet cultural categories, such is commonly the case by the late twentieth century. For example, the MET acquired a number of Tibetan objects in 1915. These were displayed beside objects from different cultures, largely in Room 32 on the second floor. The nineteenth century Tibetan jewelled crystal tray was displayed with other jades and crystals, while “a picture, altar-jewel, gold box, silver tray and twenty-six pieces of gold and silver jewellery” from eighteenth and nineteenth century Tibet were exhibited with jewellery. A nineteenth century Tibetan “gold and jewelled altar ornament” was displayed with other examples of metalwork such as seven early American brass door-latches and handles. A nineteenth century Tibetan “head of Avalokita, decorated with five jewelled ornaments” was also housed in Room 32 along with other sculptures (illus. 107). On the other hand, two seventeenth or eighteenth century gilt brass statues of Tārā were featured in the Recent Accessions Room, on the first floor. This room also included a late eighteenth century English toilet cabinet, mounted with Wedgewood and Bentley plaques and 18 manikins wearing recent American-made period costumes. Like the other cultural objects on display at the MET, the Tibetan artefacts were comparative exhibits demonstrating their workmanship and design. \(^{155}\)

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the Fogg Museum is a teaching/research museum and therefore, is not and should not be discerning, however at the same time the MFA was accepting the equivalent items.

\(^{152}\) For a description of this jewellery see W.M.M. and Friedley, D. 1915. By 1926 Tibetan jewellery, particularly the gaū (charm) boxes were a ‘fad.’ The article also noted that these boxes were being copied. Anon. “Tibet sends jewelry fads.” 1926.

\(^{154}\) In 1915 the MET had just acquired a “rare” collection of “Indian and Tibetan jewelry and metal work, the latter massed in a barbaric manner with precious and semi-precious stones.” Anon. “Jewels of the idols of Tibet are here.” 1915.

\(^{155}\) Acquisition data taken from, Anon. “List of Accessions and Loans.” 1915. Interestingly, all the Tibetan objects acquired by the MET in 1915 were purchased.
In the early twentieth century, the classification of fine art was beginning to broaden from its narrow focus of primarily European Masters, armoury and ancient world antiquities such as Roman, Greek and Egyptian, to include specific focused selections from Africa, Japan and China. The non-western arts becoming ‘fine’ art pieces, included: masks, ceramics, lacquer-ware and early paintings. In general, negligible distinction was made between Asian art and art of other non-Western cultures. Evidence of this lack of discrimination suggests that there was no ‘artworld’ consensus as to where the vast array of Asian art fitted. However, many western museums had accumulated a variety of Asian artefacts, including Tibetan. Art historian Steven Conn’s research into early twentieth century American ethnographic museum and fine art museum collections concluded that both types of museums collected similar objects and there was no obvious distinction between their appreciation and/or treatment of these collections.\footnote{Conn, S. 2000: 166. Conn uses the example of the Chicago Field Museum and the Boston Museum of Fine Art (MFA). He also comments on the fact that individuals from both ethnographic and fine art museums responded to the objects’ aesthetic and spiritual qualities. For instance, the curator for Japanese art at the MFA, Fenollosa had converted to Buddhism.}

This lack of difference may also reflect the fact that in the first decades of collecting, museums welcomed all acquisitions in the desire to fill their exhibition cases and store rooms, as evidenced by the earlier cast galleries. The common factor in all the American museum activity was the desire to obtain examples of artistic output from all cultures. As previously demonstrated the historical exotic western imaginings featuring Tibet had public appeal as early as the 1900 Ecumenical Conference exhibit at AMNH and the 1911 Shelton exhibition at the Newark Museum.

But while Tibetan objects were exhibited in art museums, their inclusion was not as fine art. The objects were exhibited as artistic curiosities, comparative examples in the form of altars and dioramas. They demonstrated how the Other lived. I am not arguing that the term Tibetan art was not used before 1969. It was. In the introductory chapter, I note that an anonymous art critic for The [London] Times reviewed an exhibition of Tibetan art in 1905 at Mr John Baillie’s
gallery in London. If this critic’s aesthetic opinions of Tibetan art in relation to early Italian art had been heeded and built on, I may have been arguing that the 1905 exhibition was the catalyst for the transformation of Tibetan artefact into art. However, this did not happen. Instead, I argue that the transformation was institutionalized almost 65 years later, by the 1969 New York Asia Society exhibition, *The Art of Tibet*.

As illustrated in the previous sections of this chapter, by the 1920s there was a large body of Tibetan objects in western hands. Dean noted that one “well-known collector” had acquired more “Tibetan objects” in the year after the Younghusband advance into Tibet than he had for the previous thirty years. Thus by the early twentieth century there were two important elements in place for the transformation of Tibetan artefacts into fine art—collectors and a quantity of material. However, while there were individual collectors enthusiastic for Tibetan objects as a valid [fine] art form, rather than just samples of design and artistry, these individuals and their opinions were not publicly visible. Their interest in Tibetan art only became public when their large collections surfaced either for sale, or as gifts to an institution, such as the earlier donations by Freer and Whitney, and the later museum acquisitions of the Brundage and Heeramanneck collections.

Further elements important to the transformation of artefacts into fine art are public visibility and a specialized art discourse, which brings with it instructions on how to see and know what is ‘desired’ art. Conservative museum authorities, such as Cleveland Museum director, Sherman E. Lee, did not readily accept the value of Tibetan objects. Lee was highly regarded and influential Asian art

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158 Dean, B. 1906: 97.
159 While Lee had earned a doctorate in American watercolour painting, his passion and expertise developed in Oriental art, particularly Japanese. This was the result of his WWII service in the U.S. Navy. In 1946, after active duty he was transferred to the Monuments, Fine Arts, and Archives in Japan. He was later discharged and until 1948 continued as a civilian adviser to General Macarthur on cataloging, preserving and protecting Japanese artworks. This earned him valuable experiences and entrée to many private Japanese collections. In 1952, Lee arrived as curator of Oriental art at the Cleveland Museum and was appointed director from 1958, which he
official. In 1964, he published a large authoritative book titled the *History of Far Eastern Art*. This book introduced over a generation of Americans to Asian art. Lees commented that Tibetan art was derivative—"lesser" work—focused on the endless manifestations of the same Buddha theme.\[^{160}\]

Tibetan Buddhism academic Donald Lopez Jr noted that Lee’s disregard for Tibetan art was not due to the lack of "available scholarship."\[^{161}\] The books available to an American audience at this time included an iconographic manual for identifying Tibetan deities titled *The Gods of Northern Buddhism* (1914) written by American-born Alice Getty, an independent scholar based in France. George Roerich’s study into *Tibetan Painting* (1925), while not as focused on iconography as Getty or Gordon’s later publications, his book was associated with a publicly accessible display of Tibetan objects at the Roerich Museum. The AMNH curator, Antoinette Gordon, wrote two books identifying Tibetan deities, titled, *The Iconography of Tibetan Lamaism* (1939) and *Tibetan Religious Art* (1952). Other accessible books included a volume on the art of Burma, Korea and Tibet (1951) in a series on regional histories of the visual arts. Leiden ethnographic museum curator Peter Pott wrote the Tibetan section of this series. Also available were three small volumes on the Newark Museum’s Tibetan collection (1950-61) collated by the Newark curator, Eleanor Olson.\[^{162}\] One other series of books on Tibetan objects, but particularly important for scholars and enthusiastic collectors, were the books written by Italian Tibetologist, Guiseppe

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\[^{161}\] Lopez Jr, D.S. 1998: 136-137. While other books may have been available, the lack of Tibetan art scholarship is an aspect appealed to at the time by the 1969 NYAS Tibet exhibition. For a discussion on scholarship available, see bibliography discussion in catalogue chapter.

\[^{162}\] The volumes were divided as follows: Volume I, *Catalogue of the Tibetan Collection and other Lamaist articles*, concentrating on contextualizing Tibet, its history, regions, religion and western personalities associated with the Tibetan collection; Volume II, the same title as Vol. I, concentrating on Prayer related objects, music artefacts and ritual objects; and Volume IV, the same title as Vol. I and II, but concentrated on sculptures and paintings. Two other volumes (III and V) were only published in 1971.
Tucci.\textsuperscript{163} He travelled extensively through western Tibet, documenting and photographing the artworks remaining in Tibetan monasteries. For the first time, westerners witnessed the richer artistic context in which Tibetan objects once sat. They also witnessed the loss and ruin of Tibet’s artistry due to loss of patronage or neglect of stewardship (illus. 108). Tucci also collected Tibetan objects on his travels, in particular Tibetan thangkas. Many of these works were illustrated and discussed in the large three-volume folio titled, \textit{Tibetan Painted Scrolls}. Tucci toured this collection to America, and Heeramanneck subsequently purchased it just before it was to be shipped back to Italy. Prior to this Tucci had not sold one thangka.

When Getty wrote her book on Tibetan iconography in 1914, she was aware that she was a pioneer and set herself the task of bringing some clarity to a field of study in its “infancy.”\textsuperscript{164} Getty stated,

\begin{quote}
To the uninitiated, the images of these deities are only of value as works of art, or as grotesque curios, with their various heads and many arms; but to the initiated, apart from their artistic merit, they furnish an almost inexhaustible fund for study and research.\textsuperscript{165}
\end{quote}

Her emphasis was on reading the objects for their identity and position within the vast pantheon of Tibetan Buddhism. In the preface to the second edition published fifteen years later, Getty stressed the importance of knowledge to counter the existing “ignorance” between the west and the east.\textsuperscript{166}

\textit{\textbf{French}}

Getty, Roerich and Marchais emphasized the need for knowledge to dispel ignorance, encourage tolerance and understanding. Access to knowledge is crucial in the transformation of artefact into art. Art critic and historian John

\textsuperscript{163} See bibliography for list of titles.
\textsuperscript{164} Getty, A. 1978: viii-ix (preface to first edition).
\textsuperscript{165} Getty, A. 1978: viii (preface to first edition).
\textsuperscript{166} Deniker, J. 1978 [1913]: xlvii (Deniker emphasis). Interestingly he also noted the similarities of the Tibetan ritual of clothing sculpture with that of Catholicism. Deniker wrote, “Temple figures are often grotesquely muffed in costumes of rich stuffs like certain Madonnas or saints in Spain, Italy, and above all, Latin America.” Deniker, J. 1978 [1913]: xlvii. Deniker was an ethnologist. For a summary of his achievements, see Keith, A. and Haddon, A.C. 1918: 65-67.
Canaday stated that “familiarity often breeds a degree of understanding without study.”  

He was not referring to public accessibility. After all, Tibetan objects had been on constant display in New York since the beginning of the twentieth century. Canaday’s comment referred to the familiarity of knowledge, that is, recognition of Tibetan art—seeing and knowing it.

The lack of a general attitude to knowing Tibetan art was a constraint to an earlier transformation of Tibetan artefact. Prior to 1969 there was no homogenizing global art discourse on Tibetan material which brought enthusiasts, collectors and curators together. There were few accessible publications to counter uninformed opinions, which criticized Tibetan objects as the devil’s idols or saw Tibetan art as degraded and derivative of Chinese and Indian Buddhist imagery. Put simply, there was no ‘familiar’ language, which could be employed to engage with Tibetan objects and discuss them as a valid art category.

There are at least five elements essential in the transformation of artefact into art. They are: burgeoning collection interest; public visibility, including art market and museum visibility; converging market and exhibition activity; the development of an art discourse; and socio-political acceptance. The public performance of acceptance—exhibition and publications—attracts increased interest and market activity at the same time helping to shift socio-political attitudes. These elements and their performances are suggestive of an economic theory noted in the introductory chapter, ‘informational cascade.’ That is, where the actions of recognized authorities lead to imitative behaviour, despite the fact that the authorities’ views were contrary. Economists Sushil Bikhchandani, David Hirshleifer and Ivo Welch noted that individuals defer to those who hold ‘observable’ informed opinions. In research on the value

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168 The 1969 exhibition did not automatically familiarize a population to Tibetan art, but it did set parameters for acceptance and appreciation.
169 The later attitudes, particularly to nineteenth century Tibetan art remain current.
creation process of fine art, economists Philip Crossland and Faye Smith observed that in the artworld there are three potential customers: the *cognoscenti*, such as museum curators; the investor; and the collector. An ‘informational’ cascade forms from the actions of the *cognoscenti*. Prior to the actions of the New York Asia Society (NYAS) in 1969 museums and elite collectors were not publicly signalling the value of Tibetan art despite the fact that many of these same institutions and individuals were acquiring examples of Tibetan art.

The public nature of art exhibitions and their catalogues endorse current and future directions. The NYAS took a leading role not only in exhibiting Tibetan art but also in writing an art history for it. This art history was framed by existing western knowledge, which included western imaginings, historical interpretations of Tibetan art and the socio-political agenda of 1969. I have discussed western imaginings and historical interpretations in this and the preceding chapters, here I turn my attention to an important shift in America’s socio-political attitudes, which familiarized the public and prepared them to accept Tibetan objects as fine art.

In 1980, Canaday reflected on the fact that the wider public appreciation of Asian art was encouraged by the general acceptance of abstract art. He stated,

> It is true that institutions like Asia House [gallery arm of NYAS] in New York—with its series of beautiful exhibitions devoted to creating a wider public for the arts of China, Japan, India, and related cultures—were the major force in this insurgence, but it is also true that the increased receptivity to abstract art was helpful in the program’s success.

American abstract expressionists such as Jackson Pollock and Mark Rothko introduced a different way of *seeing* art. While this did not change the nature of Tibet’s imagery, this new-styled art did allow for the appreciation and re-evaluation of Tibetan art for its difference. American abstract expressionists also

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introduced a new way of seeing and experiencing art that did not rely on perspective or the realism of figurative and landscape genre to validate its acceptance as art.

Of greater relevance to the transformation of Tibetan objects was the shift in the reference of self to the universe. No longer located in the light of a Christian God, the western self was bifurcating into two entities of self: (one) a physical self and (two) a psychological self. Increasingly scientists explained the physical, while doctors such as Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung discussed thoughts and emotions of individual self within an inner world of sexual desire, repression, transference, dreams and symbols. This opened up an ‘acceptable’ new world of images and a new way of seeing, knowing and experiencing the world. The exotic and erotic imagery of Tibetan art, its accompanying spiritual narratives and western imaginings were finding a new audience and a new source of appreciation. As a consequence a new line of discourse opened, in which the merits of Tibetan objects could be discussed.

As noted previously, the concept of western art was also shifting under this same influence. As American mainstream art, now centred on American abstractionism entered the world of inner rhythms, sound and colour, the interpretation of Tibetan art also shifted from curious artistry into the experiential inner world. For example, in the 1963 Mārg magazine’s special edition on Tibetan art, Mulk Raj Anand discussed how Tibetan art functioned as maps for personal salvation. His focus was not on iconography as the conduit, but on Tibetan Buddhist philosophy made extant by Tibetan visual imagery. Anand wrote,

The whole of Tibetan Art is a way of getting entangled in the silken webs woven by the incarnate divinities, in order to get out of the spider’s web of life.

Furthermore, the images of these "primitive but vital people" anticipated our "contemporary new vision."\textsuperscript{175} Fifty years apart, both Anand and Getty believed Tibetan art was a bridge to understanding world events. For Getty it was to understand the eastern Other, while for Anand, Tibetan art offered the opportunity to understand and accept a swiftly changing world, especially with the advent of WWII.\textsuperscript{176} Unlike previous wars, the aftermath of WWII brought with it a globalization of fear and mistrust, which popular media and political expediency brought into sharp focus. The saturation of news events and social trauma, both locally and globally, disrupted images of self as central and safe.

Anand was not the only art commentator harnessing the imagery of Tibet. Increasingly, texts accompanying Tibetan objects were western statements of experiential journeys and enlightenment. In 1960, Philadelphia Museum curator Stella Kramrisch maintained a scholarly restrained calm when she described how the art of Nepal and Tibet act as fields of power.\textsuperscript{177} However, the Riverside Museum curator John Brzostoski was less constrained in 1963 when he stated "Tibetan art should be used." He wrote in his Tibetan art catalogue,

The idiotic laughter of the Kali age is all around us with roaring flames swallowing countries. We share the extinction the Tibetans face. It would be a mistake to ignore their sometimes puzzling accomplishments, for until now they have survived with laughter and joy. ... This is where this art takes us.\textsuperscript{178}

Brzostoski described Tibetan art in the terms associated with Jungian psychotherapy of sound and colour; of ego and consciousness. Significant in Brzostoski's descriptions were the elemental violence and once plunged into darkness, the

\textsuperscript{175} Anand, M.R. 1963: 12.  
\textsuperscript{177} Kramrisch, S. 1960. Austrian-born and schooled in philosophy, she became the first professor of Indian art at the Calcutta University in 1923. In 1950, Kramrisch immigrated to America and began her professional association with the Philadelphia Museum and the University of Pennsylvania. After co-curating the inaugural (1960) NYAS exhibition with four other important Asian Art curators, Kramrisch curated the 1964 NYAS The Art of Nepal exhibition.  
\textsuperscript{178} Brzostoski, J. 1963. The last paragraph of his opening essay. Brzostoski conducts lectures along this theme during the NYAS 1969 exhibition and conducts a tour to Asia on behalf of NYAS. The Riverside Museum was originally the Roerich Museum.
Chapter Three · Materializing Tibet

self re-emerges in control to “get whatever you wish. It is up to you.”\textsuperscript{179} The (re)presentation of Tibetan objects by Anand and Brzostoski as important tools to understanding change highlight the shift in socio-political ideology governing the ‘American way of life.’

Both Anand and Brzostoski referred to Tibetan objects as art. However, as demonstrated above, their representations were emotive and engaged directly with external worldly concerns and inner world anxiety. It did not reflect the disassociated connoisseurship of the fine artworld. The New York Asia Society exhibition took the increasing dramatization of Tibetan art and officially institutionalized it within the limitations of western fine art discourse. Thereby capping excessive interpretations in the name of art and returning the psycho-narratives to the medical and spiritual domains.

\textbf{Conclusion}

In 1935, journalist Deaneh Dickason reported that collecting Buddhas whilst touring the Orient was almost as popular as collecting carved elephants. According to Dickason, the classic benign and serene posture of the seated Buddha reproduced across the Buddhist regions of “Ceylon, Tibet, Burma, Siam, Indo-China, China and Japan” meant that there were distinct varieties to collect. Dickason reported that “images of the Buddha made of sandalwood, only a few inches high, may be bought for a few cents. Others, of bronze, standing several feet in height, are valued in thousands of dollars.”\textsuperscript{180} However, Tibetan images of near naked blue or red multi-head and multi-limbed deities trampling bodies under foot and waving weapons or blood-filled skull cups were less familiar manifestations and while curiosities for some collectors, the demeanour of these objects was too foreign for many more. The public habituation to these strange

\textsuperscript{179} Brzostoski, J. 1963. Fourth last paragraph of his opening essay.
\textsuperscript{180} Dickason, D. “Collecting by tourists.” 1935.
images was progressed by their continuous exhibition in New York from the early twentieth century and their availability on the periphery of the art market.

My account of dominant trends in institutional and commercial activity across the U.S. from 1900 to 1968 indicates that Americans were not unfamiliar with Tibetan objects. In particular, New Yorkers had public access to Tibetan cultural material for almost 70 years prior to 1969. The venues for Tibetan objects available to New Yorkers ranged from Tibetan Buddhist altars at the Newark, Roerich and Jacques Marchais museums to the arranged glass cabinets at the AMNH and the MET. Furthermore, from the turn of the twentieth century Americans had access to Tibetan objects through missionary fundraisers, curiosity stores, auction sales and dealers in Oriental art. By the 1960s, Tibetan objects were also available on New York street market stalls and in fashions shops. For example, Joan Morse opened a fashion store on 780 Madison Avenue called Shangri-La. Apart from the snow leopard rug and suitcase covered with a tiger skin that Miss Morse shot herself, she also stocked gold-coated silver bracelets from Tibet, Japanese cotton kimonos and printed satin shoe trees from Hong Kong.\(^{181}\)

With all the public access to Tibetan objects, it is therefore surprising that Canaday wrote in his review of the 1969 NYAS Tibetan art exhibition “But for anyone unfamiliar with Tibetan art, which means virtually anybody.”\(^ {182}\) However, if analysing from a Foucauldian perspective of discourse to knowledge and power Canaday’s assertion is not so surprising. While there was a surfeit of Tibetan objects and opportunities to view and acquire them, the discourse was firmly based within the ethnographic and artistic terms of the exotic Other and not in the terms of the fine art canon of western artworlds. The essential difference in attitude towards Tibetan objects as fine art between prior and post 1969 is highlighted by the shift in socio-political ideology.

Over the century, Tibetan objects were acknowledged as the religious or sacred art of Tibetan Buddhism.\textsuperscript{183} The Theosophical Society, in particular, had popularized a mismatch of myth and fact as Tibetan Buddhism, but it was the fifties and sixties, which entertained Tibetan objects as a focal point for transcending the world’s woes and unifying humanity, as suggested by Anand and Bryztoski. This introduced a new way of seeing and knowing Tibetan objects. The subsequent transformation of Tibetan artefact into ‘fine’ art built on all the defining moments prior to 1969 and re-focused attention onto individual Tibetan objects for their own-sake, not as religious objects or as icons of self-realization.

Tibetan art was transformed because it was extracted from the everyday and the religious and made inalienable within the canon of fine art.\textsuperscript{184} This action institutionalized selected Tibetan artefacts as art and at the same time commodified them as fine art. As anthropologist Jacques Maquet observed, there is an intimate relationship between location and artistic value. Together they define what is valued as art. There is the presumption that if they are in the gallery (location), they have artistic value.\textsuperscript{185} The next chapter illustrates how an elite institution was able to effect the transformation of Tibetan artefact into art through it’s location in an elite suburb in New York, elite membership, association with contemporary political decisions and the authority to influence what becomes art.

\begin{figure}
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\textsuperscript{183} For example: Goetz, H. 1954; Gordon, A. 1997 [1952]; Olson, E. 1950.
\textsuperscript{184} Barrett, T. 2008: 2.
\textsuperscript{185} Maquet, J. 1986:17. He noted that if the audience does not see artistic merit they are disappointed.
\end{flushright}
March 10, 1969 marked the tenth anniversary of the Tibetan uprising against the occupation of the Chinese and His Holiness the fourteenth Dalai Lama’s flight into self-exile to India. Several thousand refugees prayed and sang for the spiritual salvation of those intent on destroying the Tibetan way of life. While His Holiness had established a Tibetan government-in-exile, his greater concern was to safeguard Tibetan culture and Buddhism. Journalist Joseph Lelyveld reported that H.H. the Dalai Lama had stated in an interview that “it was up to the refugees to preserve their Buddhism, for it was being systematically stamped out in Tibet.” He warned against the materialism of the west, and that those Tibetans in-exile must remember the reason and logic of their faith.¹

A month later and half way around the world, the Americans were also celebrating Tibetan culture in an art exhibition which transformed selected Tibetan artefacts into art. The elite non-profit cultural institution, the New York Asia Society (NYAS), undertook the incorporation of Tibetan objects into the western fine art paradigm. They hosted *The Art of Tibet*. I argue that this event was a milestone. The 119 objects had been carefully selected from public and private western art collections. The authoritative 163 page catalogue documented for posterity this initial transformation of Tibetan artefacts into art. The exhibition, art exhibition catalogue, the lenders’ names and subsequent art reviews were important in endorsing Tibetan objects as art. Furthermore, the exhibition would be on display at three venues for almost seven months. The venues were Asia House Gallery² in New York (April 10-June 8), the National Collection of Fine Arts in Washington DC (July 3-September 1) and the Seattle Museum (October 2-November 16). As

² The exhibition was held in the New York Asia Society’s gallery, Asia House. To avoid any confusion I will refer to the exhibition being held at the New York Asia Society.
previously noted the focus of this thesis is on New York. This significant exhibition was organized by the New York Art Society.

In the last chapter, I discussed the role museums played in focusing western eyes onto Tibet’s foreign imagery. By the 1960s, the Tibetans were struggling to come to terms with the overt Chinese presence in their country. They had witnessed the flight into exile of their spiritual leader and the destruction of
many monasteries.\textsuperscript{3} America was also undergoing its own crises. Increasing middle class affluence, higher education, greater mobility and exposure to alternative ideas was leading some to question normative behaviours, such as the everyday performance of gender and racial relations. The \textit{New York Times} headlines for Sunday, April 13, 1969 (fig. 4.1 above) is a tableau of the nation’s angst—Vietnam, the draft lottery, the Soviet menace, budget cuts, poverty, racism and education. Even the munificence of the philanthropists was under scrutiny. In addition, the sense of anarchy and alienation was reinforced by the stark front page illustration of unrepairsd buildings damaged in riots a year earlier. It was in this climate of socio-political unease that Tibetan artefacts were (re)presented to the public as art.

As previously noted, prior to 1969 Tibetan artefacts were occasionally referred to as art but they were not institutionalized as a western-recognized fine art form. On April 10, 1969, this situation shifted. An elite institution, the New York Asia Society, opened an exhibition titled \textit{The Art of Tibet}. This exhibition, with its associated catalogue and exhibition reviews transformed selected Tibetan artefacts into aesthetic-based artworks. Using a George Dickie metaphor, it was on this date that the institutionalized artworld “conferred” the status of art onto selected Tibetan objects.\textsuperscript{4}

This chapter explores the motivations for why Tibetan art was inaugurated into the world of western fine art in 1969. I identify this year as the point in time when Tibetan artefacts received recognition as a legitimate art form by an elite western art institution. What were the motivations and why had the New York Asia Society become involved? I will argue that the transformation of Tibetan artefacts was not a random occurrence. The socio-political unrest within America and the perceived global communist threat proved a catalyst for the transformation.

Simultaneously with the arrival of Tibetan artefacts onto the market was the revolution of western art practice. New industrial materials disgorged from

\textsuperscript{3} For history of Tibet during this period see Goldstein, M. 1997. Also, Shakya, T. 1999.
large post WWII factories and new conceptual approaches to art, such as performance, installation and in-the-moment experiences, were eclipsing traditional art materials and practices. These did not always sit restrained in the white cube spaces of conventional galleries. Furthermore, new societal directions, such as feminism and racism, exposed artists to pioneering opportunities. Elements of this new art carried ethical and political statements, which questioned the *truthfulness* of representation and the status quo.\(^5\) Contemporary western art incorporated intense sensual experiences, which contrasted with the tradition of disinterested contemplation and invited emotional engagement.\(^6\)

The following three art examples illustrate the shift in representation away from conventional gallery presentations (illus. 109a-b). An early example of the blurring of boundaries and conventions was Allen Ginsberg’s reading of *Howl* amidst the throwaway broken orange crate sculptures of Fred Martin. Fellow *Beat*, Michael McClure wrote of his sensations at the time of the performance, “None of us wanted to go back ... We wanted voice and we wanted vision.”\(^7\) Performances used various means—words, actions, silence, stillness—inverting the audience to experience these sensations evoked by performers. One such performance was Yoko Ono’s *Cut Piece*, which probed the emotional and physical conflict, violence and desecration embodied in gender tension. The audience was asked to cut away portions of her clothing as she sat statue-like on stage.\(^8\)

The third example is Andy Warhol’s social protest over depersonalised packaged commodities. His *modus operandi* was to cut famous portraits from newspapers or magazines and from these create multiple screen-printed

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\(^5\) Potts, A. 2004: 299.
\(^6\) There was also a strong Asian influence on western artists, originally Japanese woodblocks on Impressionists such as Monet. In the 1950s, Zen Buddhism was a creative force for a number of American artists. For general influence of Zen on world art, see Westgeest, H. 1997.
\(^7\) McClure, M. 1982.
\(^8\) Crow, T. 2006: 133, 132, fig.88.
portraits.\(^9\) According to Carter Ratcliff, Warhol used “the devices of commercial art to expose the mediocrity and exploitativeness of popular culture.”\(^10\) Contemporary artists, such as these three, were responding to the shifting socio-political environment of their times. Art historian and critic, John Canaday wrote that art is “the truest and most complete witnesses [sic] to the nature of the times that produced them.”\(^11\) The western transformation of Tibetan artefacts into art was a product of these same turbulent times.

I argue that in 1969 the move to institutionalise Tibetan artefacts was a dual strategy.\(^12\) Firstly, the exhibition of Tibetan artefacts as fine art disempowered the artefacts as anti-social counterculture icons. Secondly, as art, an official narrative could be woven to include propaganda messages against communism. Tibet had a unique world position in the west—at once familiar and foreign. But despite its uniqueness and isolation on the roof of the world, it too was another domino fallen to Communism.\(^13\) The very presence of these objects on the western market was a symbol of survival against communist aggression. The (re)presentation of these art works as survivors constructed a strong propaganda narrative of the west caretaking the lost culture of Tibet.

Tibetan artefacts appealed to a diverse range of consumers. One group were the western-born Tibetan Buddhist practitioner\(^14\) or the Theosophist-like New Age advocate intent on finding the ‘truth’ about themselves.\(^15\) They used Tibetan objects in their practice or as backdrops to their own self-

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\(^9\) Ironically, today his art is being authenticated by paring back his authorship on collaborative works—the antithesis to his protest on mass production. Shinayerson, M. 2007. See also Honnef, K. 2000.


\(^12\) Willard Boyd noted that museums are repositories, which actively interpret and communicate their messages to the public. They rarely explain their selection processes. The attitude of institutions was no different in 1969, therefore the duel strategy proposed here is a deduction on my part rather than a published fact. Boyd, W. 1999.

\(^13\) For domino theory see Silverman, J. 1975. Seven years earlier the *Chinese Art Treasures* exhibition had toured the U.S. with a similar message against the aggression of the Communist Chinese and loses of cultural heritage. Ju. J.C. 2007: 124-125.

\(^14\) Western-Tibetan Buddhists are sometimes referred to as a hyphenated Tibetan Buddhist. Such a label highlights the problematic nature of closely identifying Tibetan identity with Tibetan Buddhism, rather than the less regional designation of Vajrayana Buddhism.

\(^15\) Mills, S. 2003: 73.
realizations. The devil-like imagery appealed to a second group of consumer, the sixties youth who were rebelling against an authority which seemed increasingly aloof to their concerns. The juxtapositioning of wisdom and compassion with aggression and sexuality made Tibetan artefacts attractive counterculture symbols (illus. 110a-d). A third group of consumers were the increasingly affluent middle-class professionals, who had a disposable income to collect non-essentials. Tibetan artefacts provided this parent-generation with an opportunity for self-expression. Serious collectors and art connoisseurs formed a smaller fourth group that recognized the artistic worth of select Tibetan objects. Throughout the sixties, a stimulus to the flow of material objects into the U.S. was the plentiful supply of American dollars. At the same time as Tibetan artefacts appeared in the west, America was flooding the world currency markets with U.S. dollars. The over-production of currency was a strategy used by the United States to ameliorate domestic inflation by freely spending overseas. Domestically, increased individual prosperity after WWII resulted in regular wages and greater leisure—a consequence was tourism and collecting. The huge sums spent by the U.S. government on rearment and foreign social programs, were what political economist David Calleo refers to as an “ambitious reassertion of American leadership abroad.” America and Americans had money. Both public institutions and private individuals were looking for opportunities to spend it. The influx of Tibetan material onto the western market coincided with increased availability of American dollars.

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16 Campbell, C. 2001: 256.
17 A Mārg article noted that some Tibetan objects had a ‘genius’ quality which is universally recognized across culture and the ages. Sankrityayana, R. 1963: 33.
20 Calleo, D. 1980-81: 782. This comment is in reference to the Kennedy Administration era (1961-1963). However, the sentiment continued into later administrations.
21 In order to use unwanted foreign exchange the U.S. government through the Library of Congress initiated the reprinting and shipping of Tibetan texts at the Library’s New Delhi Field Office between 1962 and 1985. This arrangement was in lieu of payment for wheat shipped for famine relief. The Public Law 480 program resulted in approximately 6,000 volumes. Lopez Jr, D. 1995: 265. See also brief outline of Gene Smith’s involvement. Smith, G. 2001: xi-xii.
According to art historian and dealer, Richard Feigen, “This inundation of world currency markets naturally caused massive inflation; museum budgets ballooned and the art market soared.” The art market was also responding to the entry of clients with new wealth desiring prestige goods. The competition between museums and wealthy individuals vying for ownership of a limited supply of acclaimed western masterpieces, and established contemporary works spilled onto the art market fringes. Western scarcity resulted in new contemporary discoveries and the transformation of foreign objects. Tibetan artefacts presented as ideal candidates—the thangkas were painterly and the sculptures richly adorned. Furthermore, Tibetan objects had been visible on the margins of the western artworld, but now the increasing quantity and quality was shifting the art markets’ attitude.

One drawback was the commonly held opinion that Tibetans were not creative and only copied Indian and Chinese artists. The New York Times reported that “the Tibetans took over Buddhism intact from the Indians,” even though some of the Tibetan landscapes reveal Chinese influence. Before Tibetan artefacts could become art, the notion that Tibetan artefacts were copies had to be overcome. Art historian John Rosenfield noted that a number of “highly skilled and dedicated scholars had attempted to promote Tibetan artefacts as art. He wrote, “But despite their efforts, and despite the obvious aesthetic brilliance and historic importance of Tibetan art, it has thus far failed to gain a really stable place in western museum displays, in academic art history courses and texts.” Rosenfield’s comments support my argument that The Art of Tibet exhibition was the point of initial transformation for Tibetan artefact into art and that it was not enough to have objects in the British Museum or the Metropolitan Museum of Art (MET).

22 Feigen, R. 2000: 144.
24 Pers. comm. reported that middlemen were buying thangkas by the ‘gunny sack’ for minimal outlay.
26 Rosenfield, J. 1969: 225. The scholars he named were: Giuseppe Tucci, Antoinette Gordon, Eleanor Olson, David Snellgrove, Odette Monod, Marcel Lalou, R. A. Stein, Siegbert Hummel, Raghu Vira and his son Lokesh Chandra.
The Tibetan artefacts needed a focal exhibition to begin an art history discourse.

It took a serious undertaking by an elite institution to shift this prevailing public attitude. To explain the circumstances in which this transformation happened, I have divided this chapter into three sections. The first, titled the \textit{Swinging Sixties}, describes the socio-political milieu in which the exhibition \textit{The Art of Tibet} was planned and executed. To set the sixties scene I examine the current affairs and issues of interest on the front page of the \textit{New York Times}, for Sunday April 13, 1969. This date is relevant because John Canaday's review for \textit{The Art of Tibet} exhibition also appeared in this issue. The second section, titled the \textit{New York Asia Society}, introduces the hosting institution and its elite membership. It profiles the importance of the Asia Society in the reception of Asian art and its role in the transformation process of Tibetan art. As an elite institution with powerful and illustrious members, the Asia Society had the authority to shift historical attitudes and establish new behaviours. The ability of a few elite to shift institutionalized attitudes is referred to by economists Sushil Bikhchandani and colleagues as an 'informational' cascade.\footnote{Bikhchandani, S. et al. 1992.}

The Asia Society was an elite institution, which promoted Asian cultural capital. Its credentials and pedigree are important in understanding its role and standing in the political and social life of the United States and Asia.

The third section titled, \textit{Where Gods are Demons} presents an examination of John Canaday's review of the exhibition, in the \textit{New York Times} of Sunday April 13, 1969.\footnote{Canaday, J. "Where Gods Are Demons." 1969.} I analyse Canaday's article in order to contextualize the transformation of Tibetan artefacts into art. This article expresses the prevailing socio-political situation,\footnote{Aronowitz, S. 1994: 60.} indicating attitudes, events, beliefs and reasons for the institutional impetus to (re)present Tibetan artefacts as [fine] art. I look for keys to understand this process in the same way Canaday looked for keys to understand art.\footnote{Canaday, J. 1964: 5.} He added that these are frequently locked into
the art itself, in my case the keys to understanding the transformation of Tibetan artefact into art are locked in Canaday's exhibition review.

This close reading of Canaday's review is built upon the premise that media generated messages, such as, art reviews are coded texts and that this review reveals how the Tibet exhibition is enmeshed in political and social concerns. Political scientist Jennifer Tebbe stated, "What a society writes, publishes, and reads is a guide to its culture."\(^{31}\) As previously noted, daily newspapers were important in coalescing national attitudes and opinions.\(^{32}\) They provide the public with readily accessible tools to decipher political and social events, including new or foreign developments. Sociologist Pierre Bourdieu refers to twentieth century daily newspapers as omnibus publications designed to attract as many readers as possible with a wide range of regular cultural features, such as art reviews and cinema guides.\(^{33}\)

It is interesting to consider Bourdieu's statistics on who reads national dailies. He profiles the general readership as men and women aged 25 to 49 years, with a tertiary education and employed as junior to senior business executives.\(^{34}\) The profile identified by Bourdieu is typical of the upwardly mobile middle class. According to sociologists Paul DiMaggio and Michael Useem, these same class clusters also participate in a wide range of activities and develop large networks.\(^{35}\) They reported that "the adoption of artistic interests, tastes, standards, and activities associated with a social class helps establish an individual’s membership in that class."\(^{36}\)

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\(^{31}\) Tebbe, J. 1980: 259.

\(^{32}\) Davison, G. 2001: 12.

\(^{33}\) Bourdieu, P. 2004: 442.

\(^{34}\) The profile generated by Bourdieu’s 1970s reader statistics accords with U.S. gallery event attendances. For instance, Fred Myers summarizes the Asia Society’s own survey of visitors to their 1988 Aboriginal Art Exhibition Dreamings. He wrote the survey indicated “that the audience was relatively young, with half under 40 years of age and only 12% over 60. They were highly educated and literate; half had postgraduate degrees. Forty percent of the visitors had learned of the exhibition through the media, principally The New York Times Magazine, Time Magazine, and New York Magazine [sic].” Myers, F. 1994: 696 n.20. Gamson, W. et al. 1992: 389. Bourdieu, P. 2004: 445-6, tables 33–35.

\(^{35}\) DiMaggio, P. 1987: 444.

\(^{36}\) DiMaggio, P. and Useem, M. 1978: 143.
Knowing where to be, what to attend and how to perform is important in the schema of social stratification. The New York Asia Society (NYAS) was a location to be seen (illus. 111). Performance studies professor Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, observes that to be seen exercising good taste is an important pre-requisite to being identified with cultural capital—an essential for social mobility.\(^{37}\) Newspapers are important conduits in maintaining status networks,\(^{38}\) which made reviews such as Canaday’s essential reading for the upwardly mobile. Equally, review articles are important advertisements for an exhibition, affecting whether or not the reader will visit the exhibition.\(^{39}\)

Increased activity increases visibility and reinforces what anthropologist Paul Stoller, refers to as “a set of criteria for taste.”\(^{40}\) A focus for the New York Asia Society was to shift taste by introducing Americans to Asian art. The acceptance and positioning of Tibetan artefacts as fine art was not an historical given. The upheaval of the 1960s witnessed the refocus and renegotiation of what the public understood as art, which included Tibetan artefacts becoming art.

The swinging sixties

The sixties counter culture personality, Timothy Leary, the originator of turn on, tune in, drop out,\(^{41}\) remarked how the sixties had “scared the hell out of culture”\(^{42}\)—American culture in particular. Advances in communication were exposing Americans to alternative ways of living, seeing and experiencing the world. According to political historian Warren Cohen, the fears generated from the Vietnam and the Cold War of the 1950s and 1960s resulted in the

\(^{38}\) DiMaggio, P. and Useem, M. 1978; DiMaggio, P. 1987: 443. He adds that arts (supplemented by fashion, cuisine and sport) could also be thought of as a “common cultural currency.”
\(^{40}\) Stoller, P. 2003: 214.
\(^{41}\) It is an excerpt from a prepared speech Leary delivered at the opening of a press conference in New York City on Sep. 19, 1966.
\(^{42}\) Leary, T. 1968: 223.
Asianization of America. The nightly news forced many more Americans to pay attention to Asia and its culture. For example, Cohen considered the burgeoning interest in Buddhism as a coping mechanism for fears fuelled by the emerging Cold War and America’s place in it.\textsuperscript{43}

As previously noted, America’s attitudes towards Asia was focused on China. Journalist Harold Isaac found that America was concerned about China’s impact, he wrote, “whether it be among the fainter marks left in a remoter past, the plainer scratches made by events through the years, or the deeper gashes cut by the fears of the present.”\textsuperscript{44} Isaacs’s survey was conducted in the fifties. By the late sixties America’s activities in the Vietnam War were described as a “miasma” affecting all aspects of American life. Unavoidably Americans witnessed this war on evening television, along with the protests against the war. Historian of American studies H.G. Nicholas noted that the public were confused by the vigorous debates and acts of dissension—what should they believe?\textsuperscript{45}

Apart from greater global awareness, America’s role in world politics was escalating. Richard Nixon’s inaugural presidential address on January 20, 1969, reflects this shift in United States foreign policy. He declared,

> The greatest honor history can bestow is the title of peacemaker. This honor now beckons America—the chance to help lead the world at last out of the valley of turmoil and onto that high ground of peace.\textsuperscript{46}

But at home, America was not at peace. Across the nation, stunned Americans watched televised-live scenes of peace protests and sit-ins that were abruptly ended by authoritative violence.

An illustration of the precarious predicament in which America found itself is juxtapositioned by the inside and outside televised scenes at the 1968 Democrats National Convention in Chicago. Inside the conservative, cool calm

\textsuperscript{44} Isaacs, H. 1956: 211.  
\textsuperscript{45} Nicholas, H.G. 1968: 189-190.  
\textsuperscript{46} Woolley, J. and Peters, G. 2006.
of the Hilton Hotel ballroom were well-heeled Democrat delegates, such as Hubert H. Humphrey and Lyndon Johnson. Outside were chanting activists including Bobby Seale (Black Panthers), Abbie Hoffman (Youth International Party) and Allen Ginsberg (Beat poet). The moment the Democrats announced Humphrey as their Presidential nomination, the National Guard and the Chicago police charged the crowd of protestors. Novelist and journalist Norman Mailer wrote that as he watched from his Hilton Hotel room above the crowd, “children, and youths, and middle-aged men and women were being pounded and clubbed and gassed and beaten.”

At the same incident, the CBS Eyewitness reporter, Walter Cronkite, reported live “There has been a display of naked violence in the streets of Chicago.” Tear gas, batons and drawn machine guns were used against the protesters. America reeled in shock.

The television coverage of the Chicago riots influenced the political outcome of the American elections. One year on from the Chicago event, in a discussion on the woes of the arts in the sixties, one senior New York Times arts critic posed the question “can any manifestation in the arts and culture today be divorced from what’s going on in politics—the war, the attendant problems, race relations and so forth?”

Ironically, Tibetan art was advanced in response to these woes, in particular, by anti-communist sentiment and societal unrest linked to the American youth counterculture movement.

The front page of the New York Times, for Sunday, April 13, was full of dissent and conflict. The Soviets were rumoured to be marching on Czechoslovakia, Korean Armistice Commission remained locked in a silent stalemate and the

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50 Quoted in Salisbury, H. 1969.
51 Shuster, A. 1969.
52 There is no attached story to this caption. The caption reads “Four hours and not a word said.” See photograph at the top of figure 4.1.
war in Vietnam had escalated. Add to this, University students were rioting, this time at Harvard, ingloriously dismissing the cry “It Could Not Happen at Harvard.” A small militant band of Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) had seized the Harvard University Hall, ejecting the deans from their offices. Their protest was over the continuing campus presence of Harvard’s traditional Reserve Officers Training Corps (ROTC). An associated grievance to this protest was with U.S. troops in foreign lands fighting for social revolutions. The students argued that the war in Vietnam was just another form of colonialism.

Originally, only a small number of students were involved, in fact more students protested against the protesters. But after the police charged with batons, many more became involved. The protest shifted to a question of governance and the need to return to the core principle of “the freedom to teach, to enquire and to learn.” Critically, university students were questioning authority, especially remote authority such as the University Boards. Counterculture figure and ex-Harvard lecturer, Timothy Leary’s adage, “Think for yourself and question authority” summed up many of the attitudes of young Americans at this time. The nine New York Times arts critics had also commented on the lack of respect for authority. They agreed that the problem was America’s affluence. It gave people the time to sit, watch and to question authority which resulted in self-indulgent attitudes and loss of community.

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54 Other universities protesting during the 1969 spring included Columbia University, Princeton University, University of Arizona, MIT and the University of Montana. For a full list see Davidson, C. “Student Spring Offensive On!” For a report on the shift in student protests and the attitude of university administrators see Freeman, J. 1969.
55 Hechinger, F. 1969. See also Reinhold, R. 1969. University protests had begun at Berkley (1964) over freedom of speech and the right to hold antiwar protest. Many more universities rebelled, such as Duke, Wisconsin, Brandeis and Columbia. It was not until the death of students in May 1970 (Ohio) at the hands of National Guardsman, that attention finally focused on the student’s frustration with social issues such as the continuing Vietnam War.
58 This is a phrase he commonly used at rally speeches. For a summarized biography of Leary see New York Times obituary Mansnerus, L. 1996.
The lower-socio economic classes, especially the African-American, were also questioning education and authority. The difficulties and frustration of individuals and families to break out from the poverty cycle was a major contributor to racial tensions. The discrepancy between the social classes is borne out by the April 13 front page article “Slum Schools Fail On a Police Test.”\(^{60}\) The New York City Police Department was accused of erecting an institutional ceiling which discriminated against predominantly ethnic individuals educated in poor neighbourhoods. It was alleged that in the examination for promotion from Lieutenant to Captain, the number of advanced grammar questions impeded applicants from disadvantaged backgrounds. In addition, the continued resistance by many governing authorities to the ‘black bourgeoisie’ desire for equality eventually resulted in political activism and the expression of black culture.\(^{61}\) From this grew a more militant group, the Black Panthers.

Black activism gained momentum in the sixties. The 1968 Mexico Olympics was scandalized when two U.S. sprinters, Tommie Smith and John Carlos, each raised their black gloved closed fist in a black salute during their medal ceremony.\(^{62}\) The racial tension expressed in this act were also experienced in the American military. The April 13 headlines, “Tensions of Black Power Reach Troops in Vietnam.”\(^{63}\) Military service was a popular career for some young African-American males. It provided them with greater opportunities than civilian life.\(^{64}\) However, the anti-Vietnam sentiment of African-Americans had increased from (35%) in 1966 to (56%) in 1969. There was a growing belief that African-Americans were discriminated against and disproportionately deployed to dangerous situations.\(^{65}\) Tempers had flared and the military instituted dispute resolution mechanisms specifically targeting racial discrimination grievances.\(^{66}\)

\(^{60}\) Perlmutter, E. 1969.
\(^{61}\) Van Deburg, W. 1993.
\(^{62}\) Larner, J. and Wolf, D. 1968: 64C-D.
\(^{64}\) Van Deburg, W.1993: 99.
\(^{65}\) Van Deburg, W. 1993: 99.
Also illustrated and headlined on the April 13 front page was the dilemma of unrepai red buildings damaged by riots more than a year before. Many of the riots were subsequent to the assassination of the Reverend Dr Martin Luther King. This act and the aftermath added to ongoing frustrations, a consequence of inadequate housing, poor education, and the lack of opportunity for self-determination. Decisions made by ‘whites’ impacted continually on their lives. Pittsburgh State Representative, K. Leroy Irvis commented,

White leadership is still living in a fantasy world. They think the riot was caused by a few agitators. It was a rebellion against conditions under which black people were living.

Many African-Americans felt they were victims of colonialism, especially as they had few resources or opportunities to take possession of their own lives. While on one hand, President Nixon announced USD2,000,000 fund for building restoration projects, on the other hand, he was cutting the budget to bring in a near USD6 billion surplus, and there were no plans to spend on social programs. Furthermore, budget cutting included such projects as the antipoverty program—a successful self-help project within New York slum neighbourhoods.

Access to resources was not a hindrance for the wealthy. Their concern on April 13 was government agitation against Foundations and philanthropy. In response, John D. Rockefeller 3rd initiated the creation of an independent commission to evaluate and propose guidelines on the financial dealings of Foundations. It was thought that self-regulation was preferable to government regulation. The reality was many elite had the means to avoid paying taxes altogether. In the same April 13 issue, journalist Philip Stern

67 Herbers, J. “Cities’ riot sites remain desolate.” 1969. The stark photograph of a burnt out building at the bottom of the front page was captioned, Pattern of Violence (see figure 4.1).
72 John D. Rockefeller preferred the third to be written in Arabic (3rd) than the conventional Roman (III). Fisher, S. 2006: 22. At the time, the NYT commonly wrote the third as 3d, such as in this article. Farber, M. 1969.
detailed how the elite avoid taxes by using Foundations, while the less fortunate have few tax loopholes open to them.\textsuperscript{73}

A concern, not explicitly addressed but implied, is America's loss of faith and trust in its governing bodies. Cultural critics Peter Braunstein and Michael Doyle noted the sixties as a time when growing numbers of Americans realized that their government had not been honest in their pursuit and support of particular ideologies.\textsuperscript{74} They wrote that the

Sixties were centrally about the recognition, on the part of an ever-growing number of Americans, that the country in which they thought they lived—peaceful, generous, honourable—did not exist and never had... [they continued]... As the violence of the war expanded and government lies about its history were exposed, people withdrew the automatic trust and confidence that mark the legitimacy of public authority... [The war against Vietnam] assumed nightmare proportions, requiring an ever-greater need to protest and somehow bring it to an end.\textsuperscript{75}

Socio-political issues such as inequity, corruption, disobedience, race, gender and sensational technological achievements (such as a man on the moon) and nuclear fears resulted in loss of faith in the government and the church. The loss of faith in governance culminated in a loss of institutional authority.

The young were looking elsewhere for another morality in which they could trust. In a \textit{Time} magazine essay on Woodstock,\textsuperscript{76} the author suggests that youth had found his or her own ethical standard—freedom to be an individual and do one's own thing.\textsuperscript{77} Their search was for self-revelation, a truth that the government could not corrupt. The disenfranchised youth found solace and identity in music, as many earlier African-Americans had found theirs in gospel or jazz music. Sensory experiences, music and a desire to bring about

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item[\textsuperscript{73}] This article was also in the April 13, \textit{NYT} weekend magazine. Stern, P. 1969. On August 8, 1969 the Museum Directors, Mr Thomas P.F. Hoving (MET) and Dr Sherman E. Lee (Cleveland) spoke against the passing of laws abolishing tax-exempt status on art gifts to museums. While the bill had yet to pass through the Senate, their concern was that gifts to museums would dry-up. Shepard, R. 1969.
\item[\textsuperscript{74}] Braunstein, P. and Doyle, D. 2002.
\item[\textsuperscript{75}] Young, M. 2002: 3.
\item[\textsuperscript{76}] Woodstock was a peaceful music festival held at Bethel, New York State. Over 500,000 young people gathered to listen to 32 performers over three days, August 15-18, 1969.
\item[\textsuperscript{77}] Anon. "Time essay." 1969.
\end{itemize}
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meaningful change to an increasingly hostile world, were links in
countercultures. An illustration, again drawn from the April 13 issue is Bob
Dylan’s 1964 song The Times They Are A-Changin, which reflects the mood for
change.

Come senators, congressmen
Please heed the call
Don't stand in the doorway
Don't block up the hall
For he that gets hurt
Will be he who has stalled
There's a battle outside
And it is ravin'
It'll soon shake your windows
And rattle your walls
For the times they are a-changin'  

The young were mobile, vocal and visible. At the same time they spurned the
materialism of their parents. It is estimated that by the 1960s over 800,000
were entering the college system each year. The resulting overcrowded
living spaces and makeshift accommodation stimulated the dispersal of
countercultures such as the hippie life-style, black militancy and feminism.
For some squatting and communal living became a matter of preference, they
knew that they had the opportunities to leave the squalor behind, whereas
other Americans did not have such choices. As one African-American stated,
"the hippies really bug us, because we know they can come down here [New
York East Village] and play their games [poverty] for a while and then escape.
And we can't man." These words underscore the frustration between black
and white; poverty and affluence; choices and means of choice.

The swinging sixties was itself a transformation point in America’s history.
Marginalized groups were finding voice, especially African-Americans. In the
swirling milieu of the sixties new ideas were entering American consciousness

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78 Murphy, K. and Gross, R. “All you need is love.” 1969. This article was also featured in the
NYT April 13, weekend magazine.
79 Stanza three of The Times They Are A-Changin.
80 Lone Star College. “American Cultural History: 1960-1969.” Furthermore, it was during the
1960s when America became the first country to have more students than farmers. Gitlin, T.
1980: 2.
unfettered to normalizing ideologies. There was an increasing acceptance of
culture from the Indian sub-continent. India was an inspiration to the sixties
counterculture. A New York Times reporter wrote, “For thousands of New
Yorkers, Indian religion and philosophy have become a respiritualizing force in
their search for identity.” Cultural ambassadors such as sitarist Ravi
Shankar, and various self-styled gurus and swamis were popularising an Asia-
inspired spiritualist boom across America.

In the late sixties, two Tibetan Buddhist teachers who were to have an impact
arrived in America. The Nyingmapa teacher Tarthang Tulku Rinpoche,
settled in Berkeley, California. He described Berkeley in as,

a microcosm of a culture in transition ... the events of the decade
had shaken confidence in long-standing western traditions ... Now
scholars, philosophers, and psychologists were beginning to examine Buddhism, either out of curiosity or a more serious
interest.

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83 Ravi Shankar was appearing on TV programs, at music festivals, with Philharmonic
orchestras, and as music guru to the Beatles. He was to appear at Woodstock but rain
stopped him from attending. Harrison, G. 1999. The Asia Society organized his first across-
America tour in 1961-62.
84 Although America had been influenced by Indian philosophies a century earlier. The
nineteenth century American literature luminaries, such as Walt Whitman (1819-1892), Ralph
Waldo Emerson (1803-1882) and Henry David Thoreau (1817-1862) had studied the ancient
Indic texts of the Bhagavad-Gita and the Upanishads. Emerson’s writings popularized the
notion of Asia as an ornament, passive and spiritual, in contrast to the free and virile
America. Thoreau was known to have been conversant with the translations of Indian texts,
although he never mentions them directly. His essay titled Resistance to Civil Government
highlights the Eastern influence. Furthermore, it was this Thoreau essay, which motivated the
peaceful resistance campaign of Mahatma Ghandi and, later Martin Luther King Jr. Schueller,
85 The first Tibetan Buddhist of note to arrive was Geshe Wangyal, a Kalmyk lama, who arrived
in 1955 and headed-up a Kalmyk Buddhist temple in Newark, New Jersey. Anon. “Lama
Greeted in City as Cold as Tibet.” 1955. The replica of the Jehol Temple on exhibition at the
Chicago 1933 exposition belonged to part of the temple given to the Kalmyk’s by the Chinese
emperor after their flight from Russia across the vast wastelands. Hedin, S. 1932a. Wangyal
taught at Columbia University in the 1960s and 1970s. For references see American Institute
Jackson, P. 2003. Among Wangyal’s students was Robert Thurman, who went on to train as a
Tibetan lama. Ilson, M. “Ex-Ivy Leagues aim to be monks.” 1963. Thurman currently holds the
Jey Tsong Kappa chair of Indo-Tibetan Studies at Columbia University. On the behalf of
the H.H. the Dalai Lama, Thurman and Hollywood actor, Richard Gere were responsible for
founding New York Tibet House in 1987. For a history of the 1,000 immigrant lottery and the
Tarthang lost no time in promoting his sect of Tibetan Buddhism. In just one year, he established the *Nyingmapa* Meditation Centre and Dharma Press. The other Tibetan Buddhist teacher of note at this time was Chogyam Trungpa. He was a lineage teacher for the *Kagyu* and *Nyingma* traditions. He had already established a meditation centre in Scotland, published a book on Meditation, and followed this with an autobiography, *Born in Tibet*. It was the popular response to the latter, which prompted the University of Colorado to invite Trungpa to teach. On his arrival, he expressed his concern over the free-thinking style of America’s pseudo-Tibetan Buddhists. He thought the combination of New York City cosmopolitan life with hippie tendencies was undisciplined and practitioners were too eager for tantric experiences.

However, it was not the Tibetan Buddhist teachers but the Beat poets, who had left a lasting impression on American youth. The Beat generation was coined for a group of American writers searching for a new consciousness to explain their youthful experiences in the fifties. These searches included experimenting with drugs, alcohol, sexual behaviour and alternative religions, such as Hinduism and Buddhism. The Beats were a loosely configured group of poets, who acknowledged their debt to the earlier American transcendentalist’s. The Beat poets were inspired by the eastern poetic pulse and desire for spiritual experience over the European theological orthodoxy.

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89 Within that same year, Tarthang had published a catalogue to accompany the exhibition, *Sacred Art of Tibet*, which he had also organized. Dow, M. and Cook, E. 1985: 55, 21 and 25.
90 He founded the U.S. accredited Naropa University in Colorado in 1974. It is a private, non-profit, non-sectarian institution, inspired by Tibetan philosophies, offering a contemplative component to education.
91 *Born in Tibet* was followed by *Meditation in Action*, the first book to be published by Shambhala Publications.
92 Trungpa’s style of teaching was unorthodox and attracted criticisms and scandal Trungpa, C. and Roberts, E.C. 1977: 256-257. For comprehensive histories of Buddhism in America, see the following: Boyce, B. 2009; Fields, R. 1981; Prebish, C. and Tanaka, K. 1998; and Seager, R. 1999.
93 They included Walt Whitman (1819-1892), Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882) and Henry David Thoreau (1817-1862). Isaacs, H. 1958: 249-255.
Two influential Beat poets were Jack Kerouac and Allen Ginsberg. Kerouac’s first book *On the Road* (1957) brought critical acclaim. However it was his second book, *The Dharma Burns* (1958), that packaged Buddhism in a meaningful way for the sixties youth. Historian Deshiae Lott wrote that “Perhaps Kerouac is not ‘the new Buddha of American prose’ but an Emersonian poet-prophet of the twentieth century telling us that in the midst of chaos there is hope; there is peace; there is forgiveness; there is compassion; there is life; there is suffering; and there is death.” During the sixties Allen Ginsberg continued from his fifties *Howl* reputation and became a central participant and commentator for counterculture and increasingly disaffected Americans as they held public protests, human-be-ins and sit-ins. At these, he often performed mantras punctuated with the sound of his small Tibetan cymbals. Commentator Marc Olmstead stated that Ginsberg was leading audiences to the *buddhadharma*, even though Ginsberg’s spirituality at that time was a mismatch of words and performances drawn from reading, friends interests and drug induced reality.

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95 Ginsberg and Kerouac both attended Columbia University when the Mahayana Buddhist scholar, D.T. Suzuki was a visiting professor. Suzuki (1870-1966) married Beatrice Erskine Lane, an American Theosophist in 1911. He is regarded as the father of the Zen Buddhist movement in the States. Suzuki was a media celebrity and the toast of New York elite and intellectual life. He had arrived in response to the demand of American Zen converts. The 1934 publication of Suzuki’s ‘An Introduction to Zen Buddhism’ was edited by Christmas Humphrey, a leading British Theosophist who was active in reforming Theravada Buddhism in Sri Lanka and fostered the Pan-Buddhist movement. The foreword was written by Carl Jung. This is an example that distances across the Atlantic did not prevent collaborative projects. Other people Suzuki worked with included Paul Carus, John Cage, Erich Fromm, Father Thomas Merton, Martin Heidegger, Karl Jaspers, Alan Watts, Allen Ginsburg, and Gary Snyder.

96 Kerouac had written a biography of Siddhartha Gautama, it was published in the Buddhist magazine, *Tricycle* as a serial in 1993-95, thirty-eight years after his death. This was also a time when many notions of Buddhism were randomly chosen and adopted, with or without a guru. American-Zen practitioner and contemporary of Ginsberg and Kerouac, Alan Watts saw the true spirit of Zen as a “free-form humanistic spirituality infused with creative potential” that “fit[s] well with the expansive idealism of the 1960.” Tibetan Buddhism was affecting many in the same manner. Wolfe quoted in Lattin, D. 2003: 69. For an impression of Buddhist activity in America, see Seager, R. 1999.

97 Lott, D. 2004: 184 (Lott emphasis).

98 Trigilio, T. 2004. He is known to have chanted Tibetan mantras at many public gatherings. In 1965, during an invitation tour of Czechoslovakia to accept a poet award, Ginsberg had chanted a mantra *Om Shri Maitreya*, the hymn to the ‘Buddha of the Future’ to the accompaniment of his own small cymbals. Ginsberg was deported a day later. Kostelanetz, R. “Ginsberg Makes a World Scene.” 1965.

99 Olmstead, M. 2007. Also Ginsberg, A. 2006. He took Chogyam Trungpa as his Tibetan Buddhist teacher in 1970. He first met Chogyam Trungpa in 1962 on a trip to India with friend Gary Snyder, an American practising Zen Buddhist. On this same trip, he met with many leading Tibetan Buddhists, including H.H. the fourteenth Dalai Lama. However, a chance meeting in 1970 reacquainted Ginsberg and Trungpa, later they became student and guru.
To appreciate the transformation of Tibetan artefacts into art is to appreciate the socio-political context in which they entered and for which they attained western artworld acceptance.

New York Asia Society (NYAS)

John D. Rockefeller 3rd founded the New York Asia Society in 1956 at a time when communist witch-hunts were focused upon any individual or association with Asian contacts. For example, the two incumbent pan-Asian foundations, the Institute for Pacific Relations and the Asia Foundation, were under suspicion for communist sympathies and CIA connections, respectively. This did not deter Rockefeller 3rd. He determined that the Asia Society would be a catalyst for cultural dialogue, not foreign policy.

The emphasis for the NYAS was to be upon educating Americans about Asia and Asians about America. It was set-up as a non-profit, non-political, fee-paying membership organization. Rockefeller 3rd stated, "I think the cultural is a tremendous factor in creating understanding." His commitment included funding the fledgling Asia Society to almost USD2,000,000 in the first five years. Rockefeller 3rd remained active in Asia even though he expressed concerns in 1966 that the U.S. presence in Asia might be seen as "overwhelming" and "could in the long run become self-defeating."

The Beat poets became involved in the arts life of the Trungpa’s Naropa Institute, forming the Jack Kerouac School of Disembodied Poetics. Ginsberg, A. 2006. For details of the Indian visit, see Baker, D. 2008.

For insight into this era, see Fried, R. 1990.

In a summary on the Asia Society, Fisher noted that by 1954 it was routine for Congressional investigations to accuse Foundations of harbouring communist sympathizers. Fisher, S. 2006: 31-32.

By 1969, the NYAS was active in formulating American foreign policies and promoting trade relations.


Esterow, M. 1968.


1968, his foundation, the JDR3rd Fund, announced 299 grants, totalling USD1,500,000.\textsuperscript{108} These were for the advancement of Asians, the preservation of Asian culture in the United States and the articulation of U.S. culture in Asia.\textsuperscript{109}

The Asia Society provided the interested public with an important cultural, economic and political window into Asia, especially as a network for business associations, with seemingly neutral politics.\textsuperscript{110} By 1969, the Asia Society had become a powerful non-government organization—intimately connected to Asian and American governments, private companies and social institutions. However, for the public, the visible presence of the Asia Society was its cultural program.\textsuperscript{111}

From inception, the Asia Society presented American audiences with the opportunity to enter into dialogue with Asian cultures. These occasions were well received. The Asia Society brought performing troupes to America and developed an education department to disperse information on Asia to U.S. school teachers.\textsuperscript{112} An early cultural example was the sponsorship of the Indian sitar player, Ravi Shankar in 1961-2. The first tour was from coast-to-coast. By 1969, he was a celebrity, equally at home performing in Carnegie Hall and at Woodstock (illus. 112).\textsuperscript{113} The Asia Society had established itself as a niche art institution at a time when the importance of Asia was undervalued.\textsuperscript{114}

\textsuperscript{108} They were made to institutions in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Nepal, India, Ceylon (Sri Lanka), Burma (Myanmar), Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, South Vietnam, Philippines, Nationalist China (Taiwan), Japan and South Korea. Esterow, M. 1968.

\textsuperscript{109} Esterow, M. 1968.

\textsuperscript{110} Talbot, P. 2006: 131-132.

\textsuperscript{111} From inception, the Asia Society presented American audiences with the opportunity to enter into dialogue with Asian cultures. These occasions were well received. The Asia Society brought performing troupes to America and developed an education department to disperse information on Asia to American school teachers. Talbot, P. 2006.

\textsuperscript{112} Talbot, P. 2006.


\textsuperscript{114} It was also demonstrating its contemporariness by adopting the latest technology, for example, the use of portable audio tapes to interpret the exhibition. Canaday, J. “Where Gods are Demons.” 1969.
While maintaining cultural exchange, the Asia Society shifted attention in 1964. Rockefeller 3rd stepped down as President and Kenneth T. Young Jr, was installed. The incumbent chairman and next president, Phillips Talbot later wrote, “the Asia Society was ready to place more emphasis on the economic and political aspects of Asian life.” Young Jr was eminently suited to guide the Society through this expansion. Before his appointment, he had been involved in Asian affairs for thirty years. From the end of WWII, he served the American government in various capacities in the Far East, Northeast and Southeast Asian regions. He was part of the U.S. delegation to the United Nations in 1952-53 and 1956-57. Young Jr then spent two years in corporate oil, specializing in government relations and assessing petrochemical investments in Asia. In 1961-63, he served as Ambassador to Thailand. The year that Young Jr became President of the Asia Society he was chief of the U.S. delegation to the annual United Nations Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East. Two years later, Young Jr was reporting to the American House Committee of Foreign Affairs, on the American involvement in Vietnam. He was also included in a number of other U.S. government think-tanks and conferences. Among them, the 1965 group American Friends of Vietnam, which supported the American escalation in Vietnam, including increased bombing.

In the 1968-1969 Asia Society President’s Report, Young Jr wrote “The sheer din of so many American voices sometimes drowns out the Asian voice when it is just the one to be heard now.” But on the other hand, Young Jr also noted that the American government was frustrated that the Vietnamese

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115 In a 2004 NYT article announcing the appointment of an Asian-American female, Ms Vishakha Desai, as President of the New York Asia Society, Dinitia Smith wrote, “Ms. Desai’s appointment continues this organization’s evolution from an elite club of Foreign Service hands—devotees of Asian culture, most of them white and male—to a center with a broad cultural and educational purpose covering more than 30 countries.” Smith, D. 2004.
118 Congregational Committee Documentation 1966: 495.
121 Young Jr, K. 1969.
were not listening and acting on American advice for political and agrarian reform.\textsuperscript{122} Young Jr’s appointment is evidence of a shift in policy from Rockefeller’s non-political stance to participation in political activities.

From the outset, the Asia Society was located on the Upper East Side, within the museum mile. Its near neighbours included the Metropolitan Museum of Art (MET), and across Central Park, the American Museum of Natural History (AMNH), not to mention many smaller commercial galleries. Residents of Upper East Side, according to art historian David Halle, were wealthy, knowledgeable and engaged art audiences.\textsuperscript{123} Location is important in positioning authority. Art historian Deborah Cherry wrote that location “affects not only artists and art works, but also viewers, positioning the beholder, and shaping visual expectations and experiences.”\textsuperscript{124} As previously discussed, Tibetan art had been exhibited at various New York locations from the beginning of the twentieth century, but here was an elite institution presenting Tibetan artefacts in a fine art museum setting.

Since its inaugural art exhibition in 1960,\textsuperscript{125} the NYAS (re)presented select Asian cultural artefacts as refined and collectable. In addition, the Asia Society augmented their considerable prestige by inviting leading curators to select and arrange exhibitions, as well as write authoritative exhibition catalogues.\textsuperscript{126} For example, the NYAS inaugural exhibition in 1960, titled \textit{Masterpieces of Asian Art in American Collections}\textsuperscript{127} was curated by America’s leading Asian art curators at the time: Maurice S. Dimand (rugs, Metropolitan Museum of Art); Stella Kramrisch (Indian, Philadelphia Museum of Art); Sherman E. Lee (Far Eastern Art, Cleveland Museum of Art and the Rockefeller 3rd Collection); Laurence Sickman (Chinese art, Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas); and, Harold P. Stern (Japanese art, Freer Gallery of Art, Washington DC). Such illustrious names spoke of authority and by

\textsuperscript{122} Young Jr, K. 1971.
\textsuperscript{124} Cherry, D. 2007: 6.
\textsuperscript{125} A reminder that the gallery arm of the NYAS is called the Asia House Gallery. To avoid confusion I have chosen to refer to the Asia House Gallery by its parent designation, NYAS.
\textsuperscript{126} Asia Society Report. 1966: 12.
\textsuperscript{127} For catalogue, see Sickman, L. 1960.
association marked the Society as a serious cultural institution with a powerful voice.

In the foreword to the NYAS inaugural exhibition, Rockefeller 3rd wrote that, “Each piece testifies to the powers of selection and taste which have prevailed over the years of American collecting.” Of the 34 masterpieces on exhibit, 24 were from museums and ten from private collectors. Tibet was not represented. In a *New York Times* review of this inaugural exhibition, Stuart Preston found Asian art to be powerful and complete with spiritual imaginings. Preston wrote that Asian art “slowly and profoundly insinuates itself into our minds and, once there, retains its hold.” Preston further noted that the artefacts were carefully selected to demonstrate the “supreme genius” of the Asian artists and not the popular appeal of art for art’s sake as masterpieces. In years to come Tibetan art would take its place as Asian art masterpieces.

The power of institutions, such as the Asia Society, is their ability to direct authority and transform objects. In the very act of selecting and exhibiting, institutions normalize and validate objects as art. Sociologist Mabel Berezin noted that the institutional hosting of objects or performances is a “mechanism of social enframing that makes representation more real.” Art discourse is tied to historical narratives and the choices made by art authorities are readily accepted because they are aligned with public expectations. In *The Rules of Art*, Bourdieu argues that entering a field of production, such as art, the writer, reader and critic are inculcated with the motivations of the discipline.

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129 There was one Nepalese exhibit, a circa eighth century bronze sculpture of the Hindu deities, *Siva* and *Parvarti*. Four years later the Asia Society hosted an exhibition of Nepalese art curated by Stella Kramrisch. Kramrisch, S. 1964.
130 This is in opposition to, according to Preston, “western art’s adventorousness, restless energy and occasional lapses of taste.” Preston, S. “Art: Asian Masterpieces.” 1960.
A more recent illustration of the power of art institutions, such as the NYAS and their discourse processes was an Australian Aboriginal exhibition at the Asia Society in 1988. Fred Myers described how the authority and reputation of the Asia Society imparts an aura "of sacred tradition or aesthetic originality" onto the exhibits and performances they host.\textsuperscript{134} He wrote,

\begin{quotation}
In the case of the Asia Society show, evidently, the initial establishing exhibition was a more official recognition or certification of the objects’ worth than that of a dealer’s gallery. The reviews of a show in New York were significant in drawing attention to the work, here and in Australia, in legitimising it: putting it on the map.\textsuperscript{135}
\end{quotation}

Myers’ observations underline the authority commanded by the New York Asia Society. Its location, elite membership, government and foreign relationships guaranteed that. In 1969, the Asia Society transformed Tibetan art by including it in western fine art dialogue and framing it within the white cubed space of a western gallery.

\textit{The Art of Tibet} exhibition was the thirty-second art exhibition to be hosted by the Asia Society.\textsuperscript{136} When attending \textit{The Art of Nepal} exhibition at the Asia Society in 1964, Pratapaditya Pal, was approached for his interest in curating a Tibetan art exhibition. He had just completed a second doctorate at the Cambridge University on Nepalese art.\textsuperscript{137} In a 2000 interview, Pal admitted that the only reason he began researching Tibetan art was because of the Asia Society invite to curate an exhibition. He had not entertained the idea before this.\textsuperscript{138} Pal was given the opportunity to select from public and private collections both inside and outside America. The Trustees of the JDR3rd Fund supported Pal’s travels to Europe and Asia, and the Asia Foundation funded Pal’s travels within America.\textsuperscript{139} His role in selecting, presenting, cataloguing and promoting the exhibition, \textit{The Art of Tibet}, cannot be overestimated.

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{134} Myers, F. 1994: 682.
\item \textsuperscript{135} Myers, F. 1991: 46 (Myers emphasis).
\item \textsuperscript{136} See appendix A.6 for list of Asia Society exhibitions from 1969-1976.
\item \textsuperscript{137} At the time of the 1969 exhibition he was employed at the Boston Museum of Fine Art (MFA) as the Keeper of Indian Art.
\item \textsuperscript{138} Pal’s initial research field was Nepalese art. For a short biography in the form of an interview, see Casey-Singer, J. 2000.
\item \textsuperscript{139} Rosenfield commented on the generous funding for Pal’s research. Rosenfield, J. 1969: 226.
\end{itemize}
From the beginning, Pal emphasized aesthetic appreciation—a shortcut through the immensity of Tibetan iconography and scholarship?

As curator of the exhibition, Pal was charged with creating a scholarly exhibition, a difficult task when few had gone before him. As evidenced in the previous chapter, some Americans were using Tibetan objects as imagery through which to discover and explore the inner self. The previous chapter demonstrated that there were many Tibetan objects in western collections, although not all were necessarily collected as aesthetic objects. For instance, Tibetan objects were exotic, they also represented the western mythical and magical imaginings of Tibet, such as its associated with Shangri-la. Tibetan art, whether a peaceful Buddha or a rampant Yamantaka was affordable and provided an opportunity to construct an individual persona or speculate on future economic value. Furthermore, the sexual imagery of Tibetan objects was also captivating a younger market, not the usual museum visitor, connoisseur or art historian. They too were interested in collecting. The prominent collector of the late twentieth-early twenty-first century, John Ford, gives the sexuality of these objects as an important reason for collecting. In an interview for Orientations Magazine in 2001, Ford stated,

Initially it was curiosity—that's being candid. The spiritual aspect has grown, but that has come with maturity: at that time it was the exotic quality that appealed most to me. Here I had found a powerful expression of virility and desire that echoed my own youthful urgency, about everything. Now that says something about me, about the sexual revolution of the 60s [sic], and to some extent it was also about the search for fulfilment on every level. 

A further reason for turning to collecting Himalayan art given by Ford was that he was not competing with his parents' generation, such as the collecting of Chinese snuff bottles. American youth had a claim on Tibetan objects. Their burgeoning interest came at a time when their parents, while recognizing that Tibetan objects had artistic merit, were yet to acknowledge them as fine art. Young Americans’ claim of experience and knowledge over

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141 Doran, V.C. 2001: 82.
142 Doran, V.C. 2001: 81-82.
the Tibetan objects were associated with perceived antisocial behaviours, such as sexual promiscuity and drug use. While unproven, this perceived antisocial behaviour may have been sufficient motivation to publicly eclipse such claims and remove the objects from the youth scene by institutionalizing and transforming Tibetan artefacts into ‘fine’ art.

As noted, one role of an art institution is to maintain socio-political order by publicly interpreting, re-interpreting and re-evaluating in which categories exotic objects fit, such as art, ethnography, tourism or memorabilia. The art market and collectors both respond to and initiate institutional activity. Art and artists’ profiles rise and fall, and artefacts are transformed, by such machinations. The exhibiting of Tibetan artefacts as art presented the public with an alternative reading of these objects. Simultaneously, the Tibetan artefacts anti-establishment and countercultural messages enjoyed by the youth were over written. By (re)presenting Tibetan artefacts as art the countercultural icons were appropriated and redefined.

Cultural institutions such as the NYAS had the authority, power and socio-political relationships to achieve such a transformation. David Fleming states that

> Elites always manipulate culture, and museums are convenient (and all the more attractive through being publicly funded) vehicles for the promotion and glorification of minority tastes (theirs), which are perceived by their adherents to be superior and inviolable.\(^\text{143}\)

Bourdieu is not so critical, rather, he considered that it is the upper classes’ enculturation of taste, which predisposes them towards arts, and perhaps more importantly to the administration and support of art institutions.\(^{144}\) DiMaggio on the other hand argued that his research showed that persons with high education and income conspicuously consume because their “wideranging networks require broad repertoires of taste.”\(^{145}\) Those with wealth

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\(^{143}\) Fleming, D. 2002: 218.
\(^{144}\) Bourdieu, P. 2004.
\(^{145}\) DiMaggio, P. 1987: 444.
assume the role assigned to such a status, by displaying appropriate taste and collecting the appropriate status objects.

Ownership, performance and visibility enhances an individual's personal status. Collecting art is one sector of western culture, where performance is knowledge based—knowing how to act, to discuss and to appreciate art is strategic. So is membership and donations to institutions. The early board membership of the Asia Society illustrates this. It included Robert H. Ellsworth (collector, dealer and philanthropist), Juan T. Trippe (founder of Pan American airlines), Grayson L. Kirk (President of Columbia University), Nancy Wilson Ross (established author)\textsuperscript{146} and James J. Rorimer (Director of the Metropolitan Museum of Art). Such names were representative of the New York elite.\textsuperscript{147} They had access and networks in which to promote their interests and those of the New York Asia Society. For example, in the lead up to the opening of the Tibetan exhibition, Wilson Ross reviewed two books on Tibet and, while she did not mention the forthcoming Asia Society exhibition, her attitude to the Tibetans was sympathetic and encouraging. She concluded, "[These new books] surely rouse some interest in the fate of an ancient, vital culture and the people who created it."\textsuperscript{148} Interestingly, one of the books, Tibet by Thubten Jigme Norbu (the elder brother of H.H. the fourteenth Dalai Lama) and C.M. Turnbull, had been published seven years before.

Art institutions rely on publicity to maintain their visibility and hence authority. Exhibition reviews are important signposts and create current

\textsuperscript{146} Nancy Wilson Ross was a prolific writer on Zen Buddhism, her books include: Three ways of Asian wisdom: Hinduism, Buddhism, Zen, and their significance for the West, 1966; and, The world of Zen: An east-west anthology, 1962. She was also very active in the American art scene during the mid-twentieth century, see Westgeest, H. 1997.

\textsuperscript{147} A recent example of elitism was the Asia Society’s 50th anniversary dinner, which raised USD4,100,000. Asia Society “Gala 50\textsuperscript{th} Anniversary Dinner Speeches.” 2006.

\textsuperscript{148} The book reviews were published in the New York Times in late January, which coincided with the 10\textsuperscript{th} anniversary of the self-exile of H.H. the fourteenth Dalai Lama and just two months before the NYAS April opening of The Art of Tibet. Wilson Ross, N. “A Cultural History of Tibet.” 1969. The other book was A Cultural History of Tibet by D. Snellgrove and H. Richardson (1968). The Wilson Ross review was raising the profile of Tibet in anticipation of the forthcoming Tibetan exhibition. The review also had a large illustration of a Tibetan thangka. Wilson Ross, N. “A Cultural History Of Tibet.” 1969.
opinion. In the late sixties John Canaday was an important critic in mediating public opinion by either encouraging or dissuading audiences from attending reviewed exhibitions. The public assumes that reviewers are art experts, but as Business Studies professor Morris Holbrook warns, their expertise is validated by their discipline standards. He wrote, “Typically, professional critics who presume to evaluate the works in question serve in an institutionalized capacity sanctioned by official appointments or by the support of various scholars, authorities, editors, or other people in power.”

In agreement, sociologist Wesley Shrum adds that critics are “ideological labellers, opinionators, tastemakers, and symbolic framers of events.”

Canaday’s review is an important introduction in the transformation of Tibetan artefact to art.

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Where Gods are Demons

On Sunday, April 13, 1969, when the readers turned to the New York Times arts page (illus. 113) their eyes were immediately arrested by a black and white image of an Asian-styled sculpture and the accompanying title Where Gods are Demons (illus. 114). The image appears to be of a hominid-form with multiple arms sitting side-saddle on a Chinese-like lion. The God/Demon was wearing a textured broad rimmed hat on its multiple heads, along with beaded accessories.

The reviewer John Canaday was a regular New York Times art critic and by 1969, he had published five books on modern art and painters from Late Gothic, High Renaissance, Baroque to Post-impressionist periods. He had also recently reviewed another Asia Society exhibition and apologised to his public at the commencement of the review with,

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149 Holbrook, M. 1999: 147.
151 The Canaday publications mentioned are included in the bibliography under Canaday, J.
At the risk of establishing a reputation as a shill for Asia House, I must report enthusiastically on another first rate exhibition.\textsuperscript{152}

Here the personal voice of John Canaday urgently beckons. He is aware the reader might question him for endorsing yet another Asia Society exhibition, but this exhibition can’t be missed. Philosopher Alexander Nehamas commented that reviewers assume the position of trusted friend who is eager to introduce us to an experience. He wrote that reviews are invitations to attend to these works for ourselves, promises that spending some time with them will (or won’t) be worth our while, and their reliability depends partly on the reviewer’s record and reputation.\textsuperscript{153}

While Canaday is apologizing, he keeps the reader in suspense until the fifth line of the text. Where are Gods also Demons? Answer—Tibet! The image accompanying Canaday’s review dominates both his text and the page. It sits large—almost centre. If the visual text supports the written by condensing and representing it, what does the image reveal?\textsuperscript{154} First impressions are paramount, especially in art reviews. Why was \textit{Pe har}, chosen to illustrate the exhibition review?\textsuperscript{155} He was “chief of the Five Kings” and important to H.H. the Dalai Lama’s sect, the Gelug-pa.\textsuperscript{156} It is a safe image, but why not a more familiar image, such as \textit{Maitreya}, the benevolent future Buddha, catalogue number 57, (illus. 115) Or if the image was to shock the viewer, why not the catalogue number 72, the fierce buffalo headed \textit{Yama} (see illus. 116).

For those familiar with the Asia Society, the immediate impression would be the resemblance of the image to the Society’s lion logo, the \textit{leogryph} (illus. 117a-d).\textsuperscript{157} The lion is familiar throughout Asia, especially the Chinese

\textsuperscript{152} Brown, L. 1993: 2826. A shill is a decoy or accomplice posing as an enthusiastic or successful customer to encourage others to attend.

\textsuperscript{153} Nehamas, A. 2000: 3.

\textsuperscript{154} Scott, J. 2001.

\textsuperscript{155} In answering this question and others I may pose throughout the chapter, I need to remind the reader that many of my responses were contingent on available texts and archival access.\textsuperscript{156} Pal, P. 1969: 152. There is no English or Tibetan translation given for \textit{Pe har}. Exhibits of other \textit{Pe har} examples remain scarce, in contrast to the many other Gods/Demons.\textsuperscript{157} The \textit{Leogryph} is a mythical guardian, combing the anatomy of a lion and a griffin, which stands at the four entrances of many temples. Asia Society logo was modelled on a Nepalese pair loaned from the Jacques Marchais Museum. Asia Society AustralAsia Centre. “The Asia Society’s \textit{Leogryph}.” 1999.
guardian lions, which are also referred to as temple dogs. Pairs of lions often stand astride temple entrances or public thoroughfares not only in China but also in western-located Chinatowns. The Tibetan-in-exile government also features a pair of lions—snow lions—on their national flag.\textsuperscript{158} On the other hand, the decision to use *Pe har* may have been an issue for the sub-editor. Since it constitutes a square picture to wrap the text around and it fills the allotted half page space, more easily than a vertical image of a thangka.

Or it may have been simply that *Pe har* was considered to be an arresting image. This opinion was shared by John Rosenfield’s in his review in the *Oriental Art* magazine review of *The Art of Tibet* exhibition. He reported that the bronze *Pe har* is a perfect example of what is so “original and startling” about Tibetan art. Rosenfield wrote, “Many canons of classical taste are violated by this icon, which stimulates an instinctive love of the horrendous and fantastic which is buried in the darker recesses of man’s character, an instinct to which the Gothic fantasists of Northern Europe appealed” (illus. 118a-b).\textsuperscript{159} Rosenfield may also be referring to Freud/Jungian psychoanalysis and the dark recesses of man’s character—the uncivilized and primitive urges. Is the tension of consciousness (ego) versus the unconscious (id) underscored in the attraction of this unknown art? Sociologist David Halle in his study of art in domestic settings found that in the case of religious iconography and primitive art, the owners could not articulate why they wanted to own these objects.\textsuperscript{160}

Alternatively, the choice of *Pe har* could have been based on its Musee Guimet ownership. Musee Guimet is an elite international Asian art museum and the name carries a powerful silent message of validation. Furthermore, choosing an off-shore public museum avoided any potential competitive angst at home if a private artwork had been chosen as the image for the review.

\textsuperscript{158} Beer, R. 1999: 78-80, pl.51. The snow lions are often portrayed with their turquoise manes shimmering as they playfully leap from one mountain to another.


\textsuperscript{160} Halle, D. 1993b.
The small printed acknowledgement to the owner of the sculpture, the “Musee Guimet, Paris,” was located at the conventional corner in which western artists commonly sign and date paintings. The signature and date are the initial guides to authentication of a western artwork. If these are missing or dubious then the origin of the artwork must be researched further. A provenance of this kind is an endorsement of the art and another element in the cascade phenomenon.

The sculpture itself demonstrates a high level of competence and artistic skill in depicting form and casting techniques. The animation of the lion’s face and the shimmering movement caught in the mane and tail is masterful. The intricate detail of the saddle furnishings, the beads, the hat and the lion’s forelocks are indicative of very fine work. Even seen through the distorted pixilated effect of newspaper print and bleeding ink, the evident artistry alone may have caused many readers to pause and re-evaluate whatever their previous opinions of Tibetan art might have been.

Returning to the text and the headline Where Gods are Demons, Canaday’s use of the terms Gods and Demons in the same headline was calculated to startle—to juxtapose binary opponents, such as good and evil or light and dark. Moreover, the addition of the plural ‘s’ to mean many gods, and equally, many demons, situates the art in a realm outside of Christianity—something dangerous, untamed, unpredictable, exciting. Canaday may have been inspired to this title after talking with the curator, Pratapaditya Pal. In an article released at the time, Pal wrote that the Tibetan gods “are symbols of both good and evil forces with which the adept must identify himself.”

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161 The western convention for artists signing their works on paper/canvas is in the lower right-hand corner. Scott, L. 1994.  
162 Casting technique commonly used in the making of Tibetan artefacts is the lost-wax method, cire perdue, where a wax model is formed over a clay base, which is then covered in another clay and husk mix. When the molten metal is poured into the clay-husk mould, the wax is displaced. For overall discussion on metal crafts in Asia, see Teague, K. 1990. The Newar craftsmen plied their casting skills in Bhutan, Tibet and China. They still practice their craft in Nepal today. See Lo Bue, E. 2002.  
163 Pal, P. 1969c: 44.
Perhaps more disconcerting is the word Where. The use of this term disorientates the reader. Does it mean that the source of this art determines whether these Gods are malevolent spirits? Has the Asia Society created a safe liminal zone\textsuperscript{164} where the western audience can experience and enjoy the ritual splendour and aesthetics of the Other?\textsuperscript{165} The liminal phase is an ambiguous journey, which is open to both acceptance and rejection—to delight and horror. In the case of the gallery, it is itself a ritualized space, where western discourse recontextualizes foreign objects. In essence, the indigenous power of the artefact is transformed into an aesthetic/economic value—a demonstrable and known value.

Canaday wrote,

\textit{The Art of Tibet} and the impressive loans include twenty-three pieces from the Tibetan national treasure and the personal collection of the Dalai Lama (the highest priest of the Lamaist religion and head of the Tibetan state) who fled in 1959 from the invading armies of China to take refuge in New Delhi. Closer to home there are loans from the Newark Museum; the rest come from museums and private collections around the world, or at least the parts of the world that are part of ours. Unhappily this does not include Tibet just now.\textsuperscript{166}

The staging of Tibetan art in 1969 reflects an attempt to counterbalance the increasing anti-Vietnam sentiment. The Tibetan artefacts were an understated visual reminder of what happens to countries and their culture if Communism is not stopped. Tibetan art entered the western artworld during a campaign for the hearts and minds of the American people.

His reference to “at least the parts of the world that are part of ours” is a direct address to the political situation in 1969. Where the \textit{us}, evokes goodness and lightness, and the \textit{them}, the ever encroaching, dark presence of Communism.\textsuperscript{167} Tibet had a newsworthy profile—the innocent victim of

\textsuperscript{164} Turner, V. 1969: 80-83.
\textsuperscript{165} The Art of Tibet did represent a liminal phase—the transitional phase of the western appropriation of the exotic curio of the Other to fine art.
\textsuperscript{166} Canaday, J. “Where Gods are Demons” 1969.
\textsuperscript{167} This \textit{us or them} posture was idealized in the Great Game of the late 19th early 20th century. The fear that Russia was gaining ascendancy in the region prompted the British government to send an expeditionary force led by Younghusband into Tibet. See Meyer, K. and Brysac, S. \textit{Tournament of Shadows}; and, Hopkirk, P. \textit{Trespassers on the roof}. 
communist brutality. The victimization of Tibet by China stood in stark contrast to western imaginings of a magical and mystical land.

In an empathetic public’s mind, a Tibetan exhibition raised the spectre of communist treachery and the Tibetan refugee’s plight.\(^{168}\) Heedless of contested ‘Nation’ politics, the pervading western sentiment was empathy for that was now lost to ‘us’ in the west. Canaday’s use of such words “who fled,” “invading armies” and “taking refuge” implies loss of cultural continuity—an abrupt rupture to Tibetan cultural production. It appeared the world had lost the last Utopia, even if imagined. At a time when the world was in need of a *Shangri-la*, the potential candidates, now refugees, had been rendered all too visible and war torn. Fortunately, some cultural representatives had been salvaged, and these artefacts were on display at the Asia Society.

The expression of loss, demonstrated by Canaday’s word selection of “unhappily” Tibet is not one of ours “just now.”\(^{169}\) Such sentiment intimates that Tibet had been ours and is now lost. The British entered Tibet with an armed expedition in 1903/4 to force Tibet to open their borders to trade.\(^{170}\) However, Britain did not colonize Tibet. Canaday’s claim of ownership, as in ‘ours’ appears more as oblique reference to democracy and the political nuances of the Cold War and less based on historical fact.

In reviewing books on the politics of the Cold War, historian Tony Shaw noted that at that time “Virtually everything, from sport to ballet to comic books and space travel, assumed political significance and hence potentially could be deployed as a weapon both to shape opinion at home and to subvert societies abroad.”\(^{171}\) Canaday’s review is evidence that this exhibition was

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\(^{168}\) Pal suggests in 2000, that the Tibetan diaspora is still an influence on the popularity of Tibetan art. Casey Singer, J. 2000.


\(^{170}\) Carrington, M. 2003. There were many stories of looting and the very public knowledge and material evidence of this looting prompted the British Government to change their strategy towards Tibet. See also Harris, C. 1999: 28-29 for a glimpse of one British soldier’s experience.

\(^{171}\) Shaw, T. 2001: 59.
deployed to shape opinion, an attitude shared by the Director of the Asia House, the NYAS gallery arm, Gordon Washburn.\textsuperscript{172} He wrote,

\begin{quote}
No comparable selection of Tibetan art has previously been shown in America. The situation that now makes it possible to display certain of the greatest examples of her artistry is a tragic one, caused by the destruction of the Tibetan state by the invading armies of China.\textsuperscript{173}
\end{quote}

Since 1969 considerably more examples of Tibetan artistry has emerged from Tibet. In 2000, Pal noted that material from Tibet continued to flow onto the western art markets in ever increasing numbers.\textsuperscript{174}

Of the 119 exhibits in The Art of Tibet, almost 60\% were from private or institutional collections in Britain, France, Germany, Netherlands, Sweden and Switzerland. In an unspoken gesture these lenders—lent their support to the U.S. even though their nations were geographically distant from America and Asia. The political nature of this exhibition implicates the Asia Society’s role in creating a cultural forum through which American foreign policy is silently reinforced in a seemingly neutral territory, the exhibition space.

During the late 1960s when the world appeared in turmoil, visiting galleries may have been a delight or at the very least a distraction from wars and protest. The Art of Tibet exhibition enjoyed strong attendance figures possibly due to a combination of curiosity and western imaginings. The Tibetan images, while they were strange, were also somehow familiar. The idea that Tibetan art was a window onto, or the manifestation of, primitive thoughts buried in the dark recesses of the imagination, had contemporary appeal especially to the youth. The 1960s witnessed many Americans embracing the experiential methods of Freudian/Jungian psychotherapy and the LSD induced experiences of counterculture groups. Each was encountering

\textsuperscript{172} Washburn, G. in Pal, P. 1969: 7-9. As already noted, to avoid confusion I have chosen to identify Asia House Gallery by its parent designation, Asia Society.


\textsuperscript{174} Casey Singer, J. 2000.
the dark recesses of their own psyche. The Asia Society offered associated activities to contextualize Tibetan art. While these included an art tour to Asia and film viewings, the two lectures given by curator John Brzostoski directly engaged the potential power of the Tibetan artworks. He had curated the 1963 exhibition of Tibetan art at the Riverside Museum.

In this 1963 exhibition catalogue, Brzostoski suggests that it is best to leave all knowledge outside the door and just enjoy the aesthetic appeal of Tibetan art, although he expressed a desire for the viewer to take the spiritual flight for which the artefacts were designed. This may explain the reason he chose the following titles for his two Asia Society lectures were: Sound and Light Interpretation of Tibetan Mantras; and, Vision and Illusion: An inquiry into the nature of Tibetan painting. Brzostoski used these lectures to describe how a Buddhist practitioner might instruct a westerner to see Tibetan objects. Using his earlier catalogue as a guide, Brzostoski described the Tibetan images as “tools of power.” He called them “yantras (mental machines) that operated on the matter of consciousness and its flow.” Brzostoski argued that this is because the Tibetan sculptures and paintings are not just visual images. They also operate in the field of sound. They work “in”

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176 The events were: an Arts Tour of Asia (India, Ceylon and Indonesia); an informal exhibition of Tibetan costumes and photographs from the Newark Museum; films on Lamaism and Tibetan ritual, and Lowell Thomas’s journey into Tibet. There were also assorted lectures by individuals; and a series of lectures sponsored by the India Council on Tibetan and Indian tantra, including a lecture on the counterculture of (Indian) ‘tantraists’ to the western hippy movement. Asia Society Report 1968-1969. 1969: 8, 15. In the following year, Brzostoski gave a colour slide show illustrating Tibetan Folktales and he later recites Tibetan Folktales in the Festival of Asian Literature series. Also in the 1970-1971 programs, was the Society’s radio interview of the Permanent Representative of H.H. the Dalai Lama in New York, Phintos Thondon, which discussed Tibet’s situation in the world today and the role of the Dalai Lama. Asia Society Report. 1969-1970: 24. Interestingly, at the time the self-exiled H.H. the Dalai Lama was requesting permission to visit America, see Henry Kissinger’s advice to President Richard Nixon. Kissinger, H. 1970.
the mind, constantly “bouncing” like sound waves.\textsuperscript{180} For Brzostoski, the images acted like waking dreams, thoughts, creating a space within the cluttered mind, in the same way as the psychedelic drugs LSD, mescaline and peyote also entered upon the mind. At the time, the spiritual use of these psychedelic drugs was colloquially known as \textit{Beat Zen}.\textsuperscript{181} Furthermore, influential psychologist and LSD drug researcher Timothy Leary and colleagues had adapted a do-it-yourself manual for psychedelic experiences from the \textit{Tibetan Book of the Dead}.\textsuperscript{182}

Important in the western recontextualizing of Tibetan knowledge for western audiences is the distance constructed between the object and its origin. Once isolated, particular ethnographic and/or indigenous knowledge is selected to establish a new discourse, which transforms the object into art. However, objectifying Tibetan art for the disinterested appraisal of connoisseurs was not so straightforward. Tibetan objects demanded a response from the viewer. According to an author referenced by Pal, Fokka Sierksma, the images should be interrogated with the question “Who are you?” This opens a relationship, a dialogue with the Other, an understanding, an appreciation of difference and sameness.\textsuperscript{183} Sierksma invited the reader to consider “Whether it is man and his gods or man and his devil that we meet in the cultural history of mankind, we shall always find man and his reflection.”\textsuperscript{184} These thoughts of god versus demon may well have reverberated in the American psyche against the backdrop of the Vietnam War and the political demonstrations at home. Perhaps the answer depended on \textit{where} the Other stands in relation to the viewer’s socio-political leanings—communism or democracy; conventional or counterculture behaviour.

\textsuperscript{180} Brzostoski, J. 1963.
\textsuperscript{181} Cunningham, E. “Ecstatic Talks.” The personal interrelationship between inner searching, drugs and Asian religions such as Tibetan Buddhism can be glimpsed in a biography on Allen Ginsberg’s visit to India. Baker, D. 2008.
\textsuperscript{183} Sierksma, F. 1960: 7.
\textsuperscript{184} Sierksma, F. 1960: 58.
One such God/Demon was Yamantaka, exhibition catalogue number 12 (see illus. 119). This blue-black, multi-limbed figure with snarling multi-heads, trampling humans and animals underfoot was opposite to the calm compassionate Buddha figure. Yamantaka is portrayed rampant and in sexual embrace with his consort. Both are naked except for beaded accessories. In the Connoisseur magazine Pal ameliorates the erotic references for his readers by explaining that this sexual imagery would have been viewed by initiates only. Furthermore, Pal stated, “Such sexual imagery has a deep mystical connotation.”\textsuperscript{185} Canaday avoids any mention of sexuality in his review. Nor is the chosen Pe har image overtly sexual.

Notwithstanding the silence, the demon-like qualities—sexual deviancy, multiple and twisting naked limbs, horns and fire—were on exhibit. Rosenfield’s exhibition review in Oriental Art magazine reported good attendance figures, including “the rebellious young” who found this type of imagery attractive, much to the chagrin of the usual NYAS members. Furthermore, Rosenfield also reported that the regular conservative members “occasionally felt ill at ease among the black flesh eaters, skull cups, and unpronounceable names on the labels (gShin-rje-gshed [Yamantaka] for example).”\textsuperscript{186} It is curious that Rosenfield should sensationalize the report with the “black flesh eaters” quote—perhaps a distressed regular patron had spoken to him about this. It is almost as if the ‘rebellious youth,’ despoiling the gallery, are synonymous with the Tibetan demons on exhibit.\textsuperscript{187} Furthermore, his emphasis of “black flesh eaters” also invokes the unspoken contemporary fears of conservative America as racial tensions were fought out on their streets and hippie lifestyles were eroding the polite barriers between personal and community spaces.

Another concern of Rosenfield’s was the “unpronounceable” names on the labels. Since 1969, the difficulty of the Tibetan language has been overcome.

\textsuperscript{185} Pal, P. 1969: 44.
\textsuperscript{186} Rosenfield, J. 1969: 223 (Rosenfield emphasis).
\textsuperscript{187} DiMaggio, P. and Useem, M. 1978: 144. They note that it is ‘expected’ that the dominant class will attempt to exclude other classes as a means to preserving elite boundaries. Perhaps there is a hint of this in Rosenfield’s text.
by the Tibetan artworld adopting phonetic Sanskrit. This has meant an international standardization for deity names and iconographic details,\textsuperscript{188} in much the same way that Latin has functioned for the scientific community. Many Tibetan deities have a Sanskrit name because they were originally introduced from Tibet. However, there are some deities that are Tibetan only and do not have a Sanskrit name, such as Pe har, which has a non-anglicized Tibetan equivalent of rdo rje grags ldan.

In the 1969 catalogue entry, gShin-rje-gshed, the ‘unpronounceable’ Tibetan name is given first, followed by the Sanskrit equivalent in brackets (Yamantaka). Again, I think Pal may have opted for caution in using only Tibetan or Sanskrit names. For example, the English translation of Yamantaka is ‘The Destroyer of Death’. An explanation of the English translation may take longer than the general public acceptance of the foreign name. Furthermore, the use of the ‘unpronounceable’ Tibetan name adds weight to the curator’s interpretive expertise, authority and to the authenticity of the exhibition, in addition to creating an aura of mysticism.

Canaday’s review is not concerned with “black flesh eaters” or unpronounceable names. Rather than stressing difference, his review attempts to assure readers that they are not expected to be familiar with Asian art. Canaday wrote,

\begin{quote}
But relatively few people have more than a vague idea of what Borobudur, the Buddhist Chartres, is like, if they have ever heard of it, and it is not surprising that one piece of sculpture from that part of the world looks much like another to most westerners.\textsuperscript{189}
\end{quote}

It is easy to imagine some readers nodding their heads in agreement with Canaday at this statement. However, the Asian Society members would have been aware of Borobudur, if only because they had attended the inaugural 1960 exhibition, which had included works from Java. A report on the activities of Asian art in America in the summer of 1970, suggested that lack

\textsuperscript{188} The other standardization has been that the foreign language words are italicized, while English is not.
of knowledge is not due to the lack of enthusiasm but few opportunities to
learn. Joan Hartman wrote, “We lack not for interest in orientalia among our
colonies but for knowledge. Let us set about the task of educating our
public.” The founding mission of the NYAS was to introduce and educate
the American public to Asian art. It was also the opportunity to reinforce the
narrative of Tibet as a lost culture because of communist China’s aggression
and an opportunity to set selected Tibetan objects apart from countercultural
borrowings.

In (re)presenting Tibetan artefacts as art, the NYAS was rescripting this art,
making these selected Tibetan objects accessible to the public by re-
negotiating the historical-laden connotations attributed to the devil’s idols.
Through the assistance of the authoritative position of the Asia Society, the
idols were metamorphosing. Canaday acknowledges the endeavour of the
NYAS to present Tibetan artefacts as art. He stated, “I found it most
rewarding from, I admit, the limited point of view of an eye that sought only
to be delighted, and was.” Nor did Canaday find it necessary to know more.
He admitted that he was “delighted” with the art for art’s sake appreciation.
With this said, Canaday was also reassuring the reader that the exhibition was
accessible. Canaday also adds that, “as is usual in these galleries, the
installation is flawless.”

Conclusion
The Asia Society exhibition demonstrated to the artworld that Tibetan
artefacts had fine art qualities. The author of Art Worlds, Howard Becker
wrote, “Audiences select what will occur as an art work by giving or
withholding their participation in an event or their attention to an object.”

192 Siegel, J. 1985: 2.
The Asia Society's President's report for 1968-1969 noted that *The Art of Tibet* exhibition had attracted large attendance figures. In particular, the spiritual message of the arts of India, Nepal and Tibet was attractive to the younger generation. Rosenfield agrees that the exhibition was an "unnerving success" because the "rebellious young were attracted by the occult imagery." Although he also added, that the NYAS exhibitions are always well attended.

The prominence of institutions is a powerful force in validating what is fine art. For example, Stoller observed that shifting the Michael Rockefeller primitive art collection from the specialized NY Museum of Primitive Art to the Michael Rockefeller wing at the Metropolitan Museum of Art (MET), re-configured the same artworks, adding an aura of timelessness—the gloss of an elite institution. The NYAS provided the first fine art public statement and evaluation of Tibetan artefacts as fine art by themselves and not as a peripheral affiliate. Furthermore, the NYAS Tibetan exhibition started writing Tibetan art in the terms of western art history rather than the prevailing discourse that Tibetan objects were the 'poor cousin' of Indian or Chinese art, because they were too influenced by their neighbours art or they were uninspired and degraded copies.

In this chapter, I show how the collection dynamics shifted as Tibetan objects flowed unrestrained onto the western market. The American public was aware that their sudden and plentiful appearance was a consequence of communist aggression. I argue that the launching of Tibetan art was a two part strategy—a subtle anti-communist propaganda exercise and the neutralizing of counterculture icons. I find support for this view in the Asia Society's 1968-69 Presidents' report. Young Jr wrote that

Dramatizing the political plight of Tibet while underscoring the spiritual goals of Lamaism and Vajrayana Buddhism, the

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196 Rosenfield, J. 1969: 223. For the full quote see this chapter's opening quote.
197 Stoller, P. 2003: 214. Another example is the introduction of Primitive art into the Louvre. The political message given, at the insistence of the French President Jacques Chirac, was that art from Africa, Asia, Oceania and the Americas was equal to the European collection historically held at the Louvre. Riding, A. "Arts Abroad." 2000.
exhibition drew the expected core of New Yorker's and [sic] the nation's scholars and gallery-goers. Moreover, it attracted the largest and most involved contingent of young people in the Gallery's history, attested to a new relevance among them of Asian thought and religion. ¹⁹⁸

There should be little surprise that the young attended, they already thought of the Tibetan objects as their own.

For the parent generation the demise of Tibet and subsequent diaspora was reminiscent of the (dis)placement and loss caused by WWII, an event still within their living memory. The current events of Tibet struck a chord. Tibet was news. Tibet was publicly accessible in a way that it had not been before. The NYAS exhibition rendered the imagined mystical realm at the roof of the world visible. A land now lost, its people and treasures were survivors adrift from their homeland. There is a compelling voyeuristic quality to attending exhibitions drawn from vestiges of the past. The audience caught between mourning and marvelling at what is and what may have been. Out of this state of reminiscing arises the desire to take in, to hold, to consume, to posses some part of the loss—some keepsake.

But public attraction is not sufficient to determine whether Tibetan artefacts become art or just overnight sensations. Rather, the transformation occurs if the potential collectors are assured that the lost treasures have the ability to accumulate value. The public demonstration of an elite institution and the acceptance by its members was appropriate assurance as to the potential for Tibetan artefacts to become art. Furthermore, the very act of an elite institution exhibiting these objects created value and collecting interest. Sociologist Vera Zolberg noted, that museum collecting is central in transforming objects into symbolic capital. ¹⁹⁹

The Asia Society and its members began the ‘informational’ cascade phenomenon, inspiring and approving the collection of Tibetan objects as art,

¹⁹⁹ Zolberg, V. 1981: 120.
as evidenced by the many collections which began soon after such as the expansion of the Zimmerman collection and the Wesley and Carolyn Halpert Collection. Museum participation in the act of collecting signals the value of these objects. Even though the NYAS had (re)presented Tibetan artefacts as fine art, the attitude of other institutions and individuals did not change immediately. In fact, the curator Pratapaditya Pal noted in 1971 that although Tibet was “overpowered” by the artistic traditions of her neighbours, Tibet’s distinction was her “rich use of grotesque imagery.” His explanation to why the Tibetans resorted to such terrifying imagery was to appeal to the motivation of fear. Pal wrote,

Perhaps the basic motivation was fear, fear of the occult, of the supernatural, of the malevolent forces of nature, and of the forces that lurk in the human subconscious. It was probably easier for them to invoke the aid of terrifying divinities to tame these evil forces and passions than to attempt to subdue them directly.

This explanation returns us to Moravian missionary Herman Marx’s explanation in 1921. But over time the shift became general acceptance, for example, in 1973 the British Museum held its first exhibition of Tibetan art even though they had Tibetan objects in their collection from the 1860s. The next two chapters investigate how the processes of value creation—art exhibition catalogues and New York Asia Week with its associated art auctions and fairs—act on the objects incorporating them into the global art market.

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Catalogues are funny animals. They exist primarily as the saleable components of contemporary cultural experiences. Ubiquitous, bulky presences in gallery shops, exhibition visitors desirous of preserving memories, or resolutely determined to read, at leisure, information that eluded eyes and minds while dodging the blockbuster crowds, purchase them. Once dismantled, exhibitions leave only a residue of newspaper reviews and interviews, statistics about budgets and visitor numbers, and the catalogue—buteff of its parentage, is this document an integral component of an exhibition, or does it become an autonomous publication contributing new scholarly insights?  

The representation of Tibetan art does not halt when major exhibitions close. Between these episodic exhibitions, associated catalogues and events, including auctions and fairs, sustain the visibility of Tibetan art. These in turn continue to engage collectors and enlist new enthusiasts into the Tibetan artworld. Art exhibition catalogues, auctions and fairs act as ‘informational’ cascade agents, continuing to promote the candidature of Tibetan artefacts as art. They also sustain the process of categorization, validation and authorization. As representational agents, they create value by publicizing the object(s), increasing their visibility, recognition, status and desirability of Tibetan art. The transformation of the devil’s idols into valid western fine art has been and continues to be mediated through words, images, performances and events, which constitute the discourses of the artworld.

In this chapter, I discuss the role of art exhibition catalogues. The objects reproduced in these publications continue to shape and inform aesthetic taste long after the exhibition in which they were displayed has closed.  

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1 By art exhibition catalogues I am referring to catalogues which have accompanied art exhibitions in public museums and are readily available to a wide audience. Catalogues produced by commercial galleries or catalogues documenting a private collection, which have not been widely circulated have not been considered.
3 The ‘informational’ cascade began with the 1969 Tibetan art exhibition hosted by the New York Asia Society and the accompanying catalogue continues as an ongoing informant (agent) promoting Tibetan objects as art rather than previous evaluations as artefacts.
New York Asia Society's (NYAS) 1969 exhibition was pivotal in shifting selected Tibetan ritual objects from ethnographic into fine art, its catalogue was critical in providing written evidence for this shift. This catalogue recorded how the reader was to see and appraise this new-comer to fine art for posterity. Since then, Tibetan art catalogues have pursued and maintained an authoritative position on how to see and know Tibetan art. Furthermore, catalogues continue the exhibitions' dialogue with the art market.\(^5\) Over time, they have assisted in the homogenization and globalization of Tibetan art knowledge. Whether read by elite collectors in New York, or Tibetan art dealers in Kathmandu, catalogues provide equal access to new knowledge and curatorial direction. They function as a type of commodity portfolio available to the global population, including the source nations.

Historically, Tibetan artefacts were catalogued as numbered lists. They appeared as condensed versions of exhibition labels and acted as a pamphlet reminder, like that of a concert program, which only records the titles of the musical acts and the names of the musicians. Over the last forty years the format and content of Tibetan catalogues has changed, reflecting the transformation from exotica or ethnographic artefact into fine art. Art exhibition catalogues are a validating extension to an exhibition and its art. They demonstrate new directions for re-evaluating Tibetan art objects by documenting their universal aesthetic appeal.

At the same time, catalogues have also become artefacts in their own right—collectible traces of ephemeral exhibitions.\(^6\) They are valued as souvenirs and as an archive. As art historian William McAllister Johnson stated, exhibition catalogues are “a highly problematic form of art literature... [and have become] the single most characteristic statement of the artefact.”\(^7\) His comments reflect the same concerns expressed by architectural historian Dana Arnold in the opening quote to this chapter, that art exhibition catalogues are “funny animals.” Both authors highlight an incongruity in the function of exhibition

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\(^6\) Geismar, H. 2001: 38.
\(^7\) Johnson, W.M. 1988: xv.
catalogues to accommodate two competing demands, the public desire for an attractive exhibition souvenir and the release of new scholarship.\(^8\)

The need to satisfy two different consumers is challenging and often criticised by book reviewers. In a review of Pratapaditya Pal’s 1983 catalogue for the Los Angeles County Museum Tibetan collection, titled *Art of Tibet*, the reviewer noted that the text is readable, engaging the general reader in an otherwise daunting, if intriguing art. However, the poor photography and lack of comparative photographs caused the reviewer concern, especially as the comparative analysis of date and place would have been of great interest to art historians.\(^9\) Almost ten years later the innovative advances in publishing, especially colour printing and the burgeoning interest in Tibetan art, realized the demands of reviewers. Independent Tibetan art scholar Zara Fleming wrote that the catalogue of the inaugural Tibet House United States (THUS) exhibition, *The Sacred Art of Tibet* (1994) was thoughtful in its approach, which has made the catalogue “accessible not only to the art historian and Buddhist scholar but also the general public.”\(^10\) The 1994 catalogue with its larger number of colour images and greater certainty of scholarship was the beneficiary of all previous Tibetan art catalogues. The earlier catalogues were the vanguard, attracting audiences and collector interest, which assured a viable art market. This in turn stimulated further public exhibitions and motivated private collecting—continuing the ‘informational’ cascade.

Exhibitions need an audience, catalogues need readers. It is the reader who interprets the text, even though an author created it with specific intention and

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\(^8\) The demands made on catalogues were not always seemingly diametrically opposed. M.S. Dimand noted in a 1924 catalogue review of the *Indian collection in the Museum of Fine Arts*, Boston by Ananda Coomaraswamy, that “A museum catalogue has to serve two purposes, it should register the works of art and guide those interested in art to a better appreciation of artistic qualities.” He further noted that the majority of visitors and art students are not so interested in the biographical details but in learning how to appreciate the objects artistic qualities. Dimand, M.S. 1924: 31. The strength and attraction of recent Tibetan art catalogues is their ability to convey to a general public the objects’ artistic qualities.


meaning. 11 French philosopher Roland Barthes wrote, “The reader is the space on which all the quotations that make up writing are inscribed. ... A text’s unity lies not in its origin but in its destination.” 12 The frequent reader of art history texts, such as exhibition catalogues, is not an idle reader but predisposed. 13 With every new Tibetan art catalogue released, new artefacts are displayed and described. In such a process, the catalogue becomes a primary source for the classification, promotion and the maintenance of Tibetan art and the creation of added value.

At the same time as new scholarship is revealed, the eyes feast on the images. Here lies the tension within the role of catalogues. Curator of numerous Himalayan/Tibetan art exhibition catalogues, Pal believed that as a museum professional he has a responsibility to “introduce people to this art.” 14 When asked about writing for audiences, he stated that he aims to write for his daughters— “ordinary intelligent readers.” 15 His desire is to make the catalogue accessible to the museum-going public. The attractiveness and affordability of catalogues warrants their general consumption as souvenirs. But at the same time, Pal is also aware that the scholar/collector is an important consumer of the exhibition catalogues. 16 The combination of a selection of artefacts not publicly seen before, and the inclusion of new scholarly insights, guarantees the catalogues’ appeal to collectors, connoisseurs and scholars. In an introduction to one of his many catalogues, Pal wrote how he hoped that the selection of works will “convey the essence of Tibetan culture to the general viewer but will stimulate the scholar with exciting fresh material.” 17

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16 Casey Singer, J. noted that up to July 2000, Pal, P. had published over 50 books, hundreds of articles, curated almost 30 exhibitions and had given numerous lectures. Casey Singer, J. 2000.
17 Hall, D. 1997: vii. Pal, P. selected and catalogued the artefacts and wrote an accompanying essay for this Albuquerque based exhibition titled, Tibet: Tradition and Change. This catalogue is an unusual catalogue consisting of three separate parts: “Tradition: The Art of Tibet;” “Change;” and, “Oral Histories of Tibetan Exiles Relocated to New Mexico.” The exhibition was designed to assimilate and introduce New Mexicans to a diasporic and re-settled population of Tibetans living amongst them. At the time of the 1997 exhibition there were almost one hundred Tibetans living in New Mexico. Moore, J. and Landis, E. 1997: vi.
Catalogues remain in print and/or are re-printed long after the exhibition has been dismounted. As a representation of a past event, the catalogue is an archive. The published images and descriptions inside catalogues are important references for collectors and dealers. The catalogue continues to (re)present Tibetan objects to new and established Tibetan art enthusiasts. In general, catalogues continue the endorsement processes of exhibitions by maintaining the publicity, categorization and quality benchmarks. The catalogue documents the exhibition by listing and labelling each object displayed. At the same time, the catalogue creates desire by advertising the inherent beauty and collectability of the objects within its cover.

After 1969, Tibetan art exhibition catalogues became the textbooks for interpreting Tibetan art’s foreign-ness and a guide on how to see their beauty. Philosopher Thomas Kuhn wrote, “textbooks expound the body of accepted theory, illustrate many or all of its successful applications, and compare these applications with exemplary observations and experiments.”¹⁸ Art catalogues accomplish the same tasks. Their colourful arrangement may not appear as dry as scientific theoretical texts, but catalogues, like scientific publications, are composed on theoretical constructs—they (re)present knowledge through the art disciplines’ lens of convention and practice. As such, they silently authorize the way Tibetan artefacts are consumed as western fine art. The exercising of this textual authority has shaped western understanding of what Tibetan art is.

The exhibition catalogue is a multifaceted document, and in this chapter, it is my intention to convey its composite structure, its complexities and how it too was transformed to become a conduit in the value creation process of artefact into art. Recent art exhibition catalogues consist of two basic components: words and images. The words function as ‘biographical statements’ which characterize the object and its life. Catalogue entries generally include title, data such as

origin, date, medium, height and a description. There may be additional entries including provenance, ownership, references and exhibition history. Each statement enhances the knowledge of the other statements. According to art philosopher Arthur Danto, art history discourse requires both a text and an image. He noted that critical evaluation needs images for the context they provide. However, Danto also argued that it is the text which identifies the object as art by locating it within particular art theory, such as the earlier example of Warhol’s *Brillo Boxes* discussed in the introduction chapter.

The repetition of specific images prompt memory and has effectively globalized and homogenized selected Tibetan objects by efficiently dispersing their images. Arnold noted that reproduced images of art have become “an essential component of the international currency of intellectual ideas that transcended spoken language barriers.” While the representational values of both text and image overlap, they also bring independent meanings. It is important to note that both art exhibition and auction catalogues are an archive of both words and images. In art exhibition catalogues words act as the primary agents in categorizing, interpreting and institutionalizing what is art. The role of images is complementary to the words. In the case of auction catalogues this role tends to be reversed, with images advertising the objects desirability. As an edifice of authority, words transmute the past by rewriting them and signaling future directions while images visually record the subtle shifts in selection and (re)presentation practices. Together, words and images establish catalogues as silent political and economic witnesses to historical collection practices and processes.

*My analysis of art exhibition catalogues is focused on their evolution. I discuss their design and content under five headings, which are: covers, range of objects, layout, lenders and bibliographic references and other scholarly mechanisms. Each topic explores how Tibetan art catalogues have developed and*

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19 Danto, A. noted in Carrier, D. 1987: 5.
how they have fused the desires of the general readership with those of
connoisseurs and scholars. However, first is a brief explanation of Tibetan art
exhibition catalogues and their role in the artworld. Secondly, I map their
evolution as they develop from inclusive ethnographic records to the current
Tibetan ‘fine’ art exhibition catalogues. The evolution of these catalogues from
numbered lists to the attractively designed user-friendly products of the twenty-
first century reflects the transformation in Tibetan artefact marketability—the
transformation of artefact into art. The evolution of the catalogue reveals the
important role it performs in the value creation process.

Art exhibition catalogues and their role in the artworld
“The words it pronounces have the value of acts of integrity.”21 This is how
author Joseph Conrad described the power of the western book. The written
word is a powerful representative tool, especially if the book is authorized by
recognized specialists or institutions such as art museums. Art catalogues
combine interpretations of an object’s indigenous and historical importance with
an objects significance to its contemporary socio-economic non-indigenous
location. Historian Michel De Certeau noted that history is made by filling empty
pages with words. He wrote that “Little by little [writing] has replaced the myths
of yesterday with a practice of meaning.”22 In the same way the Tibetan art
catalogue has categorized and given western meaning to Tibetan art, taking it
from the unknown and foreign, and making it familiar and valued. Similarly,
critical theorist Homi Bhabha stated “The discovery of the book installs the sign
of appropriate representation: the word of God, truth, art creates the conditions
for a beginning, a practice of history and narrative.”23 Art exhibition catalogues

21 Conrad, J. quoted in Bhabha, H. 1985: 149.
23 Bhabha, H. 1985: 147.
construct an interpretative lens through which meanings are revealed to western eyes.

No matter how old, catalogues carry the originating ideology which governed the selection criterion. Even black and white text with no pictures publicly registers the data and descriptions current at that time. Past exhibition catalogues link historical knowledge with the present and the future. The assemblage of such discursive vehicles as catalogues institutionalises museums and their scholars as caretakers of knowledge and in this case, agents for Tibetan material culture. Philosopher Michel Foucault noted that knowledge is “reliant upon institutional support and distribution, tends to exercise a sort of pressure, a power of constraint upon other forms of discourse.”

For instance, in catalogue entries indigenous religious ritual are not presented in their entirety. Rather, western art descriptions extract partial information or key names from Tibetan ritual practices and texts inserting them within the catalogue description to provide authoritative support to their western descriptions of Tibetan art. This results in the marginalization of Tibetan religious ritual texts in favour of the dominant western art discourse, especially as it is applied to Tibetan art and its focus on aesthetic appreciation.

However, scholarship and interpretations appearing in catalogues are not static. Over time, words are replaced or shift meanings and spellings become obsolete, archaic or different. Equally, the information contained within books and catalogues may also become irrelevant or eclipsed by new discoveries, shifts in moral values and/or political expediencies. To demonstrate this I analyze a “Skull Cup” entry from the 1950 Newark Museum Volume II catalogue. This volume demonstrates pre-1969 scholarly knowledge while illustrating the

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continuance of western imaginings. In a catalogue review, published two years after the catalogues were released Harvard art historian, Benjamin Rowland Jr, wrote that “So little is available in the way of a systematic presentation of Tibetan material that the publication of the catalogue ... provides a valuable reference work for museums and scholars as well.” In this 1952 review, Rowland Jr did not acknowledge the catalogue’s accessibility or appeal to the general reader.

With his expertise in Gandharan art, Rowland Jr admitted he lacked Tibetan art knowledge. He stated that writing a review for the Newark Museum volumes I and II was as difficult as writing a review for the “latest issue of the telephone directory... Provided the names, numbers, and addresses are right, we cannot complain of the telephone book. Just as in a completely objective museum catalogue, perfection lies in an adequate listing and description of the objects of the collection.” Naming, describing and interpreting are necessary factors in the (re)presentation of non-western artefacts as fine art. Anthropologist Arnd Schneider wrote, “An essential part of turning things into objects in western thought ... is by naming them.” Catalogues record, preserve and make accessible the objects names and their important biographical features.

26 By this time, the Newark Museum already had an extensive collection of 1,200 Tibetan artefacts. Olson, E. Vol. I. 1950: 47. Newark also had a comprehensive arts and science collection, if not as stellar as the Metropolitan Museum of Art (MET) in neighbouring New York City. Newark’s founding commitment was to provide the community with objects and experiences, which would attract, entertain, educate and thereby promote questioning and learning. See, Newark Museum reference entry.
27 There are five catalogues in this series. However, the volumes were not published simultaneously. Volumes I (background on Tibet, its regions, definitions and the Newark collections) and II (objects of prayer, musical instruments and ritual objects) were published in 1950; Volume IV (rugs and textiles) in 1961; Volumes III (sculpture, paintings and printing materials) and V (food, weapons, currency and travel paraphernalia) were published in 1971.
28 Rowland Jr., B. 1952: 102-103. Rowland Jr wrote the catalogue for the NYAS, Gandhara Sculpture from Pakistan Museums’ exhibition in 1960. At the time, he was curator at the Fogg Museum, Harvard University. In Rowland Jr’s opinion only the Japanese Buddhist art from the Jogan (784-897) and the Fujiwara (898-1185) periods transcended the craftsmanship of traditional societies and belonged within the realms of western fine art. Rowland Jr., B. 1952: 103. Rowland Jr was researching Indian art and wrote the history of Indian art for the Pelican series first issued in 1953. For the shift in western approaches to Indian art, see short article by Stadtner, D. 1990.
29 Rowland Jr., B. 1952: 103.
An example of the telephone book entry in the Newark Museum catalogue was the following skull cups entry. The skull cups appeared in Volume II under the titles “Skull Cups” or “Skull-shaped Cups.” The single entry below involved three human skull cups (figure 5.1 below and illus. 120). This is an expansive entry, which highlighted the exotic foreign-ness of Tibetan culture and the knowledge possessed by the museum required to write such an entry. Many of the cataloguing components found in later Tibetan art catalogues are present, for example the title in English and indigenous languages, provenance, description and references.

The data appears objective because it is demonstrably observable, measurable and/or knowable. On the other hand, the descriptive data, while appearing objective, are western-based interpretations. The descriptions are subject to learned knowledge drawn from indigenous sources, archived references, prior catalogues and occasionally western imaginings. In the case of pre 1969 references, the authoritative sources included publications produced by non-art specialists, such as travel stories and personal diaries. Descriptions are presented as credible authoritative statements, which are reinforced by footnoted references, indicating the authorities from which the information was drawn.

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32 There are no unadorned human craniums illustrated in the catalogue even though they are catalogued. There are two metal skull-shapes (illus. 121).
33 The labels, and hence the catalogue entries, are notated according to an art history criterion. Notation is relatively standard, although it is not governed by a universal code. Currently a draft code is being developed under the auspices of the Visual Research Association. This is a United States initiative. See entry Visual Research Association in references. Voluntary compliance to a uniform cataloguing standard will ensure comparative values can be encoded between Tibetan artefacts no matter where and when they were exhibited.
Chapter Five · Art Exhibition Catalogues

SKULL CUPS

S. *kapala*     T. *tod-pa*

Shelton and Holton Collections     Acc. No. 20.431-432, 36.316.     3"h.

Human skull cups. One is reddish brown, one is light golden brown and one white

**Figure 5.A:** Extract from Skull Cups entry in Olson, E. *The Newark Museum: Prayer and Objects Associated with Prayer Music and Musical Instruments Ritualistic Objects*, vol. II.\(^{34}\)

In the above figure 5.A, the title of the artefact is given in English as “Skull Cup” and is printed in capitals. On the line below is the italicised skull cup name *S. kapala* (Sanskrit) and T. *tod-pa* (Tibetan). The anglicized Tibetan name is placed either immediately under or in the text. In the 1936 Cutting-Vernay catalogue of the American Museum of Natural History (AMNH) exhibition (figure 5.B) the title given to a human skull entry is “A Human Skull Libation Cup” which is also printed in capitals. Directly underneath, appears the anglicized Tibetan name for skull cup (T. *Kapāla*) in brackets and italicised. In this 1936 entry, the cataloguer has confused the Sanskrit term *Kapāla* for the Tibetan, *tod-pa* as used by the Newark catalogue. The Cutting-Vernay entry (figure 5.B) does not include a physical description but rather a description of the magic and mystery that surrounds the cups.

No. 76  
A HUMAN SKULL CUP LIBATION CUP  
(T. *Kapāla*)

Used only by lamas and nuns in the monasteries and nunneries for tsamba, rice, and curds. Also for altar offerings for food to the gods. The hermit monks surround themselves in their cells with utensils and religious articles made entirely of human bones. The Black Hat Sect use the skull cup filled with wine in their religious ceremonies. These skulls are also used during the devil dances. In this connection, it is a fact that living people whose skulls are particularly suitable for these cups are marked down so that when they die their skulls are carefully preserved. From Shigatse.

**Figure 5.B**: Entry taken from the Cutting-Vernay catalogue. Presented in its entirety.\(^{35}\)

In the case of the Newark entry (figure 5.A), the titles are followed by the collection and accession details. Both the collectors, Dr Albert Shelton and Mr Carter Holton, were American missionaries, who collected for the Newark

\(^{34}\) Olson, E. Vol. II. 1950: 49-50. This entry is not illustrated. For complete catalogue entry see illus. 120.

\(^{35}\) Cutting-Vernay, 1936: Cat. No.76.
Museum between 1910 and 1940. The following museum accession number facilitates museum documentation of when, where and how the object has/or is spending its time in the museum, whether in storage, in the conservation laboratory, on display or out on loan. For art exhibition catalogues, in particular, those curated from multiple public and private sources, the public institution accession number is replaced by the private collector’s name. A cumulative record of prior ownership is also documented under provenance.

The height of all three of the Newark skull cups is three inches, which provides an indication of the physical dimension to the artefact. Without an image, the proportions are not easily imagined, especially if the reader took the following entry’s image of a skull-shaped silver cup, into their calculations. It is also three inches high (illus. 121). The Cutting-Vernay entry does not include measurements, nor does it include any description of shape or colour, whereas the Newark entry differentiates their three skull-cups by colour. From the data given on the fourth line in the Newark entry, it is understood that the skull-cups are in their natural state, although they have been coloured either at origin or in the course of ritual practice. The catalogue description suggested that these colours are intentional. The entry reads “If the skull is white, disease and trouble will cease; if yellow, one’s retainers and belongings will grow in number; if red, one will acquire power over men and also wealth.” This descriptive component suggested that the skulls had sympathetic magic. The magical portent of coloured skulls reconfirms western imaginings of Tibet.

36 The first Shelton collection is known as the Edward N. Crane Memorial Collection (1911); the following purchases made from Shelton in 1914, 1918 and 1920 are known as the Albert L. Shelton Collection. The Carter D. Holton collection was acquired in 1936. Olson, E. Vol. I. 1950: 47-49.

37 The references used by this entry included: Waddell, L.A. 1895; David-Neel, A. 1931; Getty, A. 1914; Bell, C. 1931; Gordon, A. 1939; and Shelton’s notes. While much of the object knowledge collected by these earlier figures has been discredited or superseded, at the time, it was authoritative and influential in the representation of Tibetans. A discussion on the important of referencing lineages is undertaken in the following section. A recent reference for descriptions on the Tibetan ritual use of skull cups and colour associations see Beer, R. 1999: 263-267.
This account of Tibetan ritual use and meaning demonstrated knowledge and the authoritative statements of fact. These ‘facts’ do not appear incongruous, because they are accommodated within the early twentieth century western imaginings of Tibetans. For example, the Newark entry, which uses the English vernacular “devil’s juice” for the “wine of immortality,” does little to dispel the belief that Tibetans were corrupted by the devil. The Cutting-Vernay entry (figure 5.8) also associated the skull cup with wine, ritual and devil dances. In addition, the Cutting-Vernay entry ‘connected’ devil dancing with the surveillance of living people for assessment of the suitability of their skulls for preservation after death. The Newark and Cutting-Vernay accounts registered how Tibetan cultural objects both attracted and repelled western audiences. That is, Tibetan artefacts were at the same time magical, spiritual and agents of the devil. Such ambiguities endured in western imaginings, so much so, that art critic John Canaday’s playful juxtaposition of “Gods” to “Demons” in his exhibition review title of the NYAS 1969 *The Art of Tibet* exhibition did not need an explanation.

The public display of human bone, such as skull cups, thigh bone trumpets and ritual aprons introduces another type of restriction imposed by fine art discourse and curatorial practices, in particular cataloguing and exhibition selection. Human bone objects are rarely included in fine art exhibitions, even though bone adornments are illustrated on many of the exhibited sculpture and paintings (illus. 23A-f; 24a-b). Art historians might argue that human bone artefacts belong in ethnographic museums because they are part of ritual practice. However, this pronouncement could be levelled at almost all Tibetan objects, including thangkas and sculpture. Contradicting the proponents of western
concern over the display of human bone is the Christian custom of relic worship. The public display of ‘Saints’ bones’ in churches and during Christian festivals, and their subsequent incorporation into fine art institutions, such as the Metropolitan Museum of Fine Art (MET) contrasts with the treatment of Tibetan human bone objects in most fine art museums, that is, their exclusion.\textsuperscript{39} An example of differential treatment for the exhibition of human bone objects occurred at the Albuquerque Museum, which included a Tibetan human bone apron in its 1997 exhibition, Tibet: Tradition and Change.\textsuperscript{40} The museum posted a warning sign so that those who did not wish to see human bone could by-pass that particular exhibition case.\textsuperscript{41} More recently, Christie’s auction house offered A Ritual Bone Apron, without noting that the bone was human (illus. 122; 123), whereas Sotheby’s has instructed their agents not to accept Tibetan human bone objects.\textsuperscript{42} The absence of human bone artefacts from major American exhibition catalogues demonstrates the selective construction of what is identified as Tibetan art.

The NYAS 1969 exhibition shifted the collecting focus of Tibetan objects from the inclusive ethnographic criteria to primary fine art categories of sculpture and paintings. But even this exhibition included masterfully worked functional objects, such as a Tibetan beer jug and saddle, which seldom appear in later fine art exhibitions (illus. 124a-b). The 1969 exhibition curator Pal wrote in the catalogue

\begin{quote}
The jug reveals how beautifully an article of daily use was adorned and reflects the part played by aesthetics in the everyday
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{39} For St Thomas Becket’s reliquary in the MET see Hoving, T. 1965. See also MET digital collection on the internet. Furthermore, while I can find no record of Tibetan ritual objects made from human bone, the MET was donated a skull cup in 1905/6. Anon. “A Skull Cup.” 1906: 50. However, it may have been deaccessioned or remains unacknowledged in the basement. For a discussion on Buddhist relics see Sharf, R. 1999. For discussion on European relics see Brown, P. 1977. Bentley, J. 1985.

\textsuperscript{40} Hall, D. 1997: 170-171, pl.85. This exhibition included a number of artefacts which are not ordinarily included in art exhibitions. This may reflect the fact that the region (Santa Fe) is home to Tibetan refugee families and that this catalogue included their voices.

\textsuperscript{41} Knight, C. 1998: 66.

life of the people” and “This saddle ... demonstrates the part played by aesthetics in the everyday life of the Tibetans. 43

The inclusion of the beer jug and saddle implied the universal nature of aesthetics and its ability to be applied across all cultures. However, since 1969 the increasing western aestheticization of Tibetan objects has narrowed selection criteria and mirrors the western fine art preoccupation with paintings and sculpture.

The emphasis placed on aesthetic appreciation in the 1969 exhibition began the transformation of Tibetan artefacts into art. Aesthetic appreciation encourages a specific evaluation and re-evaluation that created commodities by categorizing and ranking objects in relation to each other and with other collections, in a hierarchy, for example: masterpiece, museum-quality, collectible or souvenir. The value of art objects is enhanced by the art market trust and certainty in unambiguous data issued and repeated by authoritative institutions and elite collectors. Art catalogues are a tool in stabilizing and maintaining the object’s claims authenticity.

Transformation of Tibetan art exhibition catalogues
In this section, I discuss how catalogues have mirrored the transformation of Tibetan artefact into Tibetan art. Pivotal to any discussion on transformation of Tibetan art and their catalogues is the 1969 exhibition and its associated publications. The production of an art exhibition catalogue complete with introductory essay, individual object entries and images, authenticated the Tibetan objects on exhibition. In addition, the hosting of such an exhibition by an elite institution required art consumers to reconsider their previous evaluations of Tibetan material, especially when the catalogue was dedicated to Tibetan art

as a ‘fine’ art. Putting Tibetan art into a fine art-styled catalogue strengthened the momentum of an ‘informational’ cascade.

Importantly, art exhibition catalogues function as a paper trail documenting the ownership of objects. This is an important difference between the pre and post 1969 exhibitions. I am able to report on these earlier Tibetan exhibitions because of the record preserved by their catalogues. However, the earlier catalogues generally do not leave a precise trail to identify a particular artefact, especially if they are generically named, such as Green Tara, evidenced in the Roerich Museum example illustrated in the following layout section. Nevertheless, their records usually provide sufficient evidence to identify the range of objects. The evolution of exhibition catalogues into their current form, compendiums of precise records identifying individual objects, is important to value creation. A single object’s status is enhanced by public exposure in exhibitions which, if privately owned, constructs an authenticating provenance and potentially an increased price tag should the work be offered for sale later. To chart some major changes in the evolution of Tibetan art catalogues, I analyse a selection of pre and post 1969 publications in terms of key aspects of their presentation and content: covers, range of objects, layout, lenders and bibliographic references.

Covers

Exhibition catalogues are not just flat, three dimensional objects comprising multiple pages of words and images. They are also a sensual product. Heavy weight and bulky size have become familiar trademarks for art catalogues. Their weight and paper-quality communicates directly to sensory receptors. At first glimpse, it is not the words which speak but the catalogue design and production values, particularly its cover. Today’s art catalogues are presented as decorative, desirable and authoritative objects. Furthermore, with increasing competition in the market place between art exhibition catalogues, covers use
the artifices of colour and dramatic design to highlight both their value as souvenirs and their potential as a scholarly archive.

The shift in cover presentation parallels the commodification of Tibetan artefacts into fine art. An important part of any commodity is its packaging. The move to decorative covers illustrates this process. Catalogue covers, whether exhibition or auction, signal the value of what lies within. They perform the same function for books as monumental architecture does for museums—they beckon the reader inside. Like the external architecture of museum buildings, the cover is designed to attract and represent authority.44 Key attributes of recent catalogue covers, in addition to size and thickness, include binding and title—together they produce the initial visual statement. Art historian McAllister Johnston noted that the importance of catalogues lies in how history stores them on the bookshelf,45 or in the case of such recent decorative covers, on top of the coffee table.

The attractiveness of recent art catalogues is demonstrated by the covers of three major Tibetan art exhibitions touring the U.S. in 2003 (illus. 125a-c). The cover of the Chicago exhibition Himalayas An Aesthetic Adventure (ARTIC 2003) exhibition was an insert from an exhibition thangka of Milarepa,46 depicting an important Tibetan Buddhist saint seated with the sacred snowcapped Mount Kalish towering high behind him. This image highlights the centralizing context of the exhibition—aesthetics and the Himalayan Mountain range. The cover of the Los Angeles County Museum exhibition, The Circle of Bliss (BLISS 2003), features a close-up of Chakrasamvara’s face.47 His piercing eyes, open mouth with fanged teeth, and the furrowed arched brows, should be menacing but the image conveys instead a sense of benevolence. While the gilded face of Chakrasamvara

47 Huntington, J. and Bangdel, D. 2003. Front cover image from Cat. No.65. Chakrasamvara is the central figure of the mandala that the curators have designed the exhibition around—a spiritual journey into the heart the heart of the Chakrasamvara mandala through the visual experience of Tibetan art.
fills the entire cover of the Los Angeles catalogue, the opulence of gold is not as dramatic as the Bowers Museum catalogue cover, which depicts the gilded upper torso of eleven-headed Avalokitesvara. With a portion of his one thousand hands and eyes offering compassion to the many suffering in hell and on earth, the deity is silhouetted against a brilliant orange-red background. The gold coloured lettering of the title Tibet: Treasures from the Roof of the World (ROOF 2003) is suspended over Avalokitesvara’s multiple heads. The Bowers catalogue is the only one of the three to use Tibetan script on the front cover. The use and position of the Tibetan script silently reinforces the cultural and spiritual “authenticity” of the exhibited objects. Furthermore, unlike the other exhibition, ROOF 2003 had the right to use the script because all the 200 objects on exhibit were the personal possessions of the past and present Dalai Lamas. While not as colourful as the 2003 publications, the front cover of the illustrated dust jacket of the 1969 hard-bound catalogue cleverly used a Tibetan thangka image. The design had a sophisticated appeal due to its predominance of grey tonality accented by a small red banner announcing in light lettering ‘THE ART OF TIBET’ (illus. 126a-c). The image is detail from a painting known as rGyantshogs (Sets of Ornaments). The decision to include an image on the front cover reflects the purpose and intent of the exhibition—to introduce the aesthetic appreciation of Tibetan art. This cover was designed to appeal to the taste of the New York elite—it is subdued, subtle and intriguing, as well as decorative. The images of Oriental-styled animals such as horses, tigers and lions were familiar and non-confrontational. At the same time, the chosen image is sanitized by the strategic placement of the title’s red banner over two thirds of a human skeleton. Only hominid leg bones escape from under the red banner and, along with the other isolated leg bones, they are barely noticeable amongst the swirling beasts (illus. 126b).

48 Byrd, V. et. al. 2003: Front cover image from Cat. No.34.
49 Avalokitesvara is also a representation of the Dalai Lama, who is said to be to be an incarnation of Avalokitesvara.
50 I was informed the there was a yellow soft cover version, but I have not verified this.
The practice of reproducing images from the exhibition reflects a shift in attitude towards Tibetan artefacts as commodities. In general, the earlier Tibetan catalogues privileged personalities or institutions on their front covers and not the objects in the exhibition. The movement and design of the NYAS 1969 catalogue cover was a significant departure from earlier catalogue covers, such as the 1929 Roerich Museum (ROERICH 1929) the 1936 Cutting-Vernay (C-V 1936) and the NEWARK 1950 catalogues. Early catalogues were hampered by the prohibitive cost of printing in colour and the fact that the works they were documenting were exotic artefacts of interest, but not high value. In general, the catalogues were soft-bound and employed ‘brand-like’ symbols printed in one ink on single colour card for the cover (illus. 127a-f). The ROERICH 1929 catalogue cover reproduced the insignia for the circle and three dots of the Corona Mundi International Art Center (127a).

The C-V 1936 catalogue used the seals of His Holinesses the Dalai Lama and the Tashi Lama. \[52\] Underneath the two seals was the Tibetan script \textit{Om Mani Padme Hum} translated on the catalogue cover as “Hail the Jewel in the lotus-flower.” The Cutting-Vernay cover is yellow with red-sealing wax script (illus. 127b). The use of Tibetan script, or symbols such as the seals is significant. Like the earlier mentioned Bowers Museum catalogue, the use of Tibetan script emphasizes the artefacts intimate association with Tibet. Explorers and collectors Suydam Cutting and Arthur Vernay had personally collected the exhibits objects from inside Tibet. Furthermore, the official Tibetan seals silently acknowledge the rare accomplishment of gaining access to a country whose borders were ordinarily closed to foreigners. The different coloured covers of the Newark catalogues symbolized the five Tibetan elements: white for space; blue for air;

\[52\] Since the 17\textsuperscript{th} century, Tashi Lama (Panchen Lama) is second only to the Dalai Lama in Tibetan Buddhist hierarchy. He is also believed to be the earthly manifestation of Tsong khapa, the reformer of Tibetan Buddhism and founder of Gelugpa School, which the Dalai Lama heads.
golden yellow for earth; red for light; and, green for water. Unfortunately, it took 21 years to publish all five volumes.

Another anomalous catalogue cover was produced for a soft bound publication which documented a Tibetan art exhibition hosted by the Museum of International Folk Art, Santa Fe in 1960 (SANTA FE 1960) (illus. 127d). The cover illustration is of a ‘wind horse’ surrounded by lines of Tibetan text is brown ink printed on cream board. This illustration is a print taken from a woodblock originally used to print Tibetan flags. The woodblock was one of 23 objects on exhibit, which ranged from Sakyamuni gilt bronze sculpture, a Green Tara thangka, Mani stone, papier-maché dance mask and a brass teapot. The diversity of objects selected for exhibition is important in focusing and educating the viewer’s expectations. In this Santa Fe exhibition everyday objects and ‘art’ objects received the same exhibition emphasis. Furthermore, there were no distinctions drawn—all objects were presented as exotica. The title for the Santa Fe exhibition may have been Tibetan Art, however, the absence of description and aesthetic evaluation conforms to ethnographic representations of Tibetan culture and not the fine art paradigm which was to inform the selection of objects displayed nine years later in the NYAS 1969 exhibition.

The year 1969 was also the beginning of global proselytizing by the self-exiled representatives of Tibetan Buddhist sects. In contrast to the NYAS 1969 is the 1970 The Sacred Art of Tibet exhibition catalogue (NYINGMAPA 1970) hosted by the Tibetan Nyingmapa Meditation Center in Berkley, California. This catalogue reflects the fact that ‘fine art’ was not the dominant evaluative tool used for Tibetan artefacts. The NYINGMAPA 1970 catalogue continued the religious dimension popularised by the Theosophical Society, Nicholas Roerich and more recently the touring in self-exile Tibetan Buddhist teachers. While this cover is

53 Olson identifies Waddell as her source. Olson, E. 1950a: iii.
54 The Nyingmapa sect is the oldest of the four Tibetan Buddhist sects, established in the eighth century. In 1969, the incarnated teacher Tarthung, arrived in Berkeley, California and established the Tibetan Nyingmapa Center. Within three years, he had established the Nyingmapa Institute and Dharma Publishing.
for a post 1969 exhibition catalogue, it retains the single ink corporate-style logo, in this case, the Nyingmapa insignia (illus. 127f). This soft bound catalogue is reminiscent of the earlier ROERICH 1929 and C-V 1936 catalogues. The insignia and title are printed in a flat non-metallic gold-colour on a bright leaf green cardboard cover.

Despite the fact that the title of the Nyingmapa exhibition is The Sacred Art of Tibet its’ actual focus is not on (re)presenting Tibetan ritual artefacts as ‘western’ fine art, but exhibiting the artefacts as travelling ambassadors of Tibetan culture.55 All the objects on exhibition were reproduced in black and white, which reflects the lack of value funds to print in colour and that the exhibition was not an object focused value creation process.56 The frontispiece image in the NYINGMAPA 1970 catalogue was not on exhibit (illus. 128). This historic photograph of the Samye Monastery sculpture of Padmasambhava the founder of the Nyingmapa sect is strategically located as a welcome and blessing to initiates and non-initiates as they enter the spiritually charged arena of the ‘sacred art of Tibet.’ The author of the NYINGMAPA 1970 catalogue, the Nyingmapa Meditation Center’s head lama, Tarthung Tulku, stated

Buddhist art is not art, per se. That is, its primary function is not the exploration of delightful forms ... Its function is to point the way, to teach, to alter the consciousness of the viewer.57

The NYINGMAPA 1970 was styled as an art catalogue but it was intended primarily to promote the Tibetan Nyingmapa Meditation Center, which perhaps explains why the inclusion of detailed documentation of objects was not a priority. Neither was ownership an issue; no lenders were named. The purpose for lending was to assist the Center in their goal to alleviate the poverty of the Tibetan refugees, to preserve Tibetan culture and texts.58

55 The subject of Tibetan ‘voice’ is discussed in a later chapter.
56 In the 1988 revised Sacred Art of Tibet, Nyingmapa catalogue, Tarthang wrote, “eventually we hope to publish a catalogue that will include colour prints as well as more detailed explanations.” Tarthang, T. 1988: Foreword. This 1988 catalogue was copyrighted in 1972, second edition (reissued) 1974 to coincide with another exhibition. It was then revised in 1988.
57 Tarthang, T. 1970: 5 (Tarthang emphasis).
Object range

Art exhibitions are important in defining appropriate art categories and the desired characteristics. The earlier ethnographic exhibitions were inclusive of all indigenous material that was known and/or available to the collector(s). Like the visual shift in catalogue covers from pre to post 1969, there was a corresponding restriction in the range of objects catalogued over the same period. The limited range provides further evidence for the re-evaluation and categorization of objects during the transformation process of artefact into art. The range shifted from inclusive ethnographic to the discriminating connoisseur/aesthetic selection governing many of the western artworlds. The restrictions pared the selection criteria to primarily two categories—painting and sculpture. Again, it is the 1969 New York Asia Society The Art of Tibet (NYAS 1969) exhibition catalogue, which initially sets the range of Tibetan art objects and the criteria for their selection. In this section I focus particularly on four art exhibition catalogues: the Roerich Museum 1929 catalogue (ROERICH 1929); Cutting-Vernay 1936 catalogue (C-V 1936); New York Asia Society 1969 catalogue (NYAS 1969); and the Art Institute of Chicago 2003 catalogue (ARTIC 2003).

The artefact entries of the earlier catalogues disclose their ethnographic role of surveying and comparing Tibetan material culture, rather than the post 1969 emphasis on antique and aesthetically pleasing objects. For example, in the 1929 Roerich Museum catalogue there are 154 listed objects. The range is highlighted by the exhibition catalogue’s subheadings of: thangkas; bronze images; charm boxes; Tibetan coffers; Tibetan tea pots, ceremonial objects, Lama hats; Lama masks; [small] altars, miscellaneous [Tibetan] objects, including jewellery, tea tables and prayer wheels; and, Nepal objects, which included brass door handles, oil lamps, icons and a carved wooden temple portico. The catalogue (re)produced a small number of images, which included: a Tibetan thangka of
the *Paradise of Padmasambhava*; a Nepalese bronze of *The Birth of Buddha*; an altar from Sikkim; a Tibetan altar painted with the image of the third Tashi Lama; and, a brass teapot with hammered design.

The focus of the Roerich Museum material was on thangkas, which they referred to as ‘painted banners.’ The Roerich Museum exhibition was (58%) thangkas, while the next largest group of artefacts at (24%) were common utensils such as tea kettles and cups (illus. 129). The predominance of thangkas in the Roerich Museum exhibition reflects the predisposition of the museum’s founders. The namesake of the museum, Nicolas Roerich was a painter, while his eldest son George was a Tibetologist who had published a book on Tibetan paintings in 1925. An attraction for collecting thangkas while on expedition was there portability.

Many of the Tibetan objects in the Roerich Museum exhibition were acquired during the Roerichs five-year expedition within Tibet and Central Asia region. George Roerich’s introduction to the catalogued collection emphasizes the uniqueness of Tibetan artistry and the filial devotion of artist monks. He wrote that,

> The Legend and Word of Buddha have furnished a never-failing source of themes for devout artist monks, who in the solitude of their cells created masterpieces worthy of the great masters of the Early Italian Renaissance.

These comments echo those made by *The [London] Times* anonymous art critic almost 30 years earlier, which also recognised the universal aesthetic appeal of art across cultures. However, western art discourse at this time did not consider Tibetan artefacts to be fine art.

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60. Roerich, G. 1929: pages 2, 6, 7, 8 and 10 respectively.
61. Roerich, G. 1925.
George Roerich’s introductory comments also included an appraisal of the artistic wealth held by aristocratic Tibetan families and Tibetan monasteries. He wrote,

The mansions of the old landed aristocracy of Tibet and the Tibetan temples are real museums of antiques. The temples are sometimes very fittingly described by the Tibetans themselves as “tsuk lak khang” (gtshug lag khang) or the “House of Objects produced by the Human Mind and Hands.” In them, we find priceless Chinese porcelain and enamels, presents of the Chinese Emperors to the ruling families of Tibet, fine images of gilded bronze and carved wood, masterpieces of Indian, Tibetan and Chinese art, beautiful examples of pictorial art of Tibet, painted banners of immense sizes.  

From the rudimentary descriptions contained in the catalogue it does not appear that the Roerich’s had the opportunity to acquire any treasures from the feudal aristocracy or the monasteries. George Roerich noted the difficulty of acquiring Tibetan objects, especially thangkas from Tibetans. He wrote that to convince a Tibetan to sell to a non-Buddhist an “outsider ... is almost a hopeless task.” Roerich noted that the majority of Tibetan artefacts in the west were “the result of recent wars and upheavals, which brought the destruction of several lamaseries and the ruin of rich families.” Early news reports in the New York Times also stated that Tibetans were reluctant to sell their ritual possessions.

However, by 1936 the Cutting and Vernay expedition reported that wherever they camped, Tibetans quickly formed queues to sell them all sorts of ‘everyday’ objects. In addition to the official Tibetan seals of office on the catalogue cover, the expedition also dedicated the catalogue to the Lhasa-based Tibetan ruling government officials. In their dedication, Cutting and Vernay wrote that it was “through [Their Excellencies] kindness we were able to make this collection.”

The C-V 1936 range is similar in size and scope to the earlier ROERICH 1929 collection. It is another numbered list. However, Cutting and

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64 Roerich, G. 1929: 5.
68 Cutting, S.C. and Vernay, A. 1936a: Dedication.
Vernay have added a brief explanation for each of the 162 objects’. Antoinette Gordon, the curator at the AMNH, and curators Alice Kendall and Ruth Farwell from the Newark Museum provided the catalogue descriptions. Interestingly, Cutting and Vernay drew distinctions between the curators, referencing Gordon as “the greatest expert on Buddhist and Tibetan art,” whereas the Newark curators were thanked for their “invaluable assistance in the compilation of ethnological data.”

Cutting and Vernay had affiliations with both museums and their distinction may be a reflection on Gordon’s Tibetan language skills. However, her expertise in Tibetan art did not commend Tibetan artefacts as an art commodity. Gordon’s evaluations were descriptive only and she did not employ aesthetic adjectives or evaluations.

The diversity of the Cutting-Vernay exhibition ranges from thangkas to brass water jugs and teapots; musical instruments; ritual implements such as the ‘miraculous dagger’, a ‘Lamaist sceptre’ and prayer wheel; to a human bone libation cup and thigh bone trumpet; to clothing and jewellery; and weaponry. The emphasis was on everyday objects, they accounted for almost (70%) of the collection, while thangkas accounted for (20%). The ritual objects, sculpture, music instruments and manuscript categories totalled (10%) of the whole collection.

The skewed emphasis on the everyday was intentional. In the art exhibition catalogue’s foreword, Cutting and Vernay wrote “What was desired by the museum, apart from the tang-kas, was a collection of metal work and various other articles used in the daily life of the people.” They were diligent collectors for the museum acquiring 13 teapots, 12 teacups, five teacups with stands and covers made from brass, copper, silver, wood, terracotta and executed in various shapes and designs (illus. 130a-b).

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69 Cutting, S.C. and Vernay, A. 1936a: Foreword. Gordon published her first book on Tibetan iconography in 1939 and her second book in 1952. It is also likely that Gordon described the pictured details in the thangkas and the Newark curators supplied the details for the everyday objects, which would explain the distinction made between the two groups of curators.

70 There was only one sculpture included in the exhibition. The percentages were too small to represent.

71 Cutting-Vernay, 1936a: Foreword.
Chapter Five · Art Exhibition Catalogues

The range of objects in the NYAS 1969 exhibition catalogue was neither as large nor as wide. I argue that this reflects the shift in emphasis from ethnographic to art. The exhibition consisted of (43%) sculptures and (34%) thangkas (illus. 129). Vanished from the 1969 catalogue are the human bone libation cups, lama masks, clothing and jewellery. At the same time different names are applied, for example, the charm boxes in the Roerich Museum catalogue are referred to in the 1969 catalogue as Gaus and the miraculous daggers noted in the C-V 1936 catalogue are titled magic daggers in the 1969 catalogue.\(^2\) In addition, the Cambridge-trained art historian and curator Pal emphasized another category of Tibetan artefacts which the ROERICH 1929 and C-V 1936 catalogues only sampled—this was the area of manuscripts, book covers and illuminated leaves, which totalled (9%) of the NYAS 1969 exhibition.\(^3\) The selection of sketchbooks by Pal, like the predisposition of Roerich to paintings, is a guiding factor in what becomes a Tibetan art category. Curators and associates plan and pilot the range, quality and quantity of objects selected for exhibition and recorded in catalogues for posterity.

As previously mentioned not all the 119 objects exhibited in NYAS 1969 would be acceptable for a twenty-first century fine art exhibition. Further to the rejection of such objects as the beer jug, dough mold, helmet and saddle, a number of the thangkas would be classed as too damaged, especially with the increased aesthetization of Tibetan art since 1969 (illus. 131a-d). The Art institute of Chicago (ARTIC 2003) exhibition was championed as the pinnacle of Tibetan art aesthetics—“the greatest show of art of this kind” for the last one hundred years and for the next one hundred years.\(^4\)

The ARTIC 2003 exhibition continued the sculpture-painting dominance established by Pal in the NYAS 1969 exhibition, with sculpture accounting for

\(^2\) In the 2003 Chicago catalogue the magic daggers are named Ritual Peg (Phurbu).
\(^3\) Casey Singer, J. 2000. Pal noted that British art historian Ernst Gombrich, encouraged him to look beyond obvious art examples, such as paintings and sculptures to sketchbooks and manuscripts.
(55%) of the object range and thangkas (39%). A total of (89%) of the selected Tibetan objects were either paintings or sculptures. Pal also continued the selection of manuscripts and book covers, which were the next largest category at (6%) (illus. 129). The concentration on sculptures and paintings as the ascendant representation of Himalayan art aesthetics reflects the bias towards the western fine art paradigm.

One other aspect of interest in the ARTIC 2003 range is the shift in size, particularly the size of sculpture. Once again, I argue that this shift is also a consequence of the Tibetan artefact into art transformation. For the twenty-first century consumer, size does matter, especially to the price tag. And as previously noted by Pal, in an interview with Jane Casey Singer, there is a strong relationship between aesthetics and price tag. I believe that size has also become an important consideration in the aesthetic/price equation, similar to the over-aestheticization pressure on the ‘perfect beauty’ of thangkas to qualify as Tibetan masterpieces. Current evidence for the suggestion of increased height is meagre, but a percentage comparison of the height of sculptures in the NYAS 1969 and ARTIC 2003 exhibitions demonstrate the shift in selection of sculptures height. In 1969, (4%) of the sculptures were over 60 centimetres, whereas in the ARTIC 2003 exhibition (38%) of the sculptures were over 60 centimetres. Interestingly the same percentage of sculptures (38%) was also selected in the mid-range between 30-60 centimetres, whereas the same size equivalent in the 1969 exhibition accounted for (26%).

The greatest proportion of sculptures in the NYAS 1969 exhibition were under 30 centimetres (12 inches), they accounted for (70%) of the objects, while the equivalent size range in the ARTIC 2003 exhibition accounted for only (24%) of the total objects. The tallest sculpture in the NYAS 1969 exhibition was almost one metre, whereas there were seven sculptures in the ARTIC 2003 exhibition

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76 I discuss the controversy of the alleged practice of overpainting (the ‘brightening’) of thangkas in a later chapter.
over one metre. One obvious conclusion to be drawn from the shift in heights is that there was a much larger pool of Tibetan sculptures available in 2003 compared to 1969. The sculptures available in 1969 were carried out of Tibet on foot, thereby restricting size. The pressures of the global market have overcome the transport difficulties.  

Art Exhibition Catalogue Layout

The promotion of the ARTIC 2003 exhibition as an aesthetic benchmark establishes the associated catalogue as an important archive advertising what constitutes museum-quality Tibetan art masterpieces. In the same way that the exhibition is the ‘greatest show,’ the catalogue also represents the pinnacle of its form. The attractive design also made it a worthy souvenir. The public archiving of previously non-exhibited objects, their translated dedication and scholarly mechanisms make it an important reference tool for the Tibetan artworld.

Another change in art exhibition catalogues has been their layout—in particular the positioning and proportioning of words to image. The evolution of the art exhibition catalogue layout illustrates the importance of clear concise, user-friendly text for today’s global market. The inclusion and placement of images has become increasingly significant, reflecting the similar rise in aestheticization and commodification of Tibetan art. The general layout and configuration of twenty-first century Tibetan art catalogues is text on the left-hand page and directly opposite a portrait photograph of the object on the right-hand page. In turning the page, the right hand side initially traps the eye, which is why the illustration is often positioned there. Once the eye has appraised the image, attention turns to the written word on the left hand side. The text flows forming a descriptive portrayal of the object, incorporating aesthetic interpretations merged with religious Tibetan Buddhist narratives, texts and translations of

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77 Pal noted in the same interview as the aesthetic/price tag relationship the constantly increasing availability of Tibetan art compared to 1969.
inscriptions. In tandem with the text, the image is beautifully portrayed to accentuate the object's unique qualities. Recent catalogues look and read as advertisements for the objects they represent.

To compare the content, reporting styles and the placements of words and images from the ROERICH 1929 and the ARTIC 2003 art exhibition catalogue., I have selected several thangka versions of two manifestations of Tara, specifically White and Green. Catalogues do not fit conveniently into a straight ascending evolutionary line. For instance, the ROERICH 1929, C-V 1936 and NYINGMAPA 1970 entries did not provide measurements, whereas the NYAS 1969 and later catalogues do record measurements for every artefact. The NEWARK 1950 and the SANTA FE 1970 catalogues, do record appropriate heights and widths. With the transformation of artefacts into art, these cataloguing details are important comparative and evaluative tools which are accessible resources available to museum professionals, connoisseurs and enthusiasts.

Looking back to the 1929 Roerich Museum exhibition catalogue, it is notable for the absence of individualizing signifiers such as accession numbers, images and descriptions of unique features. While the catalogue entry identifies the deity and area in which the style was generated it does not record measurements, specify particular media, iconography or aesthetic description provided by later catalogues. The Roerich Museum entries for Tara found under "Category IX. Tibetan Painted Banners (Thang-kas)" are rudimentary—a numbered list of names (figure 5.D.).

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78 There are twenty-one Tara, Roerich names the, see, Roerich, G. 1925: 65-66.
There is no identifying or descriptive data to discriminate catalogue number 93 Green Tara from catalogue number 94, also Green Tara, which certainly reinforces the earlier-held belief that Tibetan art was not original and that Tibetan artists slavishly followed formulas. This assumption in western perspective was still current in 1969, when John Canaday wrote in his exhibition review of the 1969 NYAS that Tibetan art was an “obedient repetition of a pattern long set to formula.”

Defining individual objects is significant to the value creation process. However, it is inappropriate for later readers to assume that the Roerich Museum cataloguer was ignorant of Tibetan art identification and the need for contextualization. On the contrary, George Roerich had published an authoritative book on Tibetan art five years earlier, which discussed 37 thangkas in detail. He provided measurements, scholarly descriptions and translations of prayers and ritual practices. Information is sourced either to a published reference or to a primary Tibetan text that he has translated. Of the 37 thangkas, 18 were photographed. Only the frontispiece of Sitātapatrāparajitā, a manifestation of Tara, is reproduced in colour (illus. 132). The duplication of names in this book and the exhibition list suggests that the earlier publication

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informed the exhibition catalogue by providing significant information on most of the thangkas on exhibit. It is possible that George Roerich selected the exhibition relying on exhibition visitors to buy his earlier book to fill in the information unavailable in the ROERICH 1929 catalogue.

By 1936, the Cutting-Vernay exhibition cataloguers have begun to record descriptions and meanings for the Tibetan ritual artefacts.\textsuperscript{82} Their catalogue entry for White Tara describes the historical and spiritual myth which surrounds White Tara, her place in the Tibetan pantheon, especially her distinguishing feature in this manifestation—her seven eyes (illus. 133a).

\begin{tabular}{|c|c|}
\hline
No. 19 & SITATARA  \\
& (T. s Grol-ma d kar-po)  \\
& White Tārā of the Seven Eyes  \\
\hline
The White Tārā symbolizes Compassion, white is the reincarnation of the Chinese Princess Wench’eng who married King Sr’ on Tsan Gampo. She is one of the most venerated deities in the Tibetan Pantheon. Legend has it that she was born of a tear from the eye of the All-Compassionate Avalokiteśvara, the Patron Deity of Tibet. She has many different forms and variations. In this form she is shown with seven eyes. In addition to the usual eyes, she has the eye of the foreknowledge in the centre of her forehead, and eyes in the palms of her two hands, and in the soles of her feet. At her right hand is the Buddha Amitābha and at the left the Buddha Akshobhya. Below her are the sacred offerings to the divinity.  \\
\hline
\end{tabular}

\textbf{Figure 5.E:} Illustration of White Tara label entry found in the 1936 Cutting-Vernay Tibetan exhibition held at AMNH.\textsuperscript{83}

The C-V 1936 cataloguers did record measurements and described Tibetan Buddhist elements within the thangka but did not provide guidance to the appreciation and understanding of aesthetic values. Aesthetics was not a necessary or critical component for the ethnographic artefacts. Although there was no accompanying picture at the time, I was able to ascertain which Sitatara Cutting and Vernay collected by consulting the AMNH accession register (see illus. 133a-c).

The 1970 Nyingmapa art exhibition catalogue provides an interesting counterpoint to the general direction taken on the evolution of museum art exhibition catalogues. The 22 thangkas, the 16 sculptures and numerous ritual

\textsuperscript{82} Johnson, M. 1988: 22.
\textsuperscript{83} Cutting-Vernay. 1936a.
objects\textsuperscript{84} were selected according to their importance and educational value for the Nyingmapa Tibetan Buddhist teachings. As was the case in earlier museum exhibitions, the selection process did not discriminate for quality, age or rarity. In the Nyingmapa case, the objects were selected with reference to their sacredness. In his foreword, Tarthang Tulku acknowledged that American-Tibetan Buddhist practitioners and sympathisers lent the items. He wrote,

This exhibition is a manifestation of the collective selflessness of many individuals, largely unknown to one another, yet united in their generosity ... Needless to say the actual pieces comprise the substance of the exhibition ... by the confluence of their [lenders'] kindness, created this assembly of sacred Tibetan art, this exhibition.\textsuperscript{85}

The Nyingmapa exhibition created a tension, because unlike the 1969 NYAS collection, the exhibition was not primarily based on aesthetic values, but the desire to exhibit particular sacred deities. Included in the Nyingmapa were objects which fine art connoisseurs would have considered to be tourist or souvenir art and not worthy of inclusion in an exhibition catalogue.

In the NYINGMAPA 1970 exhibition catalogue, the text is given as a title and brief explanation for each object, while the images are grouped separately. The black and white plate of Green Tara (illus. 134) appears 15 pages after the text entry (figure 5.F), which briefly states her identifying attributes and her relationship to Amitabha.

12. TARA. Shown here in her popular green form, the “Mother of all Buddhas” carries the lotus in her left hand which is in the gesture known as \textit{vitarka}, argument, while her right hand symbolizes charity. Above her is her patronym Amitabha.

\textbf{Figure 5.F.} Label for Green Tara label for NYINGMAPA 1970 catalogue.\textsuperscript{86}

\textsuperscript{84} The various objects had been artistically arranged with the Nyingmapa sect as the context. In the catalogue they are represented in two plates. The first plate contextualizes the story of the Nyingmapa founding father, Padmasambhava. The second plate features Padmasambhava as the central figure, surrounded by sculptural examples of deities and ritual objects including Green and White Tara, Sakyamuni, stupa, dor-rje, dril-bu and a Buddha made by a student at the Nyingmapa Meditation centre.

\textsuperscript{85} Tarthang, T. 1970: (no pagination, the page directly before page 1).

While every object is illustrated in the NYAS 1969 catalogue, the catalogue entries and images are also separate. The images appear before the catalogue details. The thangkas are illustrated first, and in general, there is one thangka per page, while the following sculptures are generally two plates per page. There are five full-page coloured plates of four thangkas and a Buddha sculpture. Individuals sponsored the cost of two of these coloured plates. The 1969 catalogue image of “sGröld-dkar (White Tārā)” is full page black and white (illus. 135). The dense text which appears 59 pages later, (see fig. 5.K) is full of historical detail explaining who Tara is and her function within this Tibetan pantheon. The descriptive paragraph is followed by an aesthetic critique which reveals the western perspective of the foreign artistic elements portrayed in the thangka. There is no direct reference to Tibetan religious or spiritual concepts.

87 Like the NYINGMAPA 1970 exhibition catalogue, the NYAS 1969 catalogue begins with essays contextualizing the catalogued objects. In this catalogue Pal wrote a brief history of Tibet and Tibetan Buddhism, the pantheon of deities, the relationship of patron to artist, the materials and techniques used in the creation of sculpture and thangkas. In addition, Eleanor Olson of the Newark Museum wrote an essay on the meditation and ritual practice in Tibetan Buddhism.

88 In the foreword the director Gordon Washburn noted that the Friends of Asia House Gallery (Asia Society’s gallery) contributed to the cost of printing the catalogue. Furthermore, three men—Stacy Lloyd III, John Goelet and Earl Morse—sponsored two of the colour plates. Pal, P. 1969a: 7.
38. sGröld-dkar (White Tārā) Nineteenth century
Tanka; gouache on linen; H. 29 1/8, W. 19 11/16 in.
Tibet House Collection, New Delhi

sGröld-dkar or white Tārā (Sita Tārā) is the consort of Avalokiteśvara, but according to the Tibetan tradition she is also the apothosis of the Chinese wife of Songsten-gampo. Here she is seated in the yogic on a lotus which rises from the water. With her right hand she displays the gesture of charity (varadamudrā) and with the left she holds the lotus. The third eye on her forehead, as well as those on her hands and feet, symbolizes her omniscience. The seven other female figures, portrayed below and above, are also Tārās, while the three seated males on the upper row are the Bodhisattvas Manjuśrī, Avalokiteśvara (in the center), and Vajrapāni. The eight Tārās function together and save the devotees from the eight great perils (astamahābhaya). Tārā, as her name implies, is the saviouress and performs the same functions as her consort Avalokiteśvara. On either side of the central figure travellers are portrayed; on her right are merchants in a rocking boat, and on her left a caravan crossing a desert. They are obviously praying to her to ensure a safe journey.

The painting is an excellent example of the linear style that was developed in eastern Tibet, particularly in Kham, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. However, in contrast to the paintings of the sixteenth-seventeenth centuries (Nos. 15, 23) there is an increasing tendency towards formalization of the landscape and a rather stiff rendering of the fingers, while the tints of the colours have become brighter and less subtle. Peculiar to this tanka is the artist’s use of swaying streams of light that seem to come from a source beyond the frame of the tanka along the top.

Figure 5.8: Illustration of White Tara label entry found in the 1969 Asia Society hosted exhibition titled The Art of Tibet. 89

By the 2003, the Himalayas An Aesthetic catalogue (ARTIC 2003) had become the manifestation of the ‘funny animal’ referred to by Dana Arnold in this chapter’s opening quote. All of its 187 artefacts are beautifully illustrated in colour and harmoniously positioned on the page with text in close proximity. This catalogue is very attractive and a ‘saleable’ component of the exhibition. 90 Its ‘bulky’ 307 pages conform to the consuming visitors’ expectations. Nor is the scholar disappointed. Not only are previously unpublished artworks illustrated and described, there are new insights to be gained from the translations of the Tibetan inscriptions which appear for many of the artefacts. 91 The catalogue also included an innovative forensic insight by providing verso photographs of two thankas. 92 The revelation of the previously hidden calligraphic inscriptions is a rare opportunity for those who do not ordinarily have access to older thankas.

90 At the symposium, hearsay reported that the Chicago Institute shipment of hard and soft back catalogues had sold out within the first days of opening.
92 For an example see catalogue number 114, Buddha Shakyamuni (illus. 136). Pal, P. 2003 Cat. No.114, pp. 174-175; (verso) inscrip. & transl. pp.290. The beautiful red calligraphy is written in the shape of a stupa.
In addition, their translations and commentary are invaluable historical references, a strong dating tool, sometimes giving the date or at least providing historic clues by naming individuals or events. For example, ARTIC 2003 catalogue number 127, *Portrait of the Great Translator Marpa*, the names mentioned in the inscription provided a link to historical events, which led the Tibetologist Amy Heller to state “Thus a date of post-1160 may be proposed for the painting” (illus. 136).93

Figure 5.1: The overall page layout for catalogue no. 116 Goddess Tara featured in 2003 catalogue. This is a two-page layout.94

The text entry for the ARTIC 2003 catalogue demonstrated the classic form that the recent catalogues have taken (see figure 5.1.). It does not include the story of Tara’s origin, nor her relationship with Avalokiteshvara as in earlier catalogues.

It has become a sophisticated weaving of visual fact and descriptive adjectives, which seamlessly inscribes the aesthetic experience on both the artefact and the reader. For example the sentence, “She [Tara] is accompanied by two other green goddesses who stand demurely on either side in deferential postures.” The sentence beautifully (re)constructs in words an interpretation of gendered western femininity. As a counterpoint to this sentence and written just two years before, Pal explains another two figures standing on either side of another deity, Vajradhara, the Primordial Buddha. The descriptive sentence reads, “He [Vajradhara] is flanked by two bodhisattvas, one of whom is blue and the other red. Curiously, both have terrifying, grinning faces, even though otherwise they resemble normal bodhisattvas” (illus.137a-b). Indeed, the stances of all four are almost identical, as if drawn to a formula so often referred to by earlier twentieth century writers and critics. The differences are gender, colour, hand positions and facial expression. From the descriptions, the Tara thangka is charmed with ‘soft’ feminine power while the Vajradhara thangka is charged with masculine power, even though Vajradhara sits compassionately upon his lotus seat. The textual descriptions have become not just a story of who the deities are and how to read the foreign elements, but also how to understand them. The reader is instructed on how to experience the aesthetics of the artefact pictured on that page.

Lenders

The 1969 NYAS art exhibition catalogue was important evidence of not only Tibetan art transformation by way of aesthetic appreciation, descriptions and individual images, but also the public acknowledgement that there were also private collectors of Tibetan objects. The public announcement of Tibetan artefacts as collectable was a strategic shift in value creation. The status of lenders such as New York art dealers Nasli Heeramanec and Doris Weiner, and

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private collectors such as the New York industrial chemist Braham Norwich, American Asian art connoisseur John Ford, and Stockholm carpet dealer Nils Nessim were important to the activation of the ‘informational’ cascade phenomenon.

The lenders for the 1969 exhibition included national and international museums and private collectors that were primarily based in Europe and the United Kingdom. Journalist and art historian John Canaday noted in his art review of the exhibition, that the lenders were “from museums and private collections around the world, or at least the parts of the world that are parts of ours.”

While Canaday noted that this did not include Tibet, however, Pal borrowed (19%) objects from the Tibetan-in-exile administrated Tibet House, New Delhi. Almost (70%) of the 1969 exhibition was borrowed from public institutions, including the Tibet House collection, (illus. 138a). The higher ratio of institutional to private lenders suggests that institutions held superior pieces in 1969. However, in 2003 the situation is reversed and Pal sources (75%) from private individuals or foundations (illus. 138b).

The lending statistics also illustrate that institutions were much stronger in the thangka category. For instance, of the 40 thangkas borrowed, Alice and Nasli Heeramanec, lent nine of the eleven that were privately-owned. These statistics suggest that individuals found it easier to appreciate Tibetan sculpture than thangkas, even though European curator Peter Potts considered that few Tibetan bronzes matched the “extraordinary beauty” of the Tibetan visionary paintings. The statistics for the 1969 exhibition also show that there were few large size sculptures in the NYAS 1969 exhibition, only four percent (two sculptures out of 50) were larger than 61 centimetres whereas, the majority (70%) were under 30 centimetres. The lack of monumental sculpture in 1969

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98 The New Delhi Tibet House was founded by H.H. the fourteenth Dalai Lama in 1965 to preserve Tibetan heritage. It also became a facility to store precious objects that self-exiled Tibetans carried out and chose not to sell to western merchants.
might explain why institutions were collecting thangkas rather than small objects, whereas private collectors had the luxury of intimately displaying small Tibetan sculpture on mantelpieces or side-tables. Entering the twenty-first century, both elite collectors and museums are demanding larger aesthetic-based museum quality masterpieces.

By the time of the ARTIC 2003 exhibition, there is a dramatic reversal in lenders. Again, Pal was selecting the exhibits but this time he has borrowed (75%) percent of the exhibition from private collectors compared to (32%) in 1969 (illus 138a-b). Interestingly only (50%) of those lenders were named in the 2003 catalogue—fifteen anonymous private collectors lent 71 of the 141 aesthetic masterpieces loaned from private collections. 100

Bibliography/scholarly mechanisms

The authority of art exhibition catalogues can be assessed on a number of points, including an initial judgement on the reputation of the hosting institution and the credentials of the curator. Presentation is important for the museum souvenir trade, whereas scholars and connoisseurs of Tibetan art judge art exhibition catalogues on the quality of the knowledge they impart. The accessibility of the information within is essential, especially a clean concise layout which seamlessly identifies and connects words and images.

Curators and art historians use scholarly mechanisms such as biographical data, stylistic analysis and referencing to showcase and add to the existing pool of knowledge. New catalogues eclipse the knowledge of previous catalogues. However, each catalogue is a link in the research chain. The bibliography of art exhibition catalogues has the same capacity to reference, maintain and transfer knowledge as other academic disciplines. Art historian McAllister Johnson wrote

100 A New York dealer stated that they had lent a number of artworks anonymously. Pers. comm. 2003.
that the "easiest way to identify a determining book might be to see whether it was immediately used, quoted, whether it aroused interest in the field and somehow generated new research and thought on an unprecedented scale."\textsuperscript{101}

This concept also applies to art exhibition catalogues. The catalogue for \textit{The Art of Tibet} exhibition was an important precedent and it continues to be referenced into the twenty-first century.

Until the NYAS 1969 catalogue, few authors had isolated and related particular stories to a single Tibetan artefact in the categorizing manner of late twentieth century art historians. Pal stated that, prior to 1969, very little had been written on Tibetan art. The majority of information was buried within travel stories. The bibliography of the 1969 exhibition catalogue includes 77 publications. It is worth noting that these include books written in German, French, Chinese and Italian. Over (30\%) of the publications selected were written by authors who entered Tibet either clandestinely such as Alexander David-Neel or as political diplomats such as Charles Bell and Hugh Richardson.\textsuperscript{102} The earliest publication mentioned in the 1969 bibliography is an 1869 publication in German, which was published in St Petersburg, Russia.\textsuperscript{103}

Twenty-seven percent of the entries in the bibliography were published in the ten years between the flight of His Holiness the fourteenth Dalai Lama in 1959 and the publication of the NYAS 1969 exhibition catalogue. Such evidence reinforces my earlier argument that the changed socio-political context of Tibet heightened public and scholarly interest in Tibet and its culture. In an interview with art historian Jane Casey Singer, Pal confided that his main point of

\textsuperscript{101} Johnson, W. 1988: 45.

\textsuperscript{102} For example, Waddell entered Tibet as chief medical officer with the British Younghusband expedition in 1903/04 for an account see Waddell 1998 [1905]. David-Neel, French national, disguised herself as a regional Tibetan nun, and in the company of a young Tibetan monk, claimed to have entered Tibet. See her account in David-Neel 1940. Her claim to have entered Tibet is under some controversy. For further information on this controversy and her life see Foster, B. and Foster, M. 1998; Middleton, R. 1989.

\textsuperscript{103} The author Schieffner appears to have been a German fluent in Tibetan and residing in St Petersburg. He may have been studying the large Tibetan collection at the currently names State Hermitage Museum. He was tutor/mentor of Emil Schlagintweit who wrote \textit{Buddhism in Tibet: With an account of the Buddhist Systems preceding it in India} 1863.
reference was the three volumes of Giuseppe Tucci, *Tibetan Painted Scrolls* published in 1949. Pal stated, "I wrote the [1969] catalogue based largely on Tucci and one or two other books. There was little else." 104 Since the NYAS 1969 catalogue there has been a steady release of exhibitions and associated catalogues. Each new catalogue pursued the honour of being better than the last catalogue—more colour images, translations, larger and brighter artefacts.

In the ARTIC 2003 exhibition catalogue, Pal documented the use of 189 references in the bibliography, over double the number used in 1969. 105 Of these, just over (10%) of the bibliography was published before the 1969 catalogue, which highlights the increased interest in Tibetan material culture since 1969 (illus. 139). The greatest number, a total of (74%) of the books referenced were written between the years 1970 and 1999. A further (10%) of books were published in the three years prior to the 2003 exhibition. This last point underscores the advantage and speed at which information travels in the twenty-first century (illus. 139).

In the ARTIC 2003 catalogue, the Tucci references remain, but David-Neel and Waddell references are missing. Another author missing is Fokke Sierksma. Pal admits that the Sierksma’s theory that the harsh environment and reality of subsistence life resulted in demonic-styled gods and goddesses was a strong influence on him in 1969. Pal wrote in the NYAS 1969 catalogue’s introduction,

Equally compelling has been the influence of Tibet’s terrain and climate. In this vast and sparsely inhabited country—where people live in almost total isolation in a land of forbiddingly high mountains, untamed rivers, deep, precipitous gorges, and immense, waterless deserts—the harsh winter with their icy, howling winds, and violently variable weather, must have determined the subjective quality of the Tibetan mind. The nature and intensity of physical preoccupations and fears, together with associated hopes and despairs, seem not only to have conditioned the character of the Tibetan’s life but also

105 Included in the references are 30 publications by Pal. Four of these were co-authored. Pal, P. 2003: 298-301. It should also be noted that this was an exhibition that also encompassed adjoining countries to Tibet.
to have shaped the form of his religion. Hence, these fears and predispositions have resulted in the creation, out of his subconscious, of the terrifying and demoniacal divinities, which in turn enslaved the minds of their creators.\footnote{Pal, P. 1969a: 13. Interestingly Pal references this section to “R. B. Ekvall, Religious Observances in Tibet: Patterns and Function (Chicago, 1964); also G. Tucci, Tibet: Land of Tibet and her culture. Snows (New York, 1967) for a general description of Tibet and her culture.” Ekvall was a missionary in the China-Tibet border.}

In the interview conducted in 2000 with Casey Singer, Pal stated, “I adopted some of his [Sierksma’s] views. I would not do so now, but at the time it seemed a worthwhile theory.”\footnote{Casey Singer, J. 2000.} Future catalogues are destined to rewrite past research. New research provides the discursive events in which to rethink, reattribute, redate, rettitle, and research.\footnote{Brettell, R. 1995: 166.} This is not unique to Tibetan art scholars, as noted by Fred Myers, the majority of scholars, and the public, access their knowledge of art through texts, not everyday experiences.\footnote{Myers, F. 1991: 32.} Catalogues, therefore, set standards, which subsequently becomes the benchmark that future catalogues seek to surpass. The scholarship and publishing innovations of Tibetan art catalogues culminates in the creation of a competitive environment.\footnote{This competitive shift was noted as early as 1952 by the editor of the Burlington Magazine, during a review of the new National [London] Gallery catalogue of its permanent collection. He wrote “The result will be to raise the level of future catalogues throughout the world, [the author] has set a standard of scholarship which others engaged on the same task are bound, consciously or unconsciously, to emulate.” Editorial. “The New National Gallery Catalogue.” 1952.} The increased exposure of Tibetan objects, and knowledge about them, through exhibitions and their catalogues adds value to the Tibetan art market in general.

The author may produce a catalogue, but it is the reader who uses the catalogue. The reader brings with them their experiences and knowledge, this forms a lens by which the reader interprets the information laid out by the author. Once the catalogue is released into the public domain it becomes public property open to critique—interpretation, categorization and selective judgment. Catalogues can be referred to, quoted from, copied and reprinted.
Even if the author has the opportunity to revise, the original text remains an historical and physical fact sitting on bookshelves. Pal understood the changing relationship of written discourse to power over time. He stated that,

It is for future generations to decide how much of this [his writing] will be judged valuable. But I do believe strongly that you should write and publish as much as you can. It does not matter, ultimately, if you get a sentence wrong. If 50 percent—even 30 percent—of what I have written endures, that would be phenomenal.  

Institutions and associated professionals maintain privileged positions, because they are publicly recognized as part of an authoritative process. The artworld has primary control over the strategies by which to generate new knowledge, reinforce the current, refute and/or wrest undesirable knowledge.  At this point of entry, new knowledge is subjected to, and constructed by, the framing narrative derived from dominant or preferred cultural meanings. New knowledge is mapped onto existing narratives, and as such, is legitimized because it conforms to them. The catalogue is an important frame through which new knowledge is dispersed.

Conclusion
Catalogues are publicly seen to author(ize) Tibetan art. They communicate in a prescribed manner, with a familiar language—the nexus of their words and images is a signifying system. Their repetition delineates the desirability of selected objects and their value.  Exhibition art catalogues are an extension to the exhibition and in general, they archive the focus and message of that exhibition. Catalogues are also vehicles by which new objects are introduced and

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112 Elden, S. 104-17.
113 Grierson, E. 2007: 5340-41
tested, with the intention of expanding the Tibetan art category. The catalogue operates as a platform encouraging the release of new research to fill gaps in intellectual endeavour. It is a persistent authenticating tool, which is used to reference future curatorial and object research. Exhibition catalogues are also lasting visual records, a memory prompt of objects, once they are removed from public view. Catalogues present the critical apparatus and the scientific rigour to evaluate the merits of a Tibetan objects.

Art exhibition catalogues validate the worth of an object. Inclusion in a publication sets the selected objects apart from those not selected. Furthermore, these objects carry the public reputation that they are museum-quality. "Value is inescapable" wrote art historian Steven Connor. No matter how objective the biographical statements appear to be, they are evaluative. Evaluations, or as Joseph Alsop prefers, "revaluations," are necessary in positioning objects in relation to other objects and in the creation of value. Alsop defined revaluation as "a kind of stock market of taste." The selection, exhibition and cataloguing of Tibetan artefacts was/is the first step in the commodification process. Without the evaluative tools in catalogues the 'desirability' of an object is less obvious due to the fact that for the majority of the objects lives they are publicly unavailable—stored in museum basements or private homes. Catalogues present an image window to those objects, which were previously exhibited and since returned to their owners. By exposing the

114 This is particularly important to the viability of artworlds. New collectors entertaining the idea of entering the field need a price range, such as the recent promotion of Tibetan rugs and the San Francisco Tibetan furniture exhibition, Kamansky, D. 2004. New categories are generally on the periphery and therefore affordable entry points for new enthusiasts.
115 Art museums suffer from the 'iceberg syndrome', where only a small percentage of their collection is out on display at any one time. Allen noted the Luce Foundation Center for American Art exhibits less than 5 percent of their collection; two innovations have the potential to change this. One is the use of open storage areas, where objects are stored in secure glass storage cases and can be compactly displayed in well-lit areas removed from the main exhibition rooms, but readily accessible to the public. The other innovation is the online inventory, especially if 3-D programs are employed in the construction of these sites. Allen, R. 2001.
evaluative practices used for the selection of objects for exhibition within the marketplace, the global commodification process is set in motion.

Art exhibition catalogues continue the process of bringing western criteria onto non-western objects.\textsuperscript{118} Catalogues open and create discursive networks, which define a consensus of knowledge by referencing and building upon a lineage of knowledge and narratives found in previous catalogues. This referencing process homogenizes what is selected, exhibited and catalogued as Tibetan art and adds value to those objects which fit the homogenized criteria. The reliance on a lineage of conforming catalogues and institutionalized rhetoric results in moderated narratives or as noted by the art historian Clement Greenberg, “Practiced taste speaks as if with one voice.”\textsuperscript{119}

However, as artefacts, art exhibition catalogues are not static. They create their own space, both in their own right—in time and location—despite the intentions of the curators.\textsuperscript{120} Within the confines of the catalogue cover, new walls are constructed and the artefacts are reconfigured differently to the exhibitions display. The objects are (re)presented to the reader anew, but at the same time memories are awakened and at the consumer’s leisure, the objects are re-appraised. The reader is at liberty to curate his or her own personal art exhibition. Curled on a couch or seated at a desk the entries are read and the images studied for the cues given in the catalogue text. Crammed with information and images the art exhibition catalogue is not designed to be read from cover to cover, but to be picked up for specific research or random perusal.\textsuperscript{121}

Catalogues are agents of the exhibitions they represent. The messages they carry are open to continuing interpretation, which makes their historical meanings at once variable and multiple, despite their focus at the time. Interpretations can

\textsuperscript{118} Myers, F. 1991: 29
\textsuperscript{119} Art Historian Clement Greenberg quoted in Carrier, D. 1987: 37.
\textsuperscript{120} Rankin, E. and Leibhammer, N. 1996: 185.
\textsuperscript{121} Shiff, R. 1988: 34.
be made beyond those intended by curators/authors, especially between present and future audiences. Art historian Françoise Forster-Hahn noted that the ephemera of exhibitions, such as catalogues, interleave the ideological premises of past exhibitions into the present and the future. She wrote that “the decoding of these often diverse meanings shift with the historic position of their contemporary and future audiences.”  

For example, my (re)viewing of the 1969 *The Art of Tibet* exhibition through its sole form of exhibiting documentation—its catalogue—constructs another layer of interpretation onto the one that was originally written. My contextualization of the era in which the 1969 exhibition was held is a (re)construction in relation to my argument. Catalogues become the historical presence that can be used to challenge perceived interpretations of the past and at the same time, demonstrate how they are part of the forgetting of ideas that are dominant in the present.

The next chapter focuses on New York Asia Week and the two primary mechanisms for the commodification of art—auctions and fairs. At both these events the agents are performers, whether they are dealer, consumer or museum curator—their actions tell a story. This story informs the market, such as what is selling or who is buying.

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Pratapaditya Pal (PP): ... We must work from the position that a museum is an artificial environment for all art.

Jane Casey Singer (JCS): Yes, but one that serves important functions.

PP: Of course. But more often than not the question I am asked is: what makes one object more beautiful than another? Whether the theoretician likes it or not I am confronted by this question from the Toms, Dicks and Harrys all the time. They ask, “Why do you say this is as good as an Impressionist painting?” So my primarily goal is to establish a yardstick for beauty in Himalayan art. After all, the price of an object is generally determined by its aesthetic quality.

JCS: And its rarity.

PP: Yes, but it has got to appeal to someone to pay a million bucks for it. You may say that this is crass commercialism, but that's true of art everywhere - all art has a price tag.¹

Once an exhibition is over, the exhibits are returned to their private owners or to the museum’s storerooms. The exhibition’s catalogue remains in circulation as an ongoing representative—for sale in bookstores, a reference on collectors bookshelves or a souvenir on an enthusiast’s coffee table. The illustrations and descriptions of art exhibition catalogues are important agents for the exhibited and other objects of similar appearance.

The ever present catalogue re-assures collector and investor confidence in the artworld value creation processes.² The catalogue records the benchmark set for museum-quality masterpieces. The global art market takes its cues from recent exhibitions and presents the public with the real possibility of owning similar masterpieces. Dealers and auction houses readily direct the potential consumer either to the object’s provenance or to the similarity of this object to another in

¹ The quote is taken from a longer interview with Pal by Jane Casey Singer. This interview was a short personal piece on Pal’s contribution and thoughts on the Tibetan artworld. It was also an early promotion for the 2003 Chicago exhibition, Himalayas An Aesthetic Adventure. Casey Singer, J. 2000.
² Thornton, S. 2008: 12.
the important catalogue. The public visibility of objects and their circulation is 
essential in the creation of value.\textsuperscript{3} Even the fixed locations of museum objects 
are enveloped within the value process. Their very existence excites desire and 
influences the selling and buying trends of consignees, dealers, auction houses 
and collectors.

Once the exhibition is dismantled, it is not unusual to find lender exhibition 
pieces being presented for sale, particularly at the premium art sales held during 
New York Asia Week (illus. 140; 141). Creating value is a social process. In 
reference to sociologist George Simmel’s definition of economic value, 
anthropologist Arjun Appadurai stated that value, “is never an inherent property 
of objects, but is a judgement made about them by subjects.”\textsuperscript{4} The pinnacles of 
value in art, those designated as masterpieces, emerge from the constant 
authoritative discourse and critical appreciation. Take this ‘chatter’ away and 
their immediate value falls, such as in reattribution cases.\textsuperscript{5} For example, when 
\textit{The Man with the Golden Helmet} was reattributed to someone other than 
Rembrandt its value fell to one-twentieth of its former estimate and since then it 
has fallen into obscurity, even though it was better known than Leonardo’s \textit{Mona Lisa}.\textsuperscript{6}

New York Asia Week is a public performance space, where media and enthusiasts 
acknowledge the activities and prices paid by museums, collectors and 
connoisseurs to dealers and auction houses. At the same time as bringing 
together all the different Asian artworlds, the individual artworlds, such as the 
Tibetan or Japanese, have the opportunity to network, host and attend events in 
their specific field. Interest in, and the collection of Tibetan art, brings

\textsuperscript{3} Appadurai, A. 2001.
\textsuperscript{4} Appadurai, A. 2001: 76.
\textsuperscript{5} For an interesting discussion on the importance of social opinions and action on values. See 
\textsuperscript{6} Friedrich, O. “The Man with the Golden Helmet.” 1985
consumers into an art subculture, where meaning and ideologies are shared.\textsuperscript{7} Anthropologists John Schouten and James Alexander describe three stages of membership to a subculture. The first is experimenting with identity—does it fit? The second is identifying and conforming to the constraints of the subculture. The third is full immersion, accepting and internalizing the subcultures governance, discourse and values.\textsuperscript{8}

To belong to a subculture, the consumer must know how to behave at these events. By the time they reach the full immersion level, they understand the language and can engage in informed discussion on the finer points of Tibetan art. A key to successful performance is to know how to use the language. Communications academic Charlene Elliott stated that “language is used to perform connoisseurship so that the person of taste establishes his or her superiority.”\textsuperscript{9} Asia Week offers the opportunity to network and display these language capabilities. Conversely, the Week also provides the opportunity to perform in an open marketplace where the capacity to consume can override the lack of language skills. In the publicly accessible arena of fairs and auctions, the consumer’s knowledge and performance is not openly challenged because at that time consuming is all important. During these events, the act of consuming is a status-making opportunity, especially for new entrants to the artworld subculture.\textsuperscript{10}

This chapter is divided into four sections. The first discusses the Asia Week experience, while the second and third discuss the activities of fairs and auctions, respectively. To give a sense of the immediacy of Asia Week’s appeal, I begin the sections on fairs and auctions with vignettes drawn from my fieldwork

\textsuperscript{8} Schouten, J. and McAlexander, J. 1995: 55.
\textsuperscript{9} Elliott, C. 2006: 232.
\textsuperscript{10} In Jerry Saltz article on Fairs, Christie’s representative, Amy Cappellazzo comments that “buyers” as in contrast to collectors/connoisseurs get a “rush” out of buying art in an open marketplace provided by Fairs. Saltz, J. 2005b: 23.
observations of these events during October 2004, March 2005 and April 2006. Under the section heading, *Performing Status: Uptown and Downtown Fairs*, I discuss the performance of status and how this is exemplified by similarities and differences between the Uptown and Downtown Fairs. The heat of bidding at auction is in contrast to the composed stroll amongst the dealer’s booths at either of the Fairs. The events presented in *The practice of seduction: Auctions* are at once highly scripted, yet also performative and chaotic. Auctions test the markets’ interest and set monetary benchmarks for similar objects. The fourth section, *The consuming spectacle—value creation*, questions the recognized relationship of price tag to status and aesthetic value against the value of public possession and status.

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**The Asia Week Experience**

The foremost New York Asia Week is held annually in spring (late March-early April), while a smaller event takes place in autumn (late September-early October). The consumer has the opportunity to purchase a range of artworks: from museum-quality masterpieces to decorative objects; from old to contemporary; from the traditional to the avant-garde. Sociologist Sarah Thornton noted that participating within an artworld “is extremely appealing.” But not all attendees can afford or intend to consume. For some, New York Asia Week is an annual pilgrimage where they participate in elite performances, such as: attending gallery openings; discussing the latest collection trends with museum curators; or, the latest sales records with international dealers. The public nature of New York Asia Week, on the one hand, avoids the necessity of

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11 The activities of New York Asia Week stretch across almost two weeks. Generally, auctions and their previews fill the first week. The Downtown Fair opens midweek until Sunday, whereas, the Uptown opens a day or two later and finishes later in the next week. Exhibition dates for the dealers outside the Fairs coincide with the auction and fair dates, as do public museum exhibitions.

12 Thornton, S. 2007: 34.
intimate client-dealer relations, and on the other hand, provides an essential audience to witness and validate those who do consume.\textsuperscript{14}

Prior to the inception of New York Asia Week in the 1990s, quality Asian works were included within the International Fine Art Fair held mid-year in New York. Interested individuals, like the earlier collectors, either travelled to scattered destinations or relied on local dealers and international contacts to furnish them with objects. By the 1960s, Asian tourist trails were well worn as Americans made their way to Asia, some attracted by Asia’s material culture and artefacts.\textsuperscript{15} One such eminent collector of Asian art today, is John Ford (illus. 142a-f). He first travelled to India and Nepal in 1963 and in quick succession took a further three collection trips. Ford admits that as a young man of the sixties, the virility, desire and sexuality of the Himalayan sculptures appealed to him, but he has come to appreciate the spirituality of the objects as he has matured.\textsuperscript{16} He wrote that this “fortified me in the ability to make judgments about the arts that were foreign to my training but resonated in my mind and heart—leading to the acquisition of over 150 pieces by 1970.”\textsuperscript{17} Since then, source nations have become increasingly circumspect over access and ownership of their cultural heritage and travelling to buy is not as appealing or as productive as it was then.\textsuperscript{18} In the last decade, it has become increasingly difficult to remove historical material from source countries legally.

The initial stages of New York Asia Week began in 1992 with the introduction of the Arts of Pacific Asia Show (Downtown) to the New York art scene. It acquired

\textsuperscript{14} On the importance of collective witnessing see, Jarvenpa, R. 2003.
\textsuperscript{15} Pal, P. 2001: 7. For a tale on the activities of American counterculture youth in India at this time. See Baker, D. 2008.
\textsuperscript{16} Doran, V.C. 2001: 82.
\textsuperscript{18} However, at this time those Tibetans fleeing into exile often had to sell their possessions. The previous chapter observed the private and public acquisition of Tibetan objects prior to 1969. \textit{New York Times} journalist Nancy L. Ross noted that a “self-styled representative of the Dalai Lama” the “Chiniya” Lama had set himself-up in a monastery at Bodhnath, one of the three old Royal principalities just outside of Kathmandu. He is fluent in English and readily receives foreign guests. Ross stated “His house is filled with Tibetan treasures, some of which he may be induced to part with—for a price.”
a significant global reputation with the inception of the International Asian Art Fair (Uptown) in 1996. This was lauded an immediate success. The *New York Times* critic Rita Reif reports that the inaugural Uptown Fair sold an estimated USD25,000,000 between almost 50 world-leading Asian art dealers from eight countries. In this same week, ten auction sales made another USD21 million. Commenting on the inaugural 1996 Spring International Asian Art Fair the dealer Robert H. Ellsworth is reported to have said “Even if you spent a year going around the world, you would never be able to see all the Asian art exhibited here.” New York Asia Week is an exhausting and exhilarating few weeks of events criss-crossing Manhattan.

In 2006, under the heading, *Artistic Treasures Take Manhattan During Asia Week*, the *New York Times* art critic Roberta Smith reported,

> Asia Week is upon New York, and it is bigger than ever. Two substantial Asian art fairs have taken over the Seventh Regiment Armory on Park Avenue, at 67th Street, and the Gramercy Park Armory, on Lexington Avenue at 26th Street. And about two dozen special gallery exhibitions are spread around the Upper East Side. Timed to coincide with the fairs and mounted by local and visiting dealers, some are sublime. Quite a few are at a single address — the Fuller Building at 57th Street and Madison Avenue.

The activities of the March 2006 New York Asia Week provide a representative sample of activities. The broadsheet-style newspaper, *Asian Art* included a comprehensive 16 page ‘pull-out’ of the activities during New York Asia Week. Throughout its 40 pages individual dealers advertised that they would be in New York for Asia Week. The central pages of the ‘pull-out’ included a map of Manhattan and a gallery/event directory (illus. 143). Apart from the usual street grid and landscape features, the map marks 47 separate Asia Week activities (illus. 144a-d). The other 16 pages of the pull out section include: five pages of

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19 *NYT* art critic Roberta Smith states that Asia Week did not exist before the International Asian Art Fair, but perhaps that is because she views the Downtown Fair as the Uptown’s “less patrician rival.” Smith, R. “Artistic Treasures Take Manhattan.” 2006.
advertising, with editorials and illustrations for 19 dealers; commentary; two pages advertising the separate Fairs; two pages of museum reviews; and a further two pages detailing the Sotheby’s and Christie’s auctions to be held during Asia Week.

The enthusiasm of collectors and dealers during the New York Asia Week and the pace of the fairs and auctions is a barometer of the global state of the Asian art. The media, individuals and interested parties watch and gossip about what is being sold, or not being sold; who is buying and who is not. The overall performances of New York Asia Week is reported globally in daily newspapers, such as the New York Times, and in international art magazines, such as Orientations, Arts of Asia, Art Newspaper and Art and Auction.24 Like other markets, New York Asia Week is affected by economic downturns and commercially adverse events such as the New York World Trade Centre attack on September 11, 2001 (9/11) and the Severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) outbreak. The first Asia Week held after 9/11 was disrupted by the mobilization of America’s National Guard, which required the use of their indoor parade grounds. The parade rooms had been in regularly use by fair conveners since the early 1900s.25 The Uptown and Downtown Fairs had to find alternative venues for their events. The Uptown Fair set up under a marquee in Lincoln Park. This did not dampen their opening benefit night, which attracted 1,000 attendees, including 100 museum curators. The Downtown Fair removed to the Hasbro Building. Despite the ongoing world apprehension over future events, New York Asia Week was well attended.26 New York Asia Week sales profit from a strong domestic customer base, which is also augmented by absentee and telephone bids.27

24 A more recent phenomenon has been the reporting of art events such as Asia Week by online publishers such as Art.Net.
25 For example, in 1913 the first large-scale exhibition of mostly French Modernist painters was held in an armory. The show included Cezanne, Picasso, Degas and Gauguin, many in America were shocked. Such controversy guaranteed brisk ticket sales. McLoughlin, M. 1995.
27 London based dealer participating in the Uptown Fair, John Eskenazi, estimated that (85%) of his clients are American. Nguyet, T. 2004: 14. Christie’s and Sotheby’s are both experimenting with online bidding and real-time video proceedings.
New York Asia Week is reminiscent of the historical international expositions, which brought together international and local sellers, buyers and visitors. While the focus of these historical Fairs was not solely on Asia, they did have an impact on America’s reception, appreciation and collecting of Asian objects. For example, at the Chicago 1893 International Columbian Exposition Fair the Japanese built an intimate temple complex (Hō-ō-Den) in which they exhibit selected artworks. It was the Japanese government’s intention to highlight their civilization against the Asiatic Other, especially the Chinese, who were located on the Midway Plaisance. At the invitation of the Japanese government, the temple furnishings were coordinated by Boston Museum of Fine Arts curator Ernest Fenollosa. The credentials of Fenollosa and the museum-quality exhibits inspired elite Americans to consider collecting Japanese artworks (illus. 146c-d).

The 1939 and 1940 New York World Fair, “Building the World of Tomorrow” is another fair that highlighted the historical strength and depth of the Asian art market in New York. Japan had two representations inside the Fair—a pavilion sponsored by the government and a display in the Hall of Nations, sponsored by Japanese business whereas, war-torn China did not have a pavilion at the Fair. In the 1940 season of the New York World Fair, China was represented by the American Bureau of Medical Aid to China (ABMAC). However, New York dealers took the opportunity to represent China. Significantly, 15 of the 17 Oriental art

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28 The Midway Plaisance was also known as the pleasure mall. This long strip housed entertainment, eateries, shops and homes of many nationalities from German beer houses to Moroccan and Arab villages to a Chinese Joss House and restaurant. According to historian Steve Conn the 1893 Chicago Fair was responsible for weakening the ‘generic Asian’ object category. Conn, S. 2000: 166.

29 Amongst other achievements, Fenollosa founded the Tokyo Fine Arts Academy in 1888. His collection of Japanese art was bought for the MFA and he returned to be its curator in 1890. Brooks V.W. 1962.

30 The Fair had two seasons from April to October, 1939 and 1940, thereby avoiding the winter months.

31 Cotter, B. 2009: China pp.122; Japan pp.61. At the time, not only was China in the throes of a Civil War, it was also battling with an aggressive Japan to the north, which in 1931 had already entered Chinese controlled Manchuria and created the puppet state of Manchukuo. In 1933, the Japanese seized the neighbouring province of Jehol. For a brief account of Japanese activity in China at this time, see Tsuzuki, C. 2000.
dealers listed in the May 1939 *Parnassus* journal featured Chinese objects. A review of five of these exhibitions by Martha Davidson in the same magazine stated,

Coincident with the launching of the World’s Fair are the openings of several midtown exhibitions of Chinese art which will, in sum, fill the gap left by the unfortunate absence of a Chinese pavilion at the Flushing exposition. The exhibits cover a wide range from ancient to modern times.  

She reviewed an “extraordinary collection of Chinese paintings at the Kelekian Galleries, which dated from the Sung Dynasty to Ch’ing Dynasties (906-1912).”

The Japanese firm Yamanaka and Company included in their exhibition of Chinese sculpture, pottery, paintings and bronzes, two stone figures from the limestone caves of T’ien Lung Shan (c.700). Another exhibition reviewed by Davidson was modern Chinese paintings of scenes set in landscape. She noted they were colourful, decorative and more “ethnographic than artistic.” In two other exhibitions, Mrs Owen Roberts at the Montrose Gallery and the Arden Gallery both hosted Chinese exhibitions whose proceeds were to benefit destitute women and children in China (illus. 150a-d).

While China and Japan were represented as cultural and artistic nations, Tibet was being (re)presented in a ‘girlie’ show. The New York World Fair re-used the Jehol Bendix temple exhibited at the 1933-1934, A Century of Progress International Exposition, Chicago. It was stripped of its ecclesiastical fittings and laid bare for a fictional drama of a Tibetan lama undergoing a yearly trial of his celibacy. The spruiker announced,

It might sound strange and a trifle incongruous having lovely girls in front of the million dollar temple of Jehol whose gold leaf roof you can see over the top of this façade, but the fact is that we have a girlie show in here and a good one. The author of the book, Forbidden Tibet, Horizon Hunters and technical advisor of the picture, Lost Horizon, he doesn’t want his good name...
associated with this scandalous enterprise as brought back from the land of the lost horizon, those Terpsichordion aphrodisiacs, the love temptation dancers from the lamaseries of Tibet. A lama is a Buddhist priest and as such, he must remain celibate. He must be deaf to the calls of the flesh, immune to the pangs of passion, and averse to the charms of beautiful women. In other words he must not marry or anything.\(^{37}\)

The visibility of selected Japanese and Chinese objects, and the participation of international dealers, connoisseurs, elite consumers and museum curators encouraged the public to view this art positively, activating ‘informational’ cascades. This was not the case for Tibetan objects, which were now relegated to the role of props in a risqué ‘girlie’ performance. However, on another level the sensual performances under the gold tiles could be seen to be responding to the sensuality of Tibetan art—naked forms, movement, color. This sensuality was not lost on the later sixties counterculture. The appeal to the senses, especially the eye, remains central to enjoying Tibetan art. Catalogue entries for Tibetan masterpieces in the twenty-first century employ descriptive sensuous language that encourages the eye to travel across curves and folds, discriminating detail and embodying the experience. For example, in 2008 the description of the thirteenth century Vairocana thangka which sold for almost USD1,500,000 in The Ideal Image: Eight Masterpieces of Indian and Southeast Asian Art, used many descriptive words and phrases to engage the senses, such as: “harmoniously arranged figures;” “beautifully juxtaposed colour fields and balanced composition;” “elegantly poised cloth ties on Vairocana’s shoulders and the exquisitely rendered lotus petals” (illus. 12b). Without seeing the image, such words paint a beautiful image on the inner eye.

New York Asia Week is an extensive international affair originally one week long, it had stretched to three weeks by 2008. Taking 2006 as a sample Asia Week, there were over 180 participating dealers.\(^{38}\) Smith wrote that the 2006 March

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\(^{37}\) This was delivered by Herbert I. Taffae and was recorded in 2007. Museum of Learning.

\(^{38}\) Advertised in International Asian Art Fair directory, March 2006; Arts of Pacific Asia Show directory, March 2006; and Asian Art Newspaper, March 2006.
Asia Week “is bigger than ever.”39 The main venues were the Arts of Pacific Asia Show (Downtown), the International Asian Art Fair (Uptown) and the Fuller Building. Apart from the attractive booth arrangements at the Fairs, 25 dealers advertised specific thematic exhibitions. For example, at the Fuller Building the London dealers, Rossi and Rossi, hosted Auspicious Emblems: Form and Function in Indian and Himalayan Ritual Art, while in his gallery Carlton Rochell hosted the Realms of the Gods, which also included Himalayan art.40 On the opposite side of 57th Street to the Fuller Building, the London-based gallery Eskenazi exhibited early Chinese bronzes at the Pace Wildenstein Gallery.41

Also featured during Asia Week(s) were Asian art exhibitions hosted by 34 public institutions and museums based in New York and its vicinity. Apart from the Newark Museum’s permanent Tibetan Buddhist Altar and Tibetan Information Zone exhibitions, they also advertised an ongoing exhibition, Court Ladies and Courtesans: Private Worlds in Old Japan. Also in New Jersey was the Princeton University exhibition, Worldly Guardians of the Buddhist Law. In New York, the MET hosted multiple exhibitions apart from their permanent displays of Asian art. They were: The ‘Hundred Antiques’ in Chinese Textiles; The Fabric of Life: Ikat Textiles of Indonesia; Pearls of the Parrot of India: the Emperor Akhar’s Illustrated Khamsa, 1597-98; Glimpses of the Silk Road: Central Asia in the First Millennium. The New York Asia Society (NYAS) hosted A Passion for Asia: The Rockefeller Family Collects, which celebrated the Rockefeller legacy, begun when John D. Rockefeller 3rd founded the NYAS 50 years earlier.

In the first week of the 2006 New York Asia Week Sotheby’s and Christie’s held ten auctions. This also included the opportunity to preview the objects before the sale. At Sotheby’s the auctions included: the Jucker Collection of Himalayan

40 Carlton Rochell spent the first 18 years of his career at Sotheby’s, where he founded the Indian and Southeast Asian Art Department in 1988. He handled important works of art from such well-known collections as Mrs Nelson Rockefeller, Alice Heeramanek, Mrs James Alsford and Earl Morse. Later, he became the Managing Director of China and Southeast Asia and Head of the Asian Departments worldwide, as well as a highly regarded auctioneer. Rochell website.
41 Note that the Pace Wildenstein Gallery operated between 1993-2010, before and after this it was/is known as the Pace Gallery.
Painting; Indian and Southeast Asian Art; Chinese Works of Art; and Chinese Contemporary Art. At Christie’s the auctions were: Japanese Works of Art—Property of the MET; Korean Art—including The Robert Moore Collection of Korean Art; Fine Chinese Ceramics and Works of Art; Important Chinese Snuff Bottles from the J & J Collection, Part III; The Collection of Evelyn Annenberg Hall—Fine Chinese Ceramics and Works of Art; and, Indian and Southeast Asian Art. These auctions featured 116 Tibetan objects, while another 81 Tibetan Buddhist objects were produced in the neighboring Himalayan regions of Bhutan, Nepal and Mongolia.

In 2006, as with earlier New York Asia Weeks, Tibetan art featured alongside the other Asian arts. There were a small number of dedicated Himalayan art specialists, such as previously mentioned, Rossi and Rossi, and Carlton Rochell. On the individual dealers’ pages for the Downtown Fair, eight dealers used Tibetan art images as their signature, while only three noted Tibet as an inventory keyword. In the Uptown Fair only one dealer used a Tibetan image, while four dealers referred to Himalayan or Tibet as inventory keywords. However, strolling down the aisles the consumer would notice more Tibetan art than was suggested in the Fair booklets.

If this was the Tibetan enthusiast’s first visit to New York Asia Week there were also the larger permanent Tibetan exhibitions at Newark and Jacques Marchais museums to visit, while smaller exhibits were displayed at the MET, AMNH, Brooklyn and Roerich museums. Dedicated to the exhibition of Himalayan art the Rubin Museum of Art exhibited Holy Madness: Portraits of Tantric Siddhas (illus. 144c). At Tibet House, founded by Robert Thurman and Richard Gere under the auspices of H.H. the fourteenth Dalai Lama, there was a display of contemporary watercolours of Tibetan landscapes and architecture by Michel Peissel (illus. 144d).

Asia art week advanced from small beginnings in 1992, when the American partnership of Bill Caskey and Elizabeth Lees added the Arts of Pacific Asia Show
to the annual New York art fair calendar. New York Asia Week ‘became’ the distinctive New York Asia Week with the addition of the International Asia Art Fair in 1996 and its association with the prestigious NYAS. 42 The late New York dealer Khalil Rizk encouraged and negotiated with British-based prestige fair organisers, Anna and Brian Haughton, the NYAS and other leading New York dealers to initiate the International Asian Art Fair. 43 The inauguration of this fair focused the attention of both elite collectors and dealers specifically onto Asian art.

Fieldwork Vignette: Visiting the New York Asia Art Fairs

It is a pleasant spring morning and I have decided to walk from my hotel to the Arts of Pacific Asia Show—the Downtown Fair. Typical New York City—scores of yellow taxis, horns hooting, office workers clutching large take-away cups of Starbucks coffee and mothers pushing strollers. As I walk down, the ritzy shopfronts of Midtown fall away and are replaced by convenience stores and neighbourhood eateries, which are tucked underneath brick tenement buildings. Rusty emergency ladders, air-conditioning units mounted on window ledges and chained-up children’s bikes in the street are evidence of families living in the apartments all around me. Bikes, garbage bins, advertising billboards and pockets of people in animated conversation congest and narrow the sidewalks.

My first sight of the Downtown Fair is not flattering (illus. 147a-b; 148a-b). The discoloured solid red-brown brick walls, the pollution stained sandstone detail and the temporary scaffolding weigh on the building. Add to this the military personnel standing outside in battle fatigues. The military presence should not be a surprise because both the Downtown and Uptown Fairs have been held in the parade rooms of U.S. Armories over a number of years. 44 The military have always been visible. But the recent memory of the 9/11 attacks makes the military presence more disconcerting than it might otherwise have been for an art event.

42 For information on their organizations see Haughton International website; Caskey Lees website. Journalist Roberta Smith noted that Asia Week became an event with the inception of the Uptown Fair. Smith, R. “Artistic treasures take Manhattan during Asia Week,” 2006.
43 Mason, B. “Asian Art fair cancelled.” 2009. The economic uncertainty cancelled the International Asian Art Fair. However, this did not mean the demise of New York Asia Week, many of the activities continued, such as the Arts of Asia Pacific Fair, the Fuller Building, auction houses and institutional exhibitions.
44 In 2004, the 9/11 events closed the Armories for public usage, which meant the Uptown and Downtown Fairs went elsewhere for that year.
I enter the Gramercy Park Armory foyer and purchase an entrance ticket. I am handed a small bound glossy booklet featuring a full-page colour advertisement for each of the participating dealers. Conveniently placed at the beginning of the booklet is a map of how the parade room has been divided into exhibition booths (illus 149). Next to this is an abbreviated list of the dealers and their booth numbers. There is an air of activity—a level hum of conversation and a steady stream of people walking up and down the aisles. The pace is leisurely and calm. As I make my way around the exhibits, I question if this composed demeanour is generated by the museum/exclusive retail-like booth installations and their expectations that Asian art is to be reverently viewed—in isolation and in hushed conversation. The organizers have constructed an intimate space by strategically lowering the ceiling with flowing white fabric. The booths are lined with coloured paper of the dealers’ choice to highlight their spotlight exhibits (illus. 150a–b).

It is mid-morning and food aromas issuing from the café in the corner interrupt my reverie. I sit with a disposable cup of coffee and watch the people passing. There are couples strolling arm-in-arm, wheelchairs being pushed around, gentlemen leaning on walking sticks. Off duty exhibitors wander the aisles, evaluating audience interest and their own prospects compared to their competitors. There are interested-bodies whose eyes roam tirelessly across the exhibits and there are those already visually exhausted—overloaded by the scale of stimuli. I over-hear a conversation between two acquaintances whose paths have just crossed. After greeting each other, the conversation turns to the Fairs. One commented that they had already been up to the International Asian Art Fair and that this Downtown Fair is much nicer, it is friendlier and you can afford something. It is time to leave and take the Metro to 67th Street, to the Uptown Fair.

It is a relief to leave the stuffy subway and breathe the cool fresh air. I am greeted with wide avenues, green grass, bursting blossoms and tulips about to bloom. Close by stands the New York Asia Society. The International Asian Art Fair is housed in the Seventh Regiment Armory. The horizontal and vertical outlines of the pale sandstone detail contrasts with the building’s red brick, which has a lighter and cleaner presence than the downtown Gramercy Park Armory. A lace network of white blossom trees veils the building. An awning matching the colour of the red bricks protects the stairs from the weather and invites guests to ascend (illus. 151a–b). From the outset an Asian scene has been suggested—space, simplicity, blossom and colour. The entrance is decorated with four brightly coloured yellow columns, tall vases of floral decoration and mirrors concealing the military paraphernalia (152a–b). The monumental effect is powerful. Even before buying an entry ticket, all miscellaneous items must be coat-checked and photo identity sighted. I pick up a large glossy catalogue, which like the Downtown catalogue has full-page colour advertisements, a dealers list and a floor plan (illus. 153).

The first notable difference is sound. Wispy notes of the Japanese shakuhachi float through the air, softening conversations and masking the air-conditioning
hum. Another difference is the creation of open space along the aisles by using monumental decorative detail, such as, an avenue of tatami matting, red carpet strips, large bamboo poles, sheer fabric screens, floral displays and mood lighting (154a-b). Here the dealers don’t wander—they are either on mobile telephones or in avid discussion with clients. The style of the Uptown Glorious Food Bar and Restaurant contrasts with the Downtown Canard Café. The Uptown bar and restaurant is central to proceedings and features white cloth napkins, pots of miniature daffodils, a visible chef in a tall crisp white hat and serving staff in white jackets and black ties. The Downtown café is tucked into a corner and features take away coffee and convenience foods. Like the restaurant, the Uptown objects appear bigger and brighter than Downtown. The price tags are bigger too, but they are not visible. If you have to ask the price, you can’t afford it.

Performing Status: Uptown and Downtown Fairs

The Uptown and Downtown New York Asia Art Fairs are designed for different markets (illus. 159; 160). The Uptown Fair is within walking distance of a number of New York elite institutions, such as, NYAS, Sotheby’s and the MET. The Downtown Fair is in lower Manhattan amongst fast food cafes and residential tenements. In 1999, the New York Times art critic Holland Cotter wrote that the Arts of Pacific Asia Show (Downtown) was

A down-market version of the Asian Art Fair, the show is geared primarily to the cash-and-carry transaction: it is light on big-time masterworks, but dense with objects that might serve as decorative accessories for the home. (Many of the ritzy items uptown will, of course, be used for the same purpose)\(^4^5\)

Six years later Cotter wrote that the Downtown Fair

has an ambience very much its own: informal, neighbourly, kookier even. Booths tend to be small, but so does the art, much of which is kind of a mini-version of what’s uptown. And were I the collecting type, I’d be more than happy to walk away with some of what’s here.\(^4^6\)

\(^4^6\) Cotter, H. “Art Review: Asia Week is Here, There, Everywhere.” 2005.
The Downtown Fair offers collectibles for every pocket, while the Uptown Fair focuses on presenting museum-quality art for the elite market, especially to museum curators and the connoisseurs. It is general practice for the Downtown Fair to open a day or two before the Uptown. Another practice, also referred to by Arts of Asia editor Tuyet Nguyet, is the progression of Uptown dealers to the Downtown Fair on opening day. She wrote,

But it is possible for collectors and especially experienced dealers to find a bargain here [Downtown Fair] if they are knowledgeable and have keen eyes. That is why so many dealers patiently queued at the first day to look for merchandise to buy ahead of collectors.

Both Fairs consist of individual dealers buying booth space.47 In 2006, the Uptown Fair had 53 booths. A small number were shared between dealers. In the same year, the Downtown Fair had just over 80 booths and again a small number of these were shared. In addition, another dozen or so credentialed dealers were located in or near the Fuller Building on 41st East 57th Streets, with many more located throughout Manhattan (illus. 157a-b). All this activity resulted in a vast array of artworks ranging in quality and price. For those interested, Fairs provide the perfect opportunity to learn, practice connoisseurship and to be seen buying access into a subculture.

The longevity, expertise, reputation of the dealer and the quality of their stock determines which fair is appropriate for which dealer. Dealers trade on their reputation. Acceptance into a particular fair acknowledges a dealer’s position within the industry.48 While dealers sell high-status artworks, they are also promoting and enhancing their own status as important and trusted agents. The dealer’s reputation provides a guarantee of authenticity and an expectation that they have disclosed all relevant facts known to them, such as condition and provenance.49 Clients speak with confidence when they state which dealer they

47 Two separate companies produce the Fairs. The British fair organisers, Anna and Brian Haughton, run the Uptown Fair and Americans, Bill Caskey and Elizabeth Lees, run the Downtown Fair. Haughton International website; Caskey Lees website.
acquired their works of art from. Pre-eminent art dealers sell status symbols.\textsuperscript{50} Furthermore, each dealer’s provenance underwrites the objects’ value. The dealers name acts as a marketing brand associated with status commodities.

At both Fairs, the dealers are obliged to put their stock up for independent vetting. The artworks are examined before the fair opens to ensure descriptions and quality meet the standards of the fair. The rationale for vetting is succinctly printed in the 2006 International Asian Art Fair catalogue opposite the list of sponsors, patrons and benefactors of the Asia Society benefit night.\textsuperscript{51} It reads:

There are two main reasons for vetting.

Firstly, the public need to be reassured that all items have been examined by the Honorary Vetting Committees to ensure, as far as possible, that they conform to the regulations laid down. Every article must be authentic and of the period stated. As potential purchasers may not have sufficient expertise themselves in a particular category, this assurance of authenticity will, we hope, inspire the confidence to buy.

Secondly, vetting offers a guarantee to the exhibitors and to the public that standards are being maintained at a high level. It is crucial to the commercial and academic success of such an event that its reputation, for only having the best in all categories, is never compromised. In this way, the integrity of the fair and the reputation of the exhibitors is ensured.\textsuperscript{52}

The purpose of vetting is to engender public trust that the artworks are authentic. This is important to the process of creating value, as is the trust in the authority of the authenticators, especially for those new to the Asian art market who may be less knowledgeable and rely on price as a guide.

\textsuperscript{50} Savage, G. 1969: 30-31.
\textsuperscript{51} Haughton. 2006: vetting pp.6; Benefit list pp.7. The placement of this vetting statement is significant. The NYAS benefit night is a grand performance open to all those that can afford a ticket, some of which may be new to the Asian artworld and would be heartened by such prominent assurances as the vetting statement.
\textsuperscript{52} Mowry, R.D. 2006: 6.
Like the vetting convention, the Fairs are dominated by invisible rules and practices that govern all performances. These are on show at the NYAS benefit night, which is held on the opening night of the International Asian Art Fair. This is an important event for the elite art collector and enthusiast and demarcates the possession of cultural capital. It is the performance event to be seen at—colourful, glamorous, exclusive and flowing with champagne. Entry is via purchased ticket and there are a range of prices. In 2006, the most expensive was the Collectors Reception and Dinner ticket at USD1,000. This included a tax-deductible component of USD850. This ticket entitled the purchaser to attend the preview night, followed by dinner at the Mandarin Oriental and unlimited returns to the Uptown Fair. The lowest price ticket was the Young Patrons Reception at USD150 with a tax deduction component of USD100, which entitled consumers of age 40 and under to enter and enjoy the ambience of the opening night an hour after the collectors entered. It is a night for the elite, the aspiring and the ambitious. The condition of entry is the entrance fee and the ‘ability’ to perform according to artworld expectations and to consume or at the very least, be a credible witness to acts of consumption.

There is an element of largesse and competition on the opening night as like-minded collectors meet in the same place at the same time. It is also an important fundraiser for the NYAS. In 1996 at the inaugural opening night of the Uptown Fair 1,125 ticket-holders raised USD75,000. Ten years later, a smaller crowd of 1,000 ticket-holders raised USD500,000. At the same time as being seen to be a benefactor to the NYAS, there is also the opportunity to be seen engaging in what economist Norman Ireland described as consumption signals. If correctly performed and witnessed these signals establish a higher status level than the

54 The opening nights of the International Fair and similar prestige functions are reported on in the social gossip pages, such as the online The New York Social Diary hosted by David Patrick Columbia. Columbia, P.D. Website. Formal attendance and sales are also reported in arts and Asian art magazines and newspaper.
55 Veblen notes that close proximity encourages competition and pushes conspicuous consumption to higher levels. Veblen, T. 2000 [1925]: 41.
consumer currently enjoyed. These events are opportunities to initiate contacts and expand networks. Successful consuming performances open access, this is especially important for aspirational and newcomers to Asian art.

Analysing the 2006 March Asian Art newspaper ‘pull-out’ and the Uptown and Downtown Fair exhibition directories, the following differences between the two Fairs can be interpreted (illus. 158). According to these sources, there were 187 dealers participating in New York Asia Week. Just over half (107 or 57%) of the dealers were American-based with booths in either of the two Fairs or in showrooms/suites external to the Fairs, such as the Fuller Building. Of these 59 (55%) were New York-based, which suggests that it was important to be part of New York Asia Week. There was twenty New York dealers at the Uptown Fair and fifteen at the Downtown Fair suggesting that if you were going to be at a Fair the preferred booth was Uptown. However, the cost and dealer status would have been an over-riding restriction to participation in the Uptown Fair. Another 24 New York dealers acknowledged their New York galleries as their base during Asia Week. Those dealers remaining in their galleries were most likely to be sponsoring a thematic exhibition, while the Uptown dealers set their works up to either invoke the disinterested air of the museum or to suggest the living-room walls or vestibules of the elite—monumental and dramatic. In contrast, the profusion of glass cabinets holding smaller works gave the Downtown an exclusive retail-store look.

In line with the larger number of New York dealers participating in the Uptown Fair was a larger number of dealers from Britain and Europe—29 dealers compared to the 18 dealers exhibiting in the Downtown Fair. A total of (72%) of the dealers with booths in the Uptown Fair were based in either New York or Britain/Europe, contrasting with the Downtown Fair of (37.5%). This disparity between the two Fairs reflects the fact that the Uptown Fair attracted and represented prominent international dealers from the global art centres. By contrast, the Downtown Fair attracted the secondary art centres, such as

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Australia, regional U.S. and Asia. Almost three-quarters (72.7%) of the 22 Asian art dealers which participated in the 2006 New York Asia Week had booths in the Downtown Fair. Furthermore, (63.6%) of these were Japan-based dealers. Of the 14 Japanese dealers participating in New York Asia Week, four participated in the Uptown Fair. There were two other Asian-based dealers operating in the Uptown Fair were from Thailand and Honk Kong. The strength of the Japan-based dealers reflects the historic association of Japanese antique traders based in New York prior to WWII, such as the Yamanaka and Company.

Interestingly, there were no China-based dealers present even though media reporters, such as Smith, noted that the strength of Chinese buyers had prompted a dealer focus on Chinese art.\(^57\) This observation was not strictly true if the exhibitor advertising in the Fair pamphlets is a true reflection of their booth content.\(^58\) Of the Uptown dealers there were 22 Chinese exhibitor images in contrast to 20 Japanese, which was (72.9%) of the exhibitors images in the Fair pamphlet. Of the 76 Downtown dealers with an identifiable culture focus for their exhibitor page, 24 had a Chinese focus and 24 a Japanese focus. These two cultural categories made up (63.1%). The next cultural categories at the Downtown Fair were eight dealers with a Tibetan focus and six dealers with an Indian focus. Whereas, the next two cultural categories at the Uptown Fair were four dealers with an Indian focus and two dealers with a Korean focus. There were no advertised Asia-based dealers operating outside the two Fairs. The majority of dealers operating outside the Fairs were American (82.4%). The high American dealer presence suggests one, a locality advantage, and two, a strong domestic market for Asian art, which supports these dealers all year round.

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\(^{57}\) Smith, R. “Artistic treasures take Manhattan during Asia Week.” 2006.

\(^{58}\) Here the assumption is that if the exhibitor page is Chinese then the dealers’ booth content would be more than 50% Chinese.
Fieldwork Vignette: Visiting the auction room

I am attending one of the last auctions during Asia Week, the Indian and Southeast Asian art sales, which includes Tibetan art. I enter the auction room with my auction catalogue tucked under my arm. Even though I am early, the auction room, with its scuffed plush carpet and faintly scratched wood panels, is filling up and more chairs are carried in. Snippets of animated conversation bubble around the room as people search for vantage points. A couple clutching their bidding paddle have claimed a safe viewing distance six rows in front of the auctioneers' podium. Once the auction attendees sit, they swivel about, looking for and waving to acquaintances. They also identify which elite collectors and dealers are present. The latter are leaning on the back wall with hands in pockets chatting together about the success of this year's Asia Week and who made sales during the week. Some of these will be bidding on behalf of private clients or museums. They have positioned themselves as invisible bidders and keen observers of those seated. The auction houses' telephonists and spotters stand chatting in tidy numbers clutching takeaway coffee cups.

It's almost 10.00am. The spotters take their official positions. The telephonists seat themselves behind their wooden panels on either side of the room. The electronic screen at the front of the room flicks on. The currency conversion board lights up and clicks over to zeros. It will simultaneously convert the auctioneers announced U.S. dollar bids into Euros, British Pounds, Swiss Francs, Hong Kong Dollars, Japanese Yen, Taiwanese Dollars and Chinese Renminbi. Bids rise on an ascending scale until the gavel falls. As the auctioneer mounts the podium, voices drop and eyes focus to the front. Anticipation heightens. The auctioneer introduces himself and summarizes the conditions of sale. All is in readiness for lot one. Few in the audience will be active bidders. The majority, like me, are spectators. However, they know the auction performance and are willing witnesses—an essential ingredient in the legitimacy and transparency of the market. The onlookers create the atmosphere and validate proceedings.

Auction catalogues are open in anticipation. All in the room will watch and listen expectantly for the gavel to fall. Will it reach the reserve? Many will faithfully record the hammer price next to their anticipated calculations and the auction houses' published estimates. The image for each lot appears on a screen. The auctioneer identifies the lot number and gives a brief description of the piece. The floor is opened for bidding. Bids are accepted if a numbered paddle is raised, from the wave of a staff member taking telephone bids or from absentee bids left

59 While there are female auctioneers, all those I witnessed were male.
60 A Sotheby's auctioneer noted that auctions are primarily entertainment, with only 10% of the audience intending to bid. Hugh Hildesley in Thompson, D. 2008: 135.
61 Sotheby's past auctioneer, Peter Wilson, thought spectators necessary for a successful sale. Faith, N. 1985: 46.
62 The prices quoted on the auction sales sheets or heralded in newspapers is the hammer price plus a buyer's premium. I have a number of old catalogues which illustrate this personal notation. See footnote 74 (pp.240) for detailed explanation of buyer's premium.
with the auctioneer or auction house staff. The auctioneer's spotters are vigilant. Importantly, the auctioneer must acknowledge the bidder.\(^{63}\)

**Auctioneer**

- do I have an opening bid for lot number,
- paddle rises at the back of the room,
- spotter points to the paddle,
- auctioneer acknowledges and takes the bid,
- at the back, thank you madam,
- the bid's with me (the auctioneer is handling an absentee bid),
- paddle at back is raised again, with madam at the back of the room,
- with me, selling up here (auctioneer touches his own shoulder—absentee bidder),
- against you at the back,
- (new entry) paddle rises at the front,
- with you sir, seated at the front,
- back paddle rises,
- bidding with you at the back,
- front paddle is raised again,
- bidder at the back is hesitant,
- the auctioneer leans forward 'you've come this far' (muffled laughter),
- back bidder responds positively and raises her paddle,
- the bidder at the front has pulled out,
- a telephone bidder enters,
- the bidder at the back has pulled out too,
- a new bidder (another on the telephone),
- the audience's eyes are now focused to the side of the room,
- the two telephone bidders are in competition,
- eyes move back and forth between telephonists and auctioneer,
- auctioneer leans over the podium—intensely watching the telephonists,
- he vocalizes and officially recognizes each telephonist's affirmation,
- the auctioneer's rhythm is slowed by the silent gaps between telephone bids,
- however, excitement rises as the bids escalate well above the high estimate,
- cell phone drops out...wait...reconnects...bidding continues,
- tension rises,

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\(^{63}\) The auction room scene is drawn from field notes taken attending Christie's and Sotheby's auctions during New York Asia Week in March and in September of 2004 and 2005. For the purpose of this discussion, I focus on the two dominant global auction houses, Christie's and Sotheby's and specifically to their practices in New York. Christie's has been in the private hands of Frenchman Francois Pinault since 1998 and in 2006, their reported art sales totalled USD4.33 billion. Sotheby's is a publicly listed company, which posted sales of USD3.66 billion for the same period. Melikian, S. "How Christie's kept top spot over Sotheby's in 2006 sales." 2007. Between them, they control more than eighty percent of the world art auction market. Creswell, J. 2004. In 2008, Thornton stated that the two houses control 98% of the global auction art market. Thornton, S. 2008: 5. The old image of an auction saleroom as being a boys' club—gentlemanly, dusty and dull has long disappeared. For the high profiled art worlds, such as Impressionism and contemporary art, the premier auction sales are fashionable black tie affairs, complete with red carpet, ticketed seats and flashing cameras. Demarest, M. 1979. Thompson described a red carpet scene for a 'branded' auction of big-named artists and big-named buyers. Thompson, D. 2008: 19-22.
strangers exchange glances,  
more bids,  
the tension is now thick,  
strangers exchange whispers,  
one of the telephone bidders finally pulls out,  
momentary hesitation,  
auctioneer calls fair warning, last chance, selling,  
auctioneer glances once more at the telephonists,  
the gavel falls,  
sold!

Applause erupts. The object has achieved a new sales record. The applause is spontaneous. Neither the new owner nor the final protagonist who battled it out for ownership, are in the room to hear the applause. The clapping releases the tension trapped in the room. In turn, quiet chatter fills the room. The auctioneer silences and refocuses the audience by announcing the next lot. The auction rhythm is restored.

The Process of Seduction: Auctions  
Auctions are sensory experiences. They are personal—fear, panic, pounding heartbeat, sweaty palms, or focused, calm and competitive. There is the potential to be carried away and enter a bidding war. Philosopher Walter Benjamin offered advice for those attending auctions. He stated that, “A man who wishes to participate at an auction must pay equal attention to the [artefact] and to his competitors, in addition to keeping a cool enough head to avoid being carried away in the competition.” On the other hand, there is also room for recriminations and regret for letting one get away. Just one more bid and it would have been mine. Auctions are exciting and unpredictable. Almost everybody who intends to purchase at auction has a strategy to secure his or her desired object for the lowest price.

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64 Benjamin, W. in Arendt, H. 1969: 64.
Conversely, the auction house is intent on securing the highest price.\textsuperscript{66} To this end, the objects represented at these premium auction houses are carefully selected according to perceived market demand. This demand is influenced by recent major art exhibitions.\textsuperscript{67} Objects for auction fit the museum narrative of fine art, which highlights rarity, uniqueness, quality, age and importantly aesthetics.\textsuperscript{68} And like exhibition catalogues, auction catalogues supply the same descriptive and interpretative information. A significant factor in the expansion of auctions was the introduction of glossy photographs for each lot.\textsuperscript{69}

Auction catalogues, like that of exhibitions, are carefully crafted documents—a photo album of images.\textsuperscript{70} In auction catalogues, each image is carefully sequenced with the intention to attract the highest premium. Position is important for the high valued objects—next to, opposite, before, after, not first.\textsuperscript{71} The sharing of space, the jostling for limelight and therefore, a better price, while not always predictable, is uppermost in the mind of auction house advisers as they sort and categorize the images. Christie’s post-war art specialist Amy Cappellazzo stated,

\begin{quote}
We lay out a sale commercially. If we laid it out art-historically—chronologically or thematically—it would probably bomb. The first ten lots all have to go well. We tend to put things in there that will soar past the high estimate … At around Lot twelve or thirteen we’d better be entering a serious price point.\textsuperscript{72}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{66} Thompson, D. 2008: 133.
\textsuperscript{67} Supply is also influenced by exhibition and auction catalogues. Copies of these publications sit on art dealers desks in Kathmandu, Nepal.
\textsuperscript{68} Often objects are cherry-picked from collections and transferred on the auctioneers’ advice to where it is believed they will fetch better prices. For example, an eclectic private art collection may be offered to Sotheby’s in Australia—the premium silverware may be sent to London, a quality Tibetan sculpture to New York and better Chinese ceramics to Hong Kong.
\textsuperscript{69} Melikian, S. “How Christie’s kept top spot.” 2002. In his book on Christie’s, Watson noted that specific staff have special care of specific clients, attending to them at all hours, sending them out information and transparencies of works that might interested them. Watson, P. 1992: 12.
\textsuperscript{70} Christie’s and Sotheby’s have a well-rehearsed format for their catalogues. The catalogue is a stable entity, familiar. Only when one tries to be different does the reader realize that margins wide enough to stop the eyes from being distracted by falling off the page are important. Not to mention the use of a clear rounded typeface, as opposed to an elongated thin spider-like text all written in upper case. The dominant auction houses produce their catalogues in a manner that is familiar and conventional.
\textsuperscript{71} Watson, P. 1992: 15.
\textsuperscript{72} Thornton, S. 2008: 27.
However, because Tibetan art is part of the Indian and Southeast Asian Art auction it rarely begins the auction—how does this affect Cappellazzo’s strategy? To test her statement I randomly chose an Indian and Southeast Asian art catalogue from a pile of dates ranging from 1993 to 2008. The catalogue was Christie’s September 2007 sale (GOPI-1879), which included property from the collection of retired eminent dealer Robert H. Ellsworth. Because the Indian and Southeast Asian art sales consist of lots blocked together in cultural categories, the assumption was that the auction and interest for Tibetan art only commenced with the first Tibetan object to fall under the hammer, in this case Lot No.116. The first object was a large thirteenth century bronze figure of Vairocana. The early date and its 58 centimetres presented this sculpture as an ideal exhibition piece for home or institution (illus. 159). The auction estimate was USD100,000-150,000, it realized USD289,000. Table 6.1 illustrates the first 12 Tibetan objects for (GOPI-1879). The premium Tibetan objects were placed six lots earlier than suggested by Cappellazzo, however, this may reflect the fact that the auction was already in full swing and the audience needed less time to adjust to the fact that the auctioneer was now selling Tibetan objects.

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73 Before the Tibetan objects were 112 Indian art objects, including Indian miniatures, manuscripts, Ghandara objects and bronzes from the Ellsworth collection.
74 The realized price is the hammer price plus the buyer’s premium. In 2007, Christie’s buyer’s premium “to the buyer on the final bid price of each lot sold at the following rates: 25% of the final bid price of each lot up to and including USD20,000, 20% of the excess of the hammer price above USD20,000 and up to and including USD500,000 and 12% of the excess of the hammer price above USD500,000. Christie’s Auction Catalogues. “GOPI-1878.” 2007: 281
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lot No.</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Auction est. USD</th>
<th>Realized USD</th>
<th>Difference between realized prices &amp; highest estimate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>116</td>
<td>Vairocana, 13th C Bronze, 58 cm.</td>
<td>100,000-150,000</td>
<td>289,000</td>
<td>139,000 OVER</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>117</td>
<td>Bust of a Mahasiddhi, 14/15th C Bronze, 34.5 cm.</td>
<td>15,000-20,000</td>
<td>18,750</td>
<td>MID RANGE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>118</td>
<td>Head of Goddess, 14th C Bronze, 18.5 cm</td>
<td>4,000-5,000</td>
<td>NOT SOLD</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>119</td>
<td>Bust of a Bodhisattva, 14/15th C Bronze, 34 cm.</td>
<td>4,000-6,000</td>
<td>8,750</td>
<td>2,750</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>120</td>
<td>Vairocana, 14th C Bronze, 38.5 cm.</td>
<td>18,000-25,000</td>
<td>34,600</td>
<td>9,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>121</td>
<td>Figure of Nagaraja, 15th C Gilt bronze, 37.5 cm (Densatil)</td>
<td>80,000-100,000</td>
<td>397,000</td>
<td>297,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>122</td>
<td>Frieze of Nagaraja, 15th C Gilt bronze, 53 cm (Densatil)</td>
<td>100,000-150,000</td>
<td>205,000</td>
<td>55,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>123</td>
<td>Frieze of Sri Devi, 15th C Gilt bronze, 58 cm (Densatil)</td>
<td>120,000-180,000</td>
<td>385,000</td>
<td>205,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>124</td>
<td>Frieze of Dancers, 15th C Gilt bronze, 38 cm (Densatil)</td>
<td>50,000-70,000</td>
<td>97,000</td>
<td>27,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>125</td>
<td>Figure of Sri Devi, 15th C Gilt bronze, 41.5 cm (Densatil)</td>
<td>80,000-100,000</td>
<td>133,000</td>
<td>33,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>126</td>
<td>Support with Two Deities 15th C Gilt bronze, 28 cm (Densatil)</td>
<td>6,000-8,000</td>
<td>15,000</td>
<td>7,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>127</td>
<td>Altar Ornament, 15th C Gilt bronze, 38.5 cm (Densatil)</td>
<td>8,000-10,000</td>
<td>NOT SOLD</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.1: Christie’s Indian and Southeast Asian Art, 2007
This randomly selected auction sale fits within the commercial lay out expressed by Cappellazzo, although the serious price point started earlier, which may reflect that fact that the Tibetan objects are within an ongoing sale rather than at the beginning.

A result of these carefully crafted auction catalogues is that the reader actively engages with the text, more so than the pensive and passive enjoyment of reading an exhibition catalogue. The difference in engagement reflects the fact that the images in art exhibition catalogues carry the veneer of unattainability, whereas the images in auction catalogues are obtainable—at the right price.

Ownership is palpable. Irrespective of budget, readers of the auction catalogue are free to fantasize desire in the privacy of their home. The idle act of the reader flicking through an auction catalogue is not desultory, as a potential consumer they are engaged in evaluating the objects on sale. These casual evaluations highlight the significance of the auction catalogue to the potential

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75 Figure source: Christie’s Auction Catalogues. “GOPI-1878.” 2007: 107-116.
consumer. The consumer is evaluating the images according to their own desires. The purchase of auction catalogues allows those that have the desire but do not have the means to be part of a performance, which historically was for many an inaccessible pursuit. At the same time, the auction catalogues are themselves collectible. They are an archive in their own right, storing a history of transactions and a database of images and descriptions. Catalogues are an affordable substitute for artworks, like the C.D. is for a music concert. While only one owner can possess the object, many can possess its image. As a result, the auction catalogue itself becomes a commodity of desire—to be enjoyed at leisure.

To counter and control the intensity of consuming desires created by the auction sales catalogue, the individual undertakes their own research into the market. The study of past art exhibition catalogues and attendance at exhibitions, fairs and auction previews, educates collectors by honing their ‘eye’ and informing them of market values. Museum studies researcher Haidy Geismar noted that consumers approach auction previews with a shopping list based on their earlier perusal of the auction catalogue’s images. When the object is physically sighted, the shopping list is further refined. Collectors write their own price estimates near to the auction house estimates. As the hammer falls they record the final bidding price for future reference.

On auction day, the disciplined consumer restrains their emotions by referring back to their diligent research and reminding themselves of their maximum price which they penned into the auction catalogue before the sale began. But the heat of an auction can unravel checked emotions, especially if the emotion of regret takes hold, which may explain why some buyers use dealers to attend

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77 The exhibition catalogue is in general larger than the auction catalogue and is also available in hardcover. Only premium auction sales are published in hardcover.
78 Freedberg, D. 1989: 318. Auction catalogue in general cost USD50. For reference, the Chicago, HimalayasAn Aesthetic Adventure exhibition catalogue was USD65 for hardback and USD39.95 for paperback. The auction houses have started to digitalize the catalogue on the web free of charge. But because they are an important reference for dealers and collectors, the published form remains in demand. The serious collectors are generally sent a complimentary catalogue.
79 Geismar, H. 2001: 34.
auctions and bid on their behalf. Art consultant Philippe Ségalot counsels his elite clients that “The most expensive purchases—the purchases where you suffer the most—will turn out to be the best ones.” The atmosphere of auction encourages the intoxicating pursuit and acquisition of art. They are competitive arenas built on the premise of last chance to purchase. Auctions also bring to the fore the excitement of gambling large sums. However, in the case of auctions, the spending is ameliorated by the gain of an artwork, even if bought in the heat of the moment for an inflated price.

The pressure on auction houses and dealers is not solely on finding consumers, but perhaps even more on finding a continuous supply of commodities at the high standard demanded by the market. To overcome this shortage Christie’s and Sotheby’s bargain hard for collections. A zero commission and up-front guarantees are negotiable. There are ethical questions over these auction house practices, especially if the auction house is the selling agent, guarantor and adviser to the buyer. Some in the art market question this strategy as a self-fulfilling prophecy, particularly if the auction house lends the potential buyer the money to purchase the works that auction houses have guaranteed in the first place. Private art dealer, Richard Feigen stated that it is a “flagrant conflict of interest.” And art journalist, Souren Melikian, described the guarantees as stoking an “artificial inflation” which cannot be sustained if prices begin to fall. The concern is how much are the realized prices the product of purely market

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80 Thompson, D. 2008: 137.
81 Quoted in interview. Thornton, S. 2008: 11.
82 Vogel, C. “Sotheby’s tops estimate with 100 percent sale result.” 2004.
83 Thompson, D. 2008: 58. The auction rooms’ tempo follows a quickening circular-like waltz. All the performers take their cues from the auctioneer. Lot numbers and gavel fall in quick succession, driven by the desire to maintain the selling momentum and the necessity of time constraints. Economists Christian Heath and Paul Luff note that the episodic lots are rarely more than 30 seconds and in that time more than five bids may have been negotiated. Heath, C. and Luff, P. 2007: 64.
85 Smith, C. 1987: 103. See also Thompson, D. 2008: 145-159 for an account on the activities of the auctions houses in contemporary art.
86 “Sotheby’s still formally extends financial service to their consigners. Most items can be used by consignors as collateral for loans in advance of a sale of up to 40% of the low estimated auction value- conservative.” McAndrew, C. and Thompson, R. 2007: 603.
forces (supply and demand) and how much are they artificially manipulated by the selling agents, in this case the auction houses.\textsuperscript{89} At the same time as some within the art market expressed concern over the activities of auction houses, the art market benefits from the prices set at auction, especially when they are negotiating sales in their gallery or reporting on record prices.

Auction commentator George Savage noted that “A work of art has no definite value. Very often its value is unknown until someone decides to buy it.”\textsuperscript{90} The importance of an auction is that it sets a public market price. The auction becomes, in gallery owner Eileen Chanin’s words, “a game of matching wits, grit and financial resources. The game places emphasis on the individual artwork in its most extreme guise—as a commodity.”\textsuperscript{91} There is potential for the art object to be lost in the pursuit of ownership and the conspicuous consumption at auctions. In her analysis of the contemporary art scene Thornton stated,

Even if the people here tonight were initially lured into the auction room by a love of art, they find themselves participating in a spectacle where the dollar value of the work has virtually slaughtered its other meanings.\textsuperscript{92}

An exceptional price paid in the heat of an auction or in a dealer’s booth is critical in evaluating the public worth of art objects. The high prices paid are a branding device on the artwork, the seller and the purchaser, in the same way good provenance of an elite collector or dealer also brands the artworks. The price paid is visual evidence of accrued value. The intermittent trading and exchange of art objects is a process by which value is publicly added to artworks.

\textsuperscript{89} For a discussion on the ‘secret world of auctions’ see Thompson, D. 2008: 145-159.
\textsuperscript{90} Savage, G. 1969: 33.
\textsuperscript{91} Chanin, E. 1990: 2.
\textsuperscript{92} Thornton, S. 2007: 39.
With the multi-million dollar price tags for art, one thing has been assured, art is an investment vehicle. In 2002, the *New York Times* business section ran the following headline,

Steering clear of a depressed stock market?
Can't find the perfect house or apartment?
What do you do with all that extra cash?\(^{93}\)

The answer: Visit an auction and invest in art. The article noted that art is now recognised as an exchangeable commodity and within the artworld, the auction floor is the stock-market.\(^{94}\) Despite the advice of the *New York Times*, banks remain hesitant to accept art as collateral. They are nervous of uncertainty and unaccountability, especially over such factors as illiquidity, security, insurance costs, conservation, fakes and unsubstantiated risk evaluations.\(^{95}\) Countering the inherent insecurities within artworlds is the cultivation of a buoyant art market.

According to art critic Robert Hughes, this buoyancy is maintained by the artworld’s herd mentality. He is quoted in an interview, “Most of the time they buy what other people buy. They move in great schools, like bluefish, all identical. There is safety in numbers.”\(^{96}\) The crucial factor is public visibility and successful artworlds establish regular cycles of exhibitions, dealer exhibitions, auction sales and, critically, reports in newspapers and magazines of exhibitions,

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\(^{95}\) Helenius, T. Ultimate buy-and-hold strategy works.” 2000. Clare McAndrew and Rex Thompson stated, “art, as an asset class, reflects a more risky venture for lending institutions than the traditional assets with which these institutions have experience.” Although they remarked that the French Impressionist market may be an exception because it has a knowledgeable market, finite stock and high demand. However, a new breed of venturesome entrepreneurial banks, such as, JPMorganChase and Citigroup Private Bank are responding to the demands of their high-net-worth clients. McAndrew and Thompson wrote that Citigroup Private bank appears to be the only bank which, “consistently offers art services that include lending, through its “Art Advisory Service.” This service makes loans of up to 50% of the value of the collection or artwork. They conduct valuation in-house, basing value on their best estimate of market value, which they report as around the mid-point of the presale high and low.” McAndrew, C. and Thompson, R. 2007: 591-604. There are various reasons why consumers want to borrow for art purchases. Some are only interested in a financial return, while others are looking for status investments, or just broadening their investment portfolio—a hedge to currency, stock and bonds. Koenigsberg, L. 1989. Demarest, M. “Going... Going... Gone!” 1979. Meyers from Sotheby’s states that there is a new breed of elite collectors, they are intent on making up for lost time. They want gratification and ownership now. Meyer, T. quoted in Brooker, K. 2006.

\(^{96}\) Quoted in Thompson, D. 2008: 41.
sales and purchases. New York Asia Week is an important event in this cycle for Asian Art. Reassurance of public exhibitions, profiled dealers, record prices and elite consumer interest reinforces the ‘safety in numbers’ behaviour. An additional impetus to collecting Tibetan art is the celebrity branding of H.H. the fourteenth Dalai Lama. The transference of his office and charisma onto the objects preserves historical western imaginings and the religiosity of Tibetan art.

All of these factors create confidence in the art market, especially the perception of a continuous value creating system. In the last two decades, despite global economic crises, the art auction market has maintained buoyancy with the assistance of new entrants into the market, in particular the Russian and Chinese buyers. Journalist Katrina Brooker, in an article on Sotheby’s resurrection, noted that Sotheby’s turn-around was helped by a new class of super-rich entering the market—such as hedge fund managers, Asian tycoons and Russian oligarchs. She also noted that “they are whipping auction rooms into feeding frenzies.”97 Similarly, Dr Yip, a prominent Hong Kong collector, stated “There are a lot of [Chinese] industrialists, a lot of money floating around ... You buy cars, houses, then you buy some culture. It’s the same all over the world.” Chinese industrialists have a mission to “bring home” Chinese treasures.98 Such sentimentalty should have a future impact on Tibetan art prices, especially those Tibetan Buddhist objects known to have an Imperial Chinese provenance.

The consuming spectacle—Identity and value creation
This chapter on New York Asia Week began with an interview of veteran Tibetan art curator, Pratapaditya Pal. He commented that the museum is not the natural environment for Tibetan art. As an artificial environment, museums have the important role of selecting and exhibiting particular Tibetan objects as ‘fine’ art.

97 Brooker, K. 2006.
Pal stated "my primary goal [as museum curator] is to establish a yardstick for beauty in Himalayan art." He continued by associating the object's aesthetic qualities—beauty—with price. Pal's interviewer added, "And its rarity." While Pal agreed that this is a factor in the value equation, he emphasised that value is created through the object's appeal to the consumer. He continued,

Yes, but it has got to appeal to someone to pay a million bucks for it. You may say that this is crass commercialism, but that's true of art everywhere—all art has a price tag.

While all art that measures up to the museum yardstick may have a price, establishing and maintaining its value is problematic. The focus of New York Asia Week provides a framework in which mechanism for creating value are spotlighted. The fanfare and focus of New York Asia Week increases the motivation for individuals and institutions to consume Asian art.

There are many reasons to collect, from obsession and nostalgia, to status-seeking and investment. Collecting can be as controlled as singular fetish-like objects adorning an entrance way to a relentless pursuit for the next object—an "intimacy bounded by seriality" For serial collectors each purchase signals the desire for the next, the desire to re-live the initial encounter, which museology academic Susan Pearce described as the kiss of possession. For others it is the thrill of the chase. The intensity of the pursuit and the capture of another artwork is an extreme pleasure. Such sensations, according to sociologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi are peak-flow experiences. By peak-flow, he means the total absorption of time, action and awareness, a sense of timelessness and exhilaration. Yet for others, collecting becomes a way of life—an all consuming passion. An example of this compulsion to collect is caught by Hopi Indian Victor Masayesva's documentary camera. He films a professor of Native-American

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100 Casey Singer, J. 2000. For context to this quote highlighted see opening quote to this chapter.
104 Csikszentmihalyi, M. 1975.
studies and his wife resolute in their belief that their collecting makes the Indians happy. And while they have no vacant space in their house, the couple feel duty-bound to continue collecting. The wife asserted that, “If the Indians have made it, we have at least one of them.” A similar illustration of obsessive collecting in Tibetan art is evidenced by the large collection of thousands of Tibetan objects, especially thangkas, built by Donald and Shelly Rubin in just 25 years.

There is tension between the different styles of collectors, routinely they compete to possess the same iconic image. Two recent books, Seven Days in the Art World by sociologist Sarah Thornton and The $12 Million Stuffed Shark by economist Don Thompson, analyze the global art market for contemporary art. Both writers noted that the artworld adage, “Art is only worth what someone is willing to pay for it,” is one, an “operating cliché” and two, the price paid is a “game played by the super-rich,” where the prize is publicity and status. They argued that to be seen consuming art is crucial. Thornton and Thompson further argue that this conspicuous consumption fuelled the spectacular prices recorded in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century global art markets. The consumer who pays top price at the fair or sets the record auction price is talked about, even if they bought anonymously. Rumour about the identity of anonymous consumers actually raises their status. Journalists, dealers and curators speculate until the buyers’ identity is eventually revealed. The notoriety gained by buying the most expensive object is a public declaration of status, prestige and connoisseurship. Even if the consumer is not possessed of artistic sensibilities, they have purchased a reputation which identifies their possession of such qualities.

Historically, the purchase of luxury goods and the collection of curiosities relied on wealth, leisure and the portrayal of the right taste and/or connoisseurship. More recently, the affluent burgeoning middle and upper classes have also begun to view collections in the same way as the elite. Thompson noted that buying a branded artwork rather than the Lamborghini or French Chateau sets the purchaser apart, creating instant status and notoriety. Public recognition of the purchase ‘price tag’ counters the necessity to acquire knowledge and taste, which traditionally differentiated the social classes. The late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries acknowledgement of the interrelationship of money to identity has the potential to undermine sociologist Bourdieu concept of cultural capital—learned knowledge and taste. This is particularly the case as the twenty-first century shifts to purchasing the cultured ‘eye,’ rather than taking the time to learn art appreciation. Art knowledge and connoisseurship is for sale.

However, Bourdieu’s concept of the “autonomous field of artistic production ...a field capable of imposing its norms on both the production and the consumption of its products” remains intact because ‘the herd’ recognizes the authority of those who have access to knowledge—eminent dealers and curators. The regulation of the art market remains in the hands of an authoritative few. The difference is that today lack of connoisseurship does not preclude individuals from entry into the art market. To counter this lack of connoisseurship by many purchasers today, the art market has promoted the view that aesthetic value is related to the market price. That is, the higher their aesthetic value, the higher the market value and the greater the desire to own. At the same time, a mechanism, such as subjective aesthetic value, is needed to maintain a scarcity of status objects and restrict entry of consumers.

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110 For a brief outline of collecting history and a picture of obsessive contemporary collectors see Calloway, S. and Sorrell, K. 2004. Demarest noted that in 1979 there were an estimated twenty-two million collectors. Junk shops had become antique stores and collecting has also become a fashionable pursuit. Demarest, M. 19
111 Bourdieu, P. 2004: 3.
112 Bourdieu, P. 2004: 3.
In a double act, museums and connoisseurs set the aesthetic parameters and as a consequence, the monetary values for artworks. After 34 years of experience within the Tibetan artworld, Pal correlates the price tag of artworks with its aesthetic appeal. It is conceivable that Pal uses the term beauty to straddle the fine art/popular art divide. Beautiful has become an ‘in’ term echoed within the current art world. For example, as the New York Times art critic Holland Cotter wrote of the Uptown Asia Fair “In short, any way you approach it, the Asian Art Fair offers much food for thought. And did I mention that it’s absolutely beautiful? It is.”

Philosopher Jean Baudrillard noted that auctions provide the competitive arena through which moneyed combatants vie for signs of wealth and status. Expanding on Thorstein Veblen’s notion of conspicuous consumption, Baudrillard argued that high value-added objects do not exhaust their function. Rather they become heightened signifiers of prestige. He stated that objects “no longer designate the world, but rather the being and social rank of their possessor.” Baudrillard noted that the symbolic value of objects is “resolved” by aesthetic value judgements. However, a word of caution, these subjective judgements are not transparent, even though the aesthetic rationale substantiated the object’s position as a status symbol. As an art collector, the conspicuous consumer sacrifices their economic resources for profit creation in order to validate and legitimize their socio-political position by buying art.

Baudrillard introduced museums into this equation by acknowledging the role of museums as aesthetic arbiters. Museums create the ‘yardsticks’ by which the value of the objects is measured. In addition, museums also stabilize the value of

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113 Ivan Gaskell makes reference to the conceptual use of ‘beauty’ to mean a type of cultural authenticity, where, difference is acknowledged but cannot be defined in relationship to other cultures. Gaskell, I. 2003a: 278.
114 Cotter, H. “Fusing the many Asia’s into a Diverse Harmony.” 2004.
117 Baudrillard, J. 1981: 120.
art by selecting, borrowing, and exhibiting these status objects and creating a provenance. Baudrillard stated,

Museums acts as a guarantee for the aristocratic exchange ...
Museums play the role of banks in the political economy of paintings: — not content to act as an organic guarantee of speculation in art, the museum acts as an agency guaranteeing the universality of painting and so also the aesthetic enjoyment.\(^{118}\)

The expenditure on collecting art status according to Baudrillard is a political act aimed at securing a dominant position within, similar to the historically inherited class structures of the past. Furthermore, authorities, such as museum curators and recognized connoisseurs, control the regulation of these aesthetic markers constructing a critical threshold of dominance. Not every artefact or object has equal opportunity to be transformed into a masterpiece, nor has everybody he equal opportunity to own a masterpiece. New York Asia Week is an important event, not just because it brings together Asian art specialists, but because it is also a social opportunity to parade social status. Educator, Carol Jeffers, is of the same opinion, she stated "Construction of museum knowledge, or knowledge of what the museum represents, appears to depend ... more on the rules, codes, and norms established by the social processes and partisan interests of a particularly influential group within the Western community."\(^{119}\) Access to knowledge and the processes by which artefacts are transformed into art continues to be restricted.

Further evidence of the social nature of creating value is found in an article on the price of photography. Sociologist Patrik Aspers' research into the sale of fashion photography concluded that social interaction constructed meaning and status, which in turn influenced the price of the photographs. He wrote "Prices are not the result of purely economic process: they are rather the outcome of a social process. [and later] It is the actors who reconstruct and reproduce the market."\(^{120}\) While consumers perform, the objects assembled for New York Asia

\(^{118}\) Baudrillard, J. 1981: 121-122.
\(^{120}\) Aspers, P. 17-18.
Week are carefully selected according to perceived market demand. This demand is influenced by recent major art exhibitions and the fine art discourse—rarity, uniqueness, quality, age and importantly aesthetics. The dominance of aesthetics restricts what is seen, and as a consequence, what is learned. The commodification of Tibetan art is subjective, built on the processes of selection according to prevailing aesthetic principles.

Aesthetic appreciation as a common faculty in the artworld, authoritative statements on aesthetics—what is beautiful—belongs to the sphere of the dealers, connoisseurs, curators, art historians and art critics. They instruct the viewer on what to look for, on how to appreciate the chosen masterpieces. It is also these selected individuals who authenticate artworks and determine which are masterpieces. I will return to this question of authority and authenticity when I consider overpainting in the next chapter. Aesthetic appreciation and connoisseurship are important in the process of transforming objects into artworks and to masterpieces. Fairs provide a forum for the creation of distinction, performing connoisseurship and publicly consuming.

According to Csikszentmihalyi, consumption externalises the self by constructing a stable identity—I am what I own. Identities are forged by repeating these performances. Csikszentmihalyi names three significant ways objects do this: one, objects demonstrate the owner’s social position; two, objects give meaning to self through time and space; and three, objects materialize relationships, that is, objects symbolize membership in particular social networks, such as artworlds. Fairs provide an intimate public stage on which status is performed—an essential element in consummating desire, increasing the demand for status goods and value creation.

In his book, Reflections, Edward Said observes that, advertising and press images are employed as if they have truth-values, like scientific facts. He writes that “the communications industry would like to press viewers into accepting the

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121 Csikszentmihalyi, M. 2001: 487.
photograph as evidence either of buyable goods or of immutable reality. Buy this product because it will make you happy.”

The constant flow of images influences the way we see ourselves—they are instruments in constructing our identity. To consume is to construct an image of ourselves. The image in the auction catalogue carries the hopes and dreams of the consumer as they walk into the auction room with their catalogue safely tucked under their arm, the pages of which are marked with desire.

In the act of consuming at New York Asia Week, social status and identity are visually negotiated and communicated to others. Possessions become an extension of the self, symbolically reflecting personality, circumstances, experiences and desires. According to cultural historian Jennifer Scanlon, we communicate through the language of things and use objects to differentiate ourselves from another, demonstrate social mobility and status. As previously noted, performing taste and acquiring the trappings of an elite lifestyle depends upon the public gaze. To be seen consuming major artworks confirms the collector/connoisseur’s elite position within society and their ability to acquire non-essential, status-drenched objects. Discretionary objects such as Tibetan art mediate societal position and discernment.

Conclusion
New York Asia Week provides the intimate stage-like environment where such consuming performances can be witnessed, recorded and reported in newspapers and magazine copy. While some consumers prefer anonymity, others desire an audience to witness that they are on first name terms with elite collectors, pre-

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122 Said, E. 201: 143.
123 Schroeder, J. 2002: 45.
eminent dealers and that they have access to resources to purchase masterpieces. At such events, there is an audience to validate monetary exchanges and the status of those involved in acquiring Asian art. Performances are endorsed. Consuming at New York Asia Week is about the construction of an identity. To be seen performing at Asia Week is important. Journalist Laura Beach reported for the *Antiques and the Arts Online*,

One of the International Asian Art Fair’s many pleasures is its opening night ... The glamorous benefit committee is peppered with names like Robert and Marie-Chantal Miller and Sir Evelyn and Lady Lynn de Rothschild, and people-watching is unsurpassed. Richard C. Holbrooke, the diplomat, flirted on the Armory steps with his journalist wife, Kati Marton. Christopher Davidge, late of Christie’s, strolled the aisles with his bejewelled consort, Amrita Jhaveri. The opening is a popular outing for curators, who tend to be less exotically dressed. The RSVP list for museum folk on opening night alone was three pages long.

The public performance of consuming acts as a cascade point for others to emulate. As previously noted, an important step in constructing the artworld subculture dedicated to Tibetan art was the 1969 NYAS exhibition, *The Art of Tibet*. This exhibition validated the consumption of Tibetan art by giving the objects aesthetic value. It took another 30 years for Tibetan art to reach the permanent masterpiece stage and acquire similar social-status and investment value associated with the collection of Chinese or Japanese art. The Director of the Walters Art Gallery in Baltimore wrote in 1971,

In the past two decades... suddenly institutions have sprung forth devoted to the art of all Asia, as opposed to that of China and Japan alone... The increased knowledge and interest in this field have been spectacular and show a new aesthetic, as well as

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131 Beach, L. 2005.
132 Here I define the buyer as a casual, perhaps aspirational consumer, someone that enters the market to make an instant impression rather than a passion for collecting one particular art form. These buyers may be an important component in the positive outcome of the Fairs, but their activities are not consistent or committed, therefore my focus is on collectors and connoisseurs, who are dedicated members of an artworld.
political, point of view... Certainly one response has been the growth of private collections.\textsuperscript{133}

The 1969 exhibition seized the increasing potential of Tibetan artefacts and (re)presented them to the Western fine art market. In the next 25 years, increased commercial and exhibition activity resulted in the development of a mature Tibetan artworld, represented by international dealers, incorporated into the Fairs network and sponsored by auction houses. The periodic centralization of domestic and international dealers into an event such as the New York Asia Week encourages collectors and connoisseurs.

Throughout this dissertation, I claim that we learn to see, to know and appreciate art and that developing an art discourse is important in the transformation from artefact into art. What we learn to see is constructed from interpretations drawn from embodied stimuli, exposure and experience of artworlds. Since the 1969 New York Asia Society, The Art of Tibet exhibition, many have learned to see Tibetan objects as art because of their context within museum exhibitions and associated art catalogues, on sale in auction rooms and art fairs. Tibetan artefacts were not generally thought to be fine art when they sat in ethnographic museums or on Tibetan altars. In becoming a collector, the twenty-first century museum visitor extrapolates what they see in museums to what they expect to see in the marketplace. If they intend to spend large sums of money, they expect to buy museum-quality artwork.

I argue in this chapter that New York Asia Week provides a performance arena in which the artworks are not the only star attractions, important to the market is the consuming performances. A healthy art market signals its vitality, and more important its liquidity through conspicuous consumption. The limelight of New York Asia Week is shared, reported and gossiped. The Week assembles International Asian art dealers, collectors, connoisseurs, art curators, scholars,

\textsuperscript{133} Extracts were taken from Randall Jr's acknowledgements in the catalogue for an exhibition of John Ford's Indo-Asian art collection of 87 objects, of which 26 were Tibetan (15 bronzes and 11 thangkas). There were also 12 Nepalese objects, only one was a painting.
art critics and enthusiasts, whether a witness or a collector, it is a week of consuming. Hundreds of people visit the Uptown and Downtown Fairs and new records are set at auction. The New York Asia Society’s benefit night attracts the elite and aspiring in a performance of largesse and glamour. The aesthetic displays of the Fairs and the dynamics of the auctions reinforce the inter-relationship of price tag to aesthetic appreciation. New York Asia Week is a physical and visible outpouring of value creation. The public is encouraged to attend and witness status-conscious consumers acquiring further signifiers of their wealth and or knowledge, if they are the connoisseurs or taste arbiters.

The emphasis of New York Asia Week is on consuming the ‘right taste,’ while in the following chapter, the emphasis shifts to the authorities that set the parameters of taste—museum curators, leading dealers and collectors. These men and women are present at New York Asia Week, they too are seen but their role in selecting collection trends and desires is less obvious. These museum professionals are crucial in prescribing the current aesthetic values, which are reflected in the price tags achieved at auction or in the dealers’ booths. Their judgements initiated the transformation and created a new level of value orientated to status. They set the parameters that defined which artefact remained exotic curio and which became fine art.
In 2008, Christie's held an extraordinary sale of just eight Indian Southeast Asian artworks, all promoted as *ideal image* masterpieces. This sale was part of the 2008 March New York Asia Week. It was also celebrating the tenth anniversary of the Christie's New York Indian and Southeast Asian department.¹ Sotheby's international director for Asian art wrote "Each work appeals to the senses and intellect at multiple levels, imbued with the sensitivity and humanity of its master, capturing the finest and most eloquent moment of a timeless

existence.”

This exhibition included a 2nd/3rd century Gandharan standing Siddhartha, a Gupta (c.475) sandstone Buddha, gilt copper standing Nepalese Avalokitesvara, Tibetan thangka of Vairocana, seated Shadakshari (featured above), granite carving of Krishna playing a flute, Princely scene painted by Indian Nainsukh of Guler, and Khmer sandstone figure of Uma. The eight masterpieces at their highest estimate were valued at USD5,050,000, their total sales were USD13,087,000. Curiously, Shadakshari did not sell under the hammer whereas, the Gupta Period sandstone Buddha sold over USD4,000,000 higher than the estimate (illus. 168a-d; 169a-d). Shadakshari not selling is not surprising, it is diminutive at 44.7 cm. (17½ in.) compared to the other non-Himalayan sculptures which were over a metre tall. Furthermore, its 13th to 14th century age is mid-range, where the smaller Nepalese Avalokitesvara at 29.2 cm. (11½ in.) was 8th to 9th century and did sell.

In this same week, Christies conducted seven other Asian art auctions, which brought in over USD80,000,000 in sales, including USD1,269,912 from the [Pratapaditya] Pal Family Collection and USD20,216,925 from the fine Chinese ceramics and works of art sale. Sotheby’s held four Asian auctions with total sales of USD46,435,414 (see illus. 170). With a combined total sales for the two auction houses at over USD126,000,000 this signals a strong Asian art market especially when the American/global economy was under financial stress. For example, the New York Times front page headlines for March 15, just before the start of the Asia Week, read

A Wall Street Domino Theory

The Federal Reserve’s unusual decision to provide emergency assistance to Bear Stearns underscores a long-building concern that one failure could spread across the financial system.

The fact that the Asian Art markets did not suffer suggests not only robustness of the Asian market but at the same time that Asian art is a secure investment alternative. Historically gold has been the emergency currency to invest in when

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the economy is fragile. At the time, the American dollar was falling against other currencies, which benefits overseas buyers, but masterpieces incite desire and while the prices for mediocre or fashion-conscious art fall, masterpieces demand more. The Tibetan Vairocana masterpiece doubled its estimate, but the star of the 2008 New York Asia Week was a late twelfth century Japanese Buddha referred to as Dainichi Nyorai. It sold six times over the Christie's highest estimate for USD14.37 million (illus. 171).

The previous two chapters explored key mechanisms in the value creation process, which I identified as art exhibition catalogues, New York Asia Week and its associated auctions and fairs. Examined together they highlight the agency of words, images and performances in transforming artefacts into art. They also illustrate how artworlds are integrated cultural-behavioural systems. Art historian Joseph Alsop argued that there were eight by-products generated by those civilizations which evolved ‘the fine art tradition.’ The interaction of the first four—the art market, the collector, art history and the art museum—collectively constitute the dynamic sub-systems engaged in creating value by exhibiting and promoting selected objects as art. Very often artworld subcultures develop, such as Tibetan art or Japanese art, despite the narrow cultural focus, the individual artworlds remain defined and governed by the western fine art paradigm. Disconnected from their original indigenous source, the western constructed artworlds (re)present artworks as global commodities.

The final four by-products outlined by Alsop—faking, revaluations, antiques and super-prices—reflect consequences or impacts of ‘the fine art tradition’ on the market and on the objects. These four attributes are identifiable effects of the value creation processes. While the aim of this dissertation is to investigate the transformation of the devil’s idols into art, the significance of where, when and why this occurred revealed the necessity to investigate the value creation

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processes. Another revelation was the impact that these processes have had on the objects. Consuming is not a passive action. It is a social action requiring performers and witnesses. It uses up and/or reconfigures the Other's material culture to satisfy western desire. The subject of this chapter is the impact that the positioning of selected Tibetan art as western recognised masterpieces has had on Tibetan objects. Key concepts for my argument, in addition to the creation value processes, include aestheticization, authenticity, authority, and representation.

The cultural (re)presentation of the Other is set within a western socio-political arena. This was evident in 1969 as the transformation of Tibetan artefact into art occurred. In the fine art canon, representation involves the acts of collecting, preserving and interpreting the Other's cultural heritage. Crucial to these acts is authority over knowledge, including its collection, interpretation and dispersal. Museum curator Jane Pierson Jones stated that “The word authority in [a museum] context carries three shades of meaning: the possession and exercise of power, the notion of expertise and the notion of authorship.”7 Non-western objects enter the west with multiple narratives. In the process of (re)presentation, indigenous narratives are collapsed and essentialized to support and confirm the narrative authorized by western museums.

This chapter consists of three sections. The first is Aestheticization—Selecting masterpieces, which reflects the emphasis on aesthetics and the desire of public institutions and private individuals to be identified with owning masterpieces. Curiously, the late twentieth and early twenty-first century emphasis on masterpieces has also influenced ethnographic museums to label items from their collection as masterpieces. The second section, Authenticity and Authority—The overpainting controversy, problematizes these two concepts in the light of the alleged practice of overpainting thangkas. I discuss how this alleged practice is evidence of the impact that ‘over’ aestheticization has had on the western (re)presentation of Tibetan art and on the objects themselves. The

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third section, *The Homogenizing Effect*, discusses how globalization and selection pressures restrict and normalize what the west knows to be Tibetan art.

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**Aestheticization—selecting masterpieces**

On October 1, 1996, a museum management directive handed a nine point programme of specifications to the exhibition designers. Point three read as follows:

3. Character of the presentation: the need to see beautiful things (aesthetic) must be stimulated, to inform and to experience aspects of different cultures. Has to emanate a strong sense/character, so that the visitor leaves with a strong sense of a well-balanced yet surprising museum.⁸

This abstract is a design manifesto which was formulated, not by a fine art museum, but by an ethnographic museum, The National Museum of Ethnology in Leiden, The Netherlands.⁹ The Leiden museum director and design team were committed to

the task of turning the respectable but old-fashioned National Museum of Ethnology into a modern museum which entices 21st century visitors to enjoy and investigate cultures from around the world, and link their visual impressions to their understanding of cultural interdependence.¹⁰

Of particular interest is the accented stress given to masterpieces by this ethnographic museum. This shift in representation by an international ethnographic museum highlights the ascendancy of ‘the cult of masterpieces’ across the global cultural industry.

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⁸ Staal, G. and de Rijk, M. 2003: 3.
The objects on display at the Leiden Museum were chosen according to three “basic touchstones...: beauty, interest and uniqueness.”¹¹ They were installed in “as pure environment as possible,”¹² consisting of specially designed glass cases with no distracting labels. Object information is provided by nearby interactive touch screens, where similarly positioned black shapes represent each object in the display case. A touch on a shape brings forth the pertinent information, such as country of origin, date, title, medium and accession number. Selected from amongst the black shapes was one red shape, with a simple red word beneath it—masterpiece.¹³ While Joseph Alsop suggested that, the twentieth century was the age of museums, these changes at the Leiden Museum prompt speculation that the twenty-first century may be known as the ‘era of masterpieces’ or perhaps the next step, the ‘era of ideal masterpieces.’

The highest accolade for an art object has been to be labelled a masterpiece. The Oxford dictionary defined masterpiece to be outstanding artistry or skill, a consummate example of excellence.¹⁴ However, within the fine art context, artistry is only part of the equation. Masterpieces are selected according to the western fine art canon and western aesthetic criteria. Aesthetic appreciation is considered an objective tool in western evaluating artworks across all cultures, including western. The desire for objects falls and rise according to their aesthetic ranking, which as previously noted is reflected in their price tag. The value is increased if those judged to have aesthetic value are treated accordingly, that is, exhibited and catalogued. If not for sale, visibility and admiration is important in maintaining value, such as the Mona Lisa compared to The Man in the Golden Helmet.

According to sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, the Euro-centricity of aesthetic evaluation, that is, knowing the right taste—cultural capital—is learned.¹⁵ Today

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¹³ The design duration of the permanent galleries is forecast as ten to fifteen years. Staal, G. and de Rijk, M. 2003: 106.
the public acceptance and recognition of the concept ‘masterpieces’ and their aesthetic values is unconsciously drawn from advertising hype, media, everyday communications and museum exhibitions. Access to the once elite-held cultural capital of familiarity with masterpieces is assisted today by the internet. For instance, the international museum selection titled, *Virtual Collection of Masterpieces* (VCM) promotes international cooperation between Asian and European museums by documenting for public appraisal works of art they consider masterpieces (illus. 165-167). Such international projects foster global appreciation and the continued homogenisation of the western fine art canon across the globe. While the internet is promoting high capital masterpieces through premier auction house and Gallery sites, it also indiscriminately applies the term to mass-produced non-fine art. On the internet, key terms are dependent on who identifies with that term. For example, advertised under the heading ‘Tibetan Masterpiece’ are handcrafted *antique imitations* of classic Tibetan Buddhist thangkas made in Nepal for between USD159-199 (illus. 172). The advertising hype of the internet intensifies the focus of the consumer on the concept of masterpieces. The consumer of antique imitations desires to own a copy of what museums aesthetically evaluate to be *masterpieces*.

Art historians are concerned over the use and application of the term masterpiece. On the one hand, historian John Sekora noted that art historians use the word masterpiece to express respect for the enduring, the universal and the timeless. On the other hand, art historian Hans Belting argued that masterpiece had lost this absolute gloss and had become an excessively and arbitrarily used term of flattery and adulation. Art historian Walter Cahn has written on the notion of masterpieces and like Belting, Cahn wrote that the term

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16 VCM is managed by the National Museum of Ethnology, Leiden. According to June 10, 2009 press release contributors to the VCM were 32 Asian and 35 European museums. In May, 2010, the search engine detailed 36 ‘Tibetan’ masterpieces, which included a liddded skull-cup on a stand. See ‘ASEMUS’ (Asia-Europe Museums Network) in bibliography. Illus. 165-167 in volume two provide thumbnails of the 36 Tibetan masterpieces selected by the VCM.
17 See ‘Tibetan Masterpieces’ in bibliography.
masterpiece is "caught up in a verbal inflationary spiral." In the current global economy, the price of ownership determines which artworks are referred to as masterpieces. The exhibiting and/or selling of masterpieces creates a spectacle of possession—buying at an auction, during New York Asia Week, or a name in the exhibition lenders list. The visibility of ownership validates the act of consuming, such objects are said to possess cultural capital.

Public recognition and participation in the processes of value creation acknowledge and enhance the object’s cultural capital. Museums scholar, Susan Pearce noted that society implicitly creates value through the act of categorizing things and situations as dichotomous either/or labels. For instance, art-like objects are located onto an axis as either authentic or non-authentic and as either masterpiece or artefact (illus. 173). Not only are masterpieces assumed authentic, they are also defined as all those items connoisseurs select as art. Pearce argues that these value creation systems are deeply embedded within our inherited culture—ingrained, unnoticed. The existence of objects as masterpieces is a conceptual element of the Euro-centric inherited culture capital. Therefore, the question what is a masterpiece, could be answered quite simply with, ‘objects that meet public expectations of this term.’

However, within the artworld, the labelling of masterpieces is not left to chance, especially as large sums of money and reputations are at stake. The artworld desires stability and assurance that acclaimed masterpieces will maintain their status and value into the future. The authority to authorize masterpieces is concentrated within an elite group of experts in each artworld sub-category. In addition, a perusal of the lists of lenders from major Tibetan art exhibition catalogues provides evidence that a cadre of collectors repeatedly supply Tibetan masterpieces for exhibition. This results in a short list of Tibetan art professionals selecting objects for major art exhibitions from an elite group of

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20 Cahn, W. 1979: xv.
22 Pearce, S. 2004: 18.
collectors. The concentration of Tibetan art objects and expertise stabilizes and controls the production of knowledge.

Anthropologist Nelson Graburn wrote that, “Art historians and museum curators have worried about authenticity mostly because their professional standing and authority depends on their powers to discriminate.” The concern is heightened by the fact that they are responsible for writing the catalogues that document works of art. As previously discussed, art exhibition catalogues are the foremost carriers of Tibetan art knowledge. They provide new research, stylistic comparisons, references, guide to aesthetic appreciation and wonderful glossy images. Furthermore, these catalogues continue to showcase the curator’s abilities and knowledge to select and exhibit for years to come.

As previously argued, the transformation of Tibetan artefact into art was originally sponsored by the New York Asia Society’s exhibition, The Art of Tibet in 1969. As evidenced by the museum attendances and the increasing price tags, over the ensuing 40 years interest in Tibetan art has grown. America has continued to take a leading role in the selection and exhibition of Tibetan art, particularly its aestheticization. To discover the dominant role in the aestheticization of Tibetan masterpieces I compare and contrast the categorization made by American museums discussed throughout this dissertation with the recent Asian-European museums’ initiative of a Virtual Collection of Masterpieces (VCM) on the internet. This initiative currently consists of over 60 museums, including the Beijing and Tokyo National Museums, Musee Guimet, British Museum, the Victoria and the Albert Museum. The VCM is a virtual museum, which in May 2010 had nominated 1,495 masterpieces. A search for ‘Tibetan’ found 36 nominated Tibetan art masterpieces. Of these, 15 were sculptures and 12 were thangkas (illus. 165; 166; 167). Also included was one

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24 As previously noted in the art exhibition catalogue chapter 5, fn.111, Pal states that if 30% of what he has written stands the test of time it would be “phenomenal.”
25 For list of museums see ASEMUS (Asia-Europe Museums Network).
human skull cup on tripod with lid. The remaining eight items were costumes, ceramics or ritual objects.

The documentation accompanying the selected masterpieces from the VCM virtual catalogue is comprehensive and includes title, measurements, date, how acquired, the history of the object, and importantly, why this object was promoted by the host museum as a masterpiece. The reasons for selecting the object as a masterpiece and the descriptive prose are seldom comparable to that used by American museums to describe Tibetan objects. Few exhibit the same type of description demonstrated in the catalogue for the Chicago show, *Himalayas An Aesthetic Adventure*, 2003. However, one example from the VCM that did was the fifteenth century fire-gilded bronze sculpture of *Arhat Kanakavatsa*, held in the German State Museum of Ethnology in Munich. The concluding sentence reads “The expression and sensitive features of this statue are of unusual harmony and tenderness” (illus. 168).

An explanation for the difference between the VCM entries with the American museums is that the Asia-European museums have not fully embraced the American commodity-led aestheticization of masterpieces. The VCM entries refer to rarity but not in order to confirm the object as unique and valuable, but rather to include it as an example of art from Tibet. Entries included such statements as “one of the best Tibetan pieces” in the collection; illustrates “aesthetic ideas of earlier times;” and, “It tells us much about itself and about the drama it experienced.” Other items were selected as masterpieces because of their religious or sacred nature. The human bone skull cup was an instance of this rationale. The entry for *Why this is a masterpiece* stated, “We don’t know how and when this holy relic reached the museum. An aura of mystery envelops

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26 There were 1,495 masterpieces entries in total on May 20, 2010. The 36 Tibetan samples were too small to divide the data into ethnographic and fine art museums. In addition, museums such as the Leiden are ambiguous in respect to masterpiece status and museums like the British are inclusive museums, which bridge ethnographic and fine art museums. Furthermore, these ethnographic museums hold many objects that if they entered the art market, connoisseurs and fine art museums would compete to own.

27 The masterpieces described were: Buddha Gautama (EM-21689); Buddha Amitayas (AMM D-823); Yama-Yami (70.45-165); and Sacred Vessel Kapala/Tod.pa (MPE 142643) respectively. See ASEMUS (Asia-Europe Museums Network).
it and, along with its deep esoteric meaning, make it particularly evocative item” (illus. 169). The VCM appears to be equating the masterpiece with the emotion of salvaging Tibet’s past. This issue which is also raised in American museum descriptions.

The age and condition of artworks, which are important criteria for the valuation of Tibetan art in American museums, appear as low priorities in the selection of VCM masterpieces. For instance, more than half the Tibetan masterpieces nominated by the VCM were produced after 1700. In contrast, the 2003 Chicago exhibition exhibited only 12 objects (15.6%), which were estimated to be made on or after 1700 out of 187. The emphasis on age accentuates the Chicago’s selection bias for the antique, whereas the VCM also included early twentieth century objects, such as the set of 63 thangkas collected in 1909 (see illus. 170). The VCM entry reads,

**Why this is a masterpiece**
As individual pieces, these thangkas have no great value, but as a diversified collection, they form a unique set of Tibetan Buddhist religious art...

**History of the Object**
The thangkas are painted by Chinese artists in workshops at the Wutai Shan Mountain and transported to Urga (Mongolia) to be sold there. They were new and unmounted at the time of acquisition, so the colours were - and still are - bright and undamaged. The set represents a peculiar Sino-Mongolian style of Tibetan Buddhist painting.

The VCM entry for this collection of thangkas highlights the differences between the current American and Asia-European application of the term masterpieces to Tibetan art in particular. The current promotion of the major Tibetan art exhibitions in America focuses on promoting an essentialized view of Tibetan art as timeless, antique and Tibetan. The above VCM entry problematizes this essentialized view. This particular group of designated Tibetan art masterpieces are just over 100 years old. The Chinese artists painted them for Mongolian Tibetan Buddhist practitioners. Furthermore, their presence in a Mongolian shop

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29 ASEMUS (Asia-Europe Museums Network): “Masterpieces- VKVK4851-67,70,72,86,92.”
hints at their intention as souvenirs, especially as the entry notes that they were unmounted. Early western collectors tended to discard the textile surrounds and scroll rods in preference for western framing. The promotion of this group as masterpieces foregrounds the ambiguities of Tibetan art, including the continuing practice of Tibet’s ‘timeless’ art tradition, non-Tibetan ethnicity of artists and the non-Tibetan location of artist studios. In the aesthetization of Tibetan art, the dominating narrative of ‘lost or dying’ Tibetan culture and traditions suppress such ambiguities.

It also appears that the Asian-European museums do not put the same emphasis on condition in the selection of masterpieces. For instance, the bright new synthetic colours of later thangkas such as the group discussed above is not entertained. However, the pressure of aesthetic appreciation on American collecting has created competition for proven aged thangkas in pristine condition. In Chicago 2003, worn and recent painted thangkas were not included in the ‘greatest show’ of Tibetan art. Equally, the thangka exhibited as the VCM ‘masterpiece of the day’ on May 20, 2010, would not be included. The late nineteenth-early twentieth century thangka of Ushnishasitatapatra was included because she was as favourite of museum visitors and if missing she was constantly enquired after (illus 171).

When compared to recent Tibetan art masterpieces exhibited in America, many of the Tibetan objects included in the VCM selection would not be classified by the American art market as masterpieces, nor would their price tags reflect aesthetic value. However, this was not always the case, in 1969. Pal borrowed almost a third of the New York Asia Society exhibition from European museums. They included museums which are now involved with the VCM project. This included the Guimet, the British Museum and the Leiden Museum. In contrast, Pal did not borrow any artworks from these European sources in 2003 for the

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30 The Leiden museum curator for Tibetan art Peter Pott noted that by 1911 Chinese artisans in Peking were manufacturing Tibetan Buddhist objects for the tourist trade. Pott, P. 1964: 153-154.
31 She is a manifestation of White Tara.
Chapter Seven - The Ideal Image

Chicago exhibition. He did borrow one seventeenth century Nepalese painting from the Institut d’Etudes Indiennes, College de France and three early sculptures from the Nyingjei Lam Collection, at the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford. Pal also borrowed from European dealers including Carlo Christi (Italy), Rossi and Rossi (London) and private collectors such as Michael Hess.  

The shift in borrowing patterns between the NYAS 1969 and CHICAGO 2003 exhibitions provides evidence that the European and Asian museums have not followed the aestheticized selection and exhibition focus of American consumers in contrast to the European dealers and collectors. This latter group are active in the global Asian art value creation processes, such as attending and/or participating in the New York Asia Week art fairs, where they maintain and influence the direction of the American Tibetan art market. European collectors and dealers profit from America’s dynamic value creating processes.

In 1999, the Sotheby’s representative of Tibetan art, Carlton Rochell, advised The Art Newspaper reporter to watch the Indian, Himalayan and Southeast Asian auction sales. He stated,

This is the strongest [Sotheby’s] have ever put together with [USD]6-8 million of property ... It is also an area which sells predominantly to New York collectors rather than the Southeast Asian market. Top lot is a ferocious Sino-Tibetan gilt-bronze figure of Yamantaka from the fifteenth century, with eighteen legs trampling on hideous demons and thirty-six arms wielding various attributes. Its impeccable provenance dates back to 1904. Produced in the imperial workshops of China it is superbly andpowerfully modelled and expected to make a world record (estimate [USD]700,000-900,000).

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34 Further research into what is happening in European museums would shed light on this matter. During the plenary session of the 2003 Chicago symposium, Pal noted that he was unable to exhibit his original ‘wish list’ because nations such as India and Pakistan were reluctant to give permission for their treasures to leave the country. There was also discussion on the objects Pal wished to borrow and was refused and because they were not on public display, questions arose about whether they had been damaged or surreptitiously sold and therefore were not available to borrow.
35 To counter the dominance of the American Tibetan art market, the British countered with their own Asia Week, inaugurated in 1997.
In this same article, the Christie’s Tibetan art representative also noted the increasing importance of American consumers to the Tibetan artworld. Dr Hugo Weihe stated, “there is currently a huge interest in Buddhism and Tibetan art in particular and we are aiming to broaden people’s awareness of a much greater range of Southeast Asian art. Seventy percent of buyers in the September sale were American and many of these were completely new collectors, so the market here is very strong indeed.” The reporter highlighted the Tibetan gilt bronze of Lokapala, “still inlaid with semi-precious stones” and “close in style and date to the bronzes found on the now destroyed Densatil monastery (estimate USD20,000-25,000).” With such comments, the reporter has implied the sculptures’ rarity—it still has all its stones—and that it has survived the destruction of the Chinese Communists. The narrative of rarity and ‘loss of Tibetan culture’ are themes that coincide with the U.S. driven revaluation of Tibetan artefacts into art, launched in 1969.

Authenticity and Authority—The overpainting controversy
I argue that the interrelationship between authority and authenticity is brought into focus by the alleged practice of overpainting. The practice of painting ‘over’ the entirety of a thangka is reportedly a recent phenomenon. The products of this practice ‘out-sparkle’ comparatively drab thangkas in original condition of similar age which exhibit flattened and worn flaky paint, an inevitable consequence of intermittent rolling and unrolling. The said overpainted thangkas are attracting high prices, reflecting their harmony with the demands of the art market for museum-quality masterpieces. I argue that overpainting is an effect of the ‘over’ aestheticization of thangkas and the resulting creation of an increasing demand for unrealistic museum-quality works. Because the market

38 E.M. 1999. These comments also signpost the issues of dating to style and the role of caretaking and salvaging in promoting the collection of Tibetan art within America.
39 Boyer, M. and Terrier J.M. 2006. Many thangkas did sparkle from the addition of ground mica to the paint, pigment ground from stones such as green from malachite and blue from lapis lazuli, and the final embellishment of gold. Further to this, the peaks and valleys of fresh, un-flattened paint add shine by reflecting light. See also Jackson, P. and J. 1988.
is unable to meet the raised aesthetic yardstick, this alleged practice of overpainting is one consequence.

What is meant by overpainting? In art practice, overpainting is the final layer of paint applied over an underpainted layer. The underpainted surface defines the basic shapes and design, while overpainting fills in the detail. However, in the current Tibetan artworld context, the overpainting is not part of the original production. Rather, the Tibetan thangka is overpainted at another time by artists/technicians other than the original artist(s). Overpainting is a polite term for over-restoration.

The issue of overpainting remains a delicate topic in the Tibetan artworld. I have taken my information on alleged overpainting from two articles both appearing in the commentary section of the international Asian art periodical, Orientations. The first article to raise this issue was authored by three leading and respected Tibetan art scholars, Rob Linrothe, Christian Luczanits and Jeff Watt. The article is titled Turning a Blind Eye. The second article was a dismissive reply, authored by Robert Bruce-Gardner, a conservator and former director of the Courtauld Institute of Art in London, titled Eyes Wide Shut. A later article by veteran Himalayan art researcher Mary Shepherd Slusser congratulated the courage of the magazine and the authors to explore this issue. She added further overpainted examples to the debate and argued for a lighter restorer’s hand. Shepherd Slusser stated that if we value the paintings’ authenticity and use far lighter hands “we will come to realize that the beauty

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40 This is not to say Tibetans did not over paint their ritual artefacts. A prominent display of this is the yearly whitewash of the Boudhanath and Swaymabhunath stupas in Kathmandu.
41 While I am only discussing thangka’s here, there is a similar problem of sculptures being over-restored, for example the removal of dents, replacing lost precious and semi-precious stones. I have also witnessed the modeling of an arm to be made and reattached to a large standing deity. It should be remembered that the same casting skills are in use in present day Kathmandu, as they were for the last thousand years.
we were seeking through heavy-handed restoration was there all along in the *magic of the original.*"44

In general, Tibetan thangkas arrive in the west in need of restoration.45 The harsh Tibetan environment, frequent handling of the portable scroll-like nature of thangkas and their inclusion in ritual performances provide less than ideal preservation conditions. In ritual settings, thangkas are subjected to the spluttering dense fumes given off by butter lamps, by the thick acrid clouds of Tibetan incense, and the scattering of propitious offerings in honour of the deities. The thangkas are not on permanent display. They are rolled and unrolled, stressing the sizing and paint causing the paint to crack and flake. Under storage and hanging conditions, thangkas are subjected to water damage and vermin nesting and feeding. These life circumstances explain the creases, stains, diminished and/or lost detail portrayed by most thangkas. The reverse image of a thangka seen in illus. 172b depicts characteristic damage, especially the water stains and dirt.46 The damage is less obvious on the front of the same image (illus. 172a).

The 2003 Chicago exhibition billed as the “greatest show of art of this kind,” exhibited thangkas with minor or no distracting wear and tear marks, whereas the New York Asia Society 1969 catalogue featured many thangkas with obvious damage. This visual discrepancy from ‘worse-for-wear’ to minimal damage in just over thirty years is significant, even if the 2003 exhibition was selecting the best from a larger range than that which was available for the 1969 exhibition. Another advance since 1969 is an increased understanding of Tibetan art materials, painting methods and improved conservation practices, which have meant the preservation of thangkas with minimal intervention. However, this does not fully explain the appearance of a number of early-dated near perfect

44 Shepherd Slusser, Mary. 2005: 74 (Shepherd Slusser emphasis).
45 Mary Shepherd Slusser documents how she acquired six Nepalese paintings and their poor condition. Some were not complete, torn, patched with pieces from other thangkas, and trimmed to appear neat. Shepherd, M.S.
46 Seeing the back of a thangka is informative about the actual condition of the front, if restoration has been carried out and an indication of the extent of the restoration.
thangkas, which were exhibited in the three major art exhibitions touring the United States in 2003. Moreover, Linrothe, Luczanits and Watts reported that these near-perfect thangkas had already been exhibited in their previously worn state.

It is noteworthy that the recent appearance of near-perfect early century thangkas represents the reality of what has been progressively idealized as Tibetan art since 1969. Linrothe, Luczanits and Watts note with some concern that the dominant emphasis on aesthetic appreciation is shifting public expectations and creating unrealistic demands for near-perfect early century thangkas. They write, “In the early 1990s fresh paintings sharing a palette and impeccable condition began to penetrate the upper echelon of the market. In their perfection they succeeded in changing our expectations of what Himalayan masterpieces should look like.” I would add that this ‘type’ of thangka were a response to the positive selection/exhibition and value creation processes, which had been acting on the objects since the 1969 exhibition. The fact that these alleged overpainted thangka were attracting “astronomical” sums is evidence of market desire. By attracting high price tags, the overpainted thangkas are confirmed as masterpieces, which in a circular motion, attracts status, selection in major art exhibitions, buyers, investors and similar masterpieces.

While the wear and tear of thangkas records their participation within Tibetan life, the western art market is less interested in the romanticism of darkened temples, which caused the smoke and oil damage or the damage caused by the injudicious removal of the objects from the temple environs. The western market is more interested in the thangkas’ collectable status as Tibetan art. Western authentication of Tibetan art is reliant on stylistic embellishments, subject matter, dedication scripts and other written notation for dating, locating region of origin and describing the object. But authentication does not rely on

the scars and cumulative debris of lived indigenous practices. From this perspective, careful cleaning may reveal further evidence needed to establish the thangkas point of manufacture. Furthermore, the wear and tear unnecessarily impacts upon its aesthetic appearance, and ultimately its monetary value. If poor preservation is counter to the current art market’s demand for museum-quality works, the natural market-driven desire is to ‘fix’ the damaged thangkas. Here lies one part of the controversy—conservation versus restoration ethics. With such pressure for beauty, at what point in the conservation/restoration process is the integrity of the thangka compromised and becomes a case of over-restoring?

It is necessary to raise this ethical issue but it is not my intention to discuss this any further. My concern in introducing the alleged practice of overpainting is to tease out the interrelationship between authenticity and authority by focusing on the second part to the controversy, which is the tension between the loss of aesthetic and monetary value versus the potential loss of iconography and narrative integrity. Trust in an object’s authenticity is important to establishing the legitimacy of an artwork and its ability to achieve super prices. The public reporting of concerns about overpainting should have opened a debate on

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52 Art historian Ivan Gaskell suggests that with current globalization of art from all cultures into a canon of universal aesthetics, that perhaps there is a need to redefine and resurrect the term beauty. Gaskell, I. 2003a. Pal interchanges the terms aesthetics and beauty.
53 For the convenience of the reader, I have included a number of references in the bibliography on the ethics and standards for restoring artworks. For general discussion on conservation ethics see: Clavir, M. 2002; Clavir, M. 1998. For specific to Tibetan thangkas see Shaftel, A. 1986; Leoshko, J. 1998; Blyth-Hill, V. 1998; Goldman, J. 1998; Batton, S.S. 1998. Another ethical consideration not discussed here is the opening of consecrated Tibetan sculptures, see Reedy, C. 1991; and the ethics of studying and conserving Tibetan sculpture, see Reedy, C. 1992. In the first place, overpainting is contrary to best-practice conservation and restoration processes. In general, conservators determine how to save the integrity of the artwork, using scientific knowledge to stabilize the artwork. Where necessary the work is cleaned, paint loss filled in only to the point of not distracting the viewer. Furthermore, the restoration is undertaken with an understanding that it can be reversed with no damage to the artwork. Throughout history, there has been controversy over restoration work, the re-touching and/or the removal of grime and varnish has leading to accusations of barbarism, vandalism and the ruination of numerous paintings. For an example, see the discussion over the restoration of Leonardo’s Last Supper, such as Palmer, A. 1998; and, the explanations of the restorer of the Last Supper, see Barcilon, P.B. and Marani, P.C. 2001. For a history on the development of conservation practices and an understanding of the difference between conservation and restoration, see Clavir, M. 1998: 1-8. Sheldon Keck gives a brief historical review of cleaning controversies in a paper delivered to annual meeting of the American Institute of Conservation. Keck, S. 1984.
whether this practice compromised the authenticity of the alleged overpainted thangkas. It did not.

Rather the debate was arrested.\textsuperscript{54} Firstly, the intention of the three authors in raising the overpainting issue was to open discussion into this practice.\textsuperscript{55} The public response penned by conservator and former Courtauld Institute director Bruce-Gardner was measured to reinforce the importance of aesthetics and connoisseurship in evaluating Tibetan art in opposition to the opinions of desk-bound scholars. The dampening of debate avoided any publicity which had the potential to spoil the current buoyant Tibetan art market. Secondly, there was no denial of the alleged practice. Bruce-Gardner’s defence for overpainting was premised on aesthetic appreciation versus his perceptions of the three scholar’s pernickety focus on iconography.

Furthermore, the reply did not engage with the specific issues raised in the overpainting article and it takes on a dismissive patrician tone. The reply refers to the three academics as “iconographically obsessed” and reassures the public that if the scholars could take their eyes off the “fixed laminate sheet with a picture on it” [the computer] they too would appreciate the real-life physical beauty of the thangka. Bruce-Gardner concludes, “I really can recommend to everybody an open, receptive and wide-eyed approach to the appreciation of art.”\textsuperscript{56} The wide-eyed approach privileges the connoisseur’s gaze, the learned detached disinterestedness of appreciating a picture for its own sake, rather than its status as a cultural icon.

The three scholars who raised the issue were very careful in wording their article to an audience that also employs them. They mention the iconographic misinformation, double standards at work, the violation of conservation ethics

\textsuperscript{54} Arrested history is the postponing of the telling. The history/story is archived for some time in the future. This issue will be expanded in the next chapter. McGranahan, C. 2005.

\textsuperscript{55} Linrothe, R. et al. 2004.

\textsuperscript{56} Bruce-Gardner, R. 2005: 126. In interviews that Bakewell and her colleagues conducted, they found that there was tension between those that emphasized the importance of iconography in assessing the object and those who were more concerned with connoisseurship particularly in America. Bakewell, E. et al. 1988: 143-150.
and the need for restoration disclosure, without which forgery (deceptive intentions) becomes an issue.\textsuperscript{57} They were not implying that the thangkas were fakes, but rather overpainting had the potential to compromise the narrative integrity of the thangka and the original storyteller, the indigenous painter. Bruce-Gardner identifies forgery as an issue. He suggests that this could be proved by technical analysis but concludes that this is not necessary because to the expert the “masterpiece” will “sing sweetly” and the “fake” will be “shrill and strident.” He adds it is “sad to note how many in the field appears to be tone deaf.”\textsuperscript{58} Bruce-Gardner’s appeal is again to aesthetics and connoisseurship, and not to the integrity of narrative or authenticity of the thangkas. He seems to be suggesting that the poor condition of many of the thangkas which arrive onto the western market are less than authentic in terms of condition to that of the artist’s original intention, and that to be a masterpiece they need restoring in order to “sing sweetly.”

These two articles represent different approaches to art history. In contrast to Bruce-Gardner’s aesthetic approach, Linrothe, Luczanits and Watt are interested in the iconography of the Tibetan thangkas. That is, the branch of art history popularized by Erwin Panofsky, where the approach is the identification and classification of visual content and meaning.\textsuperscript{59} Iconography is an important tools in the identification of Tibetan Buddhist deities and it also an important resource to assess the integrity of the work. For example particular mudras (hand gestures) asanas (leg positions), vehicles (means of transport), attributes (ritual tools held), forms of dress, body colour, not to mention the number of heads, arms and legs, all help to define a Tibetan deity. A further concern is that the addition of certain flourishes, colouration, or fabric enhancement compromises stylistic interpretations, which are necessary for dating Tibetan artefacts and locating their origin. Iconography does not undermine aesthetic appreciation, but

\textsuperscript{57} Dutton, D. 2006: (section 2.1).
\textsuperscript{58} Bruce-Gardner, R. 2005: 126.
\textsuperscript{59} Panofsky, E. 1972. Iconography is the identification of visual content and iconology is the analysis of this content.
on the other hand, from Bruce-Gardner’s point of view, iconography and style are secondary to aesthetics.

Furthermore, overpainting appears to be a practice primarily carried out by westerners, and not by the Tibetan community. As previously mentioned, it is difficult to find a Tibetan voice from within the world of western representation of Tibetan art. Therefore, it is not surprising that there is no public record of Tibetan opinion on the alleged practice of overpainting. When asked about the general absence of Tibetans within the Tibetan artworld, the common reply is that the Tibetans are not interested in their own art. The same reply was repeated at the Chicago plenary session in 2003. But there are many known examples of Tibetan overpainting and care for revered artworks, such as worn thangkas being stitched behind a new representation of the same thangka, a favoured image will continue to be copied through the centuries or a worn thangka stored inside a stupa or inside sculptures.

For Tibetans, once the ritual artefacts are consecrated they become the manifested presence of that deity. Moreover, while the objects may fall out of use, be desecrated, stolen or sold, the objects’ sanctity is not destroyed. According to thangka conservator, Ann Shaftel the power of a Tibetan object is only destroyed when it is either burned or buried. Thus, for Tibetans the images remain firmly within the frame of ritual objects, their power undiminished by western ways. To the west, the ritual objects are survivors of a lost culture, which historically had a particular fascination. Once salvaged, art authorities recognized that certain artefacts belonged within the universal fine art canon prompting their transformation into art. While a Tibetan object’s authenticity is underwritten by virtue of the fact that it is ‘Tibetan,’ in reality it

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60 There is a market developing for contemporary Tibetan art. For examples of contemporary Tibetan artists and artworks, see commercial London gallery Rossi and Rossi. For a discussion on the positioning politics of contemporary Tibetan artists, see Harris, C. 1999.  
61 The inscription on the back of a thangka, Buddha Sakyamuni, Cat. No.114, gives a list of items which were stored in a stupa for eleventh century Tibetan lama and translator, Gos Lotsawa. This thangka was one of the items. Pal, P. 2003: image and description pp. 174-175; inscription and translation pp. 290.  
is the western art market, which authenticates them as western art commodities. This said the very acceptance of the alleged overpainted thangkas into major Tibetan art exhibitions; their continuing presence in the value creation process, and the art markets preparedness to purchase them, all go to validate their authenticity. Furthermore, the museum audience is learning to see that authentic is near-perfect ‘museum-quality’ rather than the wonder of the object’s life biography as it has passed through many hands over the centuries.\(^{63}\)

Cultural historians Spencer Crew and James Sims write, “Authenticity is not about factuality or reality. It is about authority.”\(^{64}\) Authenticity is about discriminating taste, a subjective judgement\(^{65}\) made in accordance with the western canon. Museums use their authority as arbiters of taste to provide the artworld with an evaluating ‘yardstick.’\(^{66}\) Furthermore, the museum curators, connoisseurs, art historians, leading dealers and the elite collectors use the same language and premise—aesthetics/connoisseurship—to evaluate Tibetan art.\(^{67}\) With one voice, the Tibetan artworld inculcates Tibetan art enthusiasts and the interested public with certain expectations, such as beauty and timelessness. The concept of ‘timelessness,’ that is, an object transcending time and place is an important expectation.\(^{68}\) Obvious wear and tear, particularly of thangkas, is an unwanted reminder of fragility and loss of value, undoing the expectations of timelessness. In contrast, in the case of sculptures subjected to catastrophic damage, such as loss of heads and arms, timelessness is valourized.\(^{69}\)

By overpainting the thangkas, they are returned to their former glory, which also visually returns them to their timeless past. Overpainting forms a nexus with Tibetan artworld expectations of timelessness, aesthetics and authenticity. By returning the thangka to timelessness, it is also returning them to their point of

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\(^{63}\) Heritage researcher Deepak Chhabra discusses the role of curatorial direction in the public negotiation and acceptance of concepts of authenticity. Chhabra, D. 2007.


\(^{65}\) Opperman, H. 1990: 9.

\(^{66}\) Pearce, S. 1995: 392.


\(^{68}\) Desai, V. 1995: 170 (Desai emphasis).

\(^{69}\) The valorization of sculpture and ruins is discussed in the following chapter.
origin and to their newly painted surface. However, while the act of overpainting returns the thangka to its former glory, it may not be returning it to the original intentions of the artist. There appears to be no attempt to take into account the artist's intention or the cultural milieu at the time the artwork was originally completed.\textsuperscript{70} This matter concerned Linrothe, Luczanits and Watt. They alleged that there is evidence that the overpainted thangkas have had unknown detail filled in and some details have been modified to enhance aesthetic appeal (illus. 173a-b). Their concerns are for loss of narrative integrity, unsubstantiated change in iconography and the conflation of stylistic elements. Apart from aesthetic valuation, the detail modified is used to date and locate where the thangka was made. Therefore, nondisclosure has the capacity to distort western research into Tibetan art. For example, Los Angeles County Museum conservator Janice Leoshko relates how when restoring a thangka the missing paint areas were colour-washed to replicate the original ground. This thangka was subsequently published and a scholar unaware of the restoration work based detailed research on how the Tibetan artist had chosen to leave the window blank.\textsuperscript{71}

A further concern expressed by the three scholars was the lack of disclosure at the point of sale and the absence of documentation, particularly before and after the thangka was painted over. Their concern highlights the issue of transparency within artworlds \textit{per se}. Art critic David Carrier has voiced his concern over the close relationships between art authorities and arbiters of taste within the art market.\textsuperscript{72} Art historian James Beck also noted that the pressures of the art market and vested interests could direct art research outcomes.\textsuperscript{73} Pearce also wrote,

\begin{quote}
    The essential paradox of the art market in all its manifestations is the notion that 'high culture'—that is, work
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{70} A good example of interpreting the artist's intention at the time of cleaning is given by Michael Swicklik. The painting was John Constable's \textit{The White Horse}, which had been extensively overpainted. Swicklik, M. 1998.
\textsuperscript{71} Leoshko, J. 1993.
\textsuperscript{72} Carrier, D. 2003a: 183.
\textsuperscript{73} Beck, J. 1998: 38. He was commenting on a statue attributed to Michelangelo, which he was arguing was not a Michelangelo.
which is by definition honourable and sacred—can be the subject of commercial transactions conducted for profit and within the ethic of the market-place. However nicely disguised, the bald facts of gain and loss, of calculation and investment, show through.⁷⁴

A further reason to bring this alleged practice into the open is to question the transparency of the selection and exhibition processes. This is particularly concerning because institutions, their agents and artworld associates, including connoisseurs, elite collectors and dealers underwrite authenticity. It is the same elite collectors/connoisseurs and dealers who lend their privately-owned artworks for museum exhibitions. In return, these artworks are validated by their inclusion in the institution’s exhibition and catalogue. The co-dependency which has evolved has the danger of appearing complicit in directing the value creating process towards privately owned artworks.

The authoritative message of the connoisseur and art market is relayed to the public through exhibitions, catalogues and network events such as auctions viewing, fairs and exhibition openings. In the case of overpainting, if museums were exhibiting alleged overpainted thangkas, then it would be generally assumed that overpainting is an acceptable practice. That is, the overpainted is more authentic because they (re)present the thangka at point of creation and not in its worn and damaged state. Those thangkas that are overpainted, shine as they once did. They are now an appropriate vessel for the deities.⁷⁵

The alleged practice of overpainting juxtaposes the authentic-lived Tibetan ritual artefact against the western expectations of what is authentic Tibetan art. That is, the evidence of use versus sublime beauty. In her discussion on Canadian native claims and cultural appropriation, Rosemary Coombe states that an “[authentic artefact] must locate itself in an untouched, pristine state that

⁷⁴ Pearce, S. 1995: 381.
⁷⁵ A team of western conservators unveiled their restoration of a Tibetan temple to the local Mustang population. The locals questioned why there were unpainted gaps in the murals. The conservators countered that there was no painted record to guide them and it would have been inauthentic to paint in new material, on the other hand, the locals were distressed by the loss of beauty—the murals were unfinished and unsuitable homes for the gods.
bespeaks a timeless essence in a particular cultural tradition." Furthermore she adds that the act of transforming artefact into art shifts the objects from the indigenous frame into the "canon of civilization" and universal history. Once the object is removed from indigenous everyday, the elements that governed its indigenous authenticity are also disconnected, and what makes this artefact 'authentic' art is written according to western fine art values. Here again, it is those Tibetan artworks that portray these universal elements that will be selected as authentic Tibetan art. Over time, skewed selection based on the dominant criteria such as dominant aesthetic appreciation will result in limiting the range of selection and demands for artworks to conform to pre-conceptions, in this case, the restoration of appearances before the employment of the thangka in Tibetan ritual usage.

Furthermore, the alleged practice of overpainting does not appear to violate the meaning of authentic. They are not fakes, nor false works. At worst, their original state has been compromised without disclosure. A classic example of the ambiguity of authenticity and the reliance on authority to judge what is authentic is the case of the painting *The Man in the Golden Helmet* previously attributed to Rembrandt. Historically, this painting was one of the best known and recognized works in the early to mid twentieth century, but its reattribution to a hand other than Rembrandt wiped off its masterpiece gloss. The painting was still authentic, but it was not an authentic Rembrandt. The public had learned to value *The Man in the Golden Helmet* through the value creation processes. Its promotional profile was extremely high, and it was reproduced for souvenirs on posters and ceramics plates, as well as in art texts. Once its authenticity was compromised, the value creation processes stopped and it has since been relegated to an obscure museum wall.

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76 Coombe, R. 1993: 258.
77 Coombe, R. 1993: 258.
78 For discussion on the relationship of authentic to inauthentic, see Dutton, D. 2006.
While it is the aim of authorities to reveal the truth, at the same time, the authorities are constrained by their discipline’s discourse and the socio-political dogma of the time in which they are writing.\textsuperscript{80} Despite the fact that the value creation processes and selection methodology underwrite Tibetan art values, the perception is that museum exhibition practices are impartial. Interestingly, art history is not ruled by judicial or sovereign law but by an apparent natural law, that of normalization—that is, the governance of familiarity and of tradition—the way it has always been. But it is the privileged access to, and the restrictive production and ownership of knowledge, which has generated this normalization of discourse. The arbitrariness of knowledge is rendered stable and consistent by the sanctity of institutionalized discourse\textsuperscript{81} Foucault noted that “part of the overall functioning of power” is the ability to represent a way of seeing that does not appear artificial.\textsuperscript{82} The public learn to see and to know under the tutelage of authoritative bodies, such as institutions, curators, and art discourse.

Authority, according to Foucault, is a complex web where the exclusive right to speak is reinforced by public acceptance.\textsuperscript{83} Authority is conventionally vested in the producers of knowledge, such as professionals, institutions and government bodies. Their authoritative positions as exhibitor, dealer, researcher, curator or collector construct and maintain particular fields of discourse. These fields or disciplines establish systems through which they control the production of discourse. Disciplines act as gatekeepers, which control and restrain access to information and construct lineages of ideas.\textsuperscript{84} These lineages not only carry knowledge but they also carry the discipline’s authority. The authority of discourse lies in its relationship to knowledge, such that discourse is deployed to divide, exclude, restrict, marginalize, limit, classify, categorize, radicalize and importantly normalize.\textsuperscript{85} If the provenance and/or signature are insecure or absent there are three ways in which artworld authorities authenticate art, they are: the expert’s certificate; opinion of a committee of experts; or a judgement

\textsuperscript{80} Golden, M. and Toohey, P. 1997: 5.
\textsuperscript{81} Gordon, C. 1980: 1106-107.
\textsuperscript{82} Foucault, M. 1979: 171.
\textsuperscript{83} Foucault, M. 1972: 216.
\textsuperscript{84} Jean and John Comaroff noted in Dening, G. 2003: 472.
\textsuperscript{85} Best, S. 1995: 94.
of individual scholars appearing in catalogues. Again, such authentication is reliant on connoisseurship.\textsuperscript{86}

The art audience is presented with masterpieces, selected, exhibited, described, photographed and already within the value creation processes. Any foreignness is interpreted, assimilated and rendered familiar within western discourse.\textsuperscript{87} The audience yields to authority and the mediation of the art authorities. The masterpiece is accepted as authentic, there are few opportunities for the audience to intercede on behalf of an artwork, or question authorities, unless they are central players within the artworld. The overpainting controversy proves that even experts in the field have difficulty in engaging within their discipline if this attention is undesired. In other words, within the artworld authenticity and authority is dependant on knowledge and position within the artworld. The art audience accepts that certain members of the artworld posses the knowledge to make judgements, especially those considered connoisseurs.

However, there is a concern that the focused selection by a small minority will lead to a reduction of categories and/or similar types over different categories. The preference shift to early century clean and ‘sparkling’ thangkas is an example of the effect which over aestheticization can have on the category of Tibetan paintings. The same shift in aesthetic preferences can be applied to sculpture, such as cleaning, replacing the missing semiprecious stones and reworking the patina. Such practices produce a similar outcome across different Tibetan art categories. Over aestheticization has an homogenizing effect on Tibetan art.

\textsuperscript{86} For further discussions on authentication and connoisseurship, see Spencer, R. 2004.
\textsuperscript{87} Ricoeur, P. 1981: 159.
The Homogenizing Effect

Joseph Alsop refers to the term homogenizing as the loss of smaller independent art traditions, destroyed by the “impact of high-technical society.” Here the imperative tread of aglobalized art market acts as a homogenizing force by pressuring smaller independent communities into participating in the global community. Relative large sums offered for objects held by impoverished individuals are motivation to sell or pillage from other sources. A consequence of this participation is the transformation of their heritage into global commodities and the potential to diminish the upkeep of traditional ways. Irrespective of their ethnicity, the western fine art canon, current fashion and the demands of the art market moderate what is transformed. The significance of becoming part of the global economy and its influential actions on smaller communities is that, their heritage enters the global value creation processes of the artworld. These processes operate independent to the communities’ desires.

By the time the objects are available to the consumer, the objects have already undergone several aesthetic appraisals—from the initial provider, perhaps a Tibetan refugee to the London or New York dealer. Each step of the value creating process has judged whether the object has the ‘qualities’ for the next level of art connoisseurship. This selection practice is subjective, very often the criteria are according to precedent which has determined consumer interest. Heightened demand for particular objects increases the chances that other similar objects are also desired. The pressure of competition for desired objects not only increases the price tag, but also validates the selection criteria. A consequence of such market forces limits what is selected by the artworld and transformed to become fine art. Thus, the selection process has an homogenizing effect on what is realized as art.

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89 This is especially the case where objects are illegally removed from the community, an issue that is discussed in the next chapter.
90 An interesting insight to the step process of initial find to runners to dealers can be found in a story on the consuming of American antiques, Freund, T. 1983.
91 The added pressure on objects not selected or restricted to a non-elite range of consumers is their survival. Without significant value, they are more likely to be seen as souvenirs, exotic
Within the western artworld, words and images act as the homogenizing agents. How, when and why particular words are chosen and used restraints access to knowledge and the interpretation and understanding of western art discourse. How words and images are used may also affect research directions. Philosopher Anna Brzyski states, “Each canon is predicated on a claim to absolute authority. In each case, the canon identifies those works that define a particular tradition (in a particular way) and that are therefore considered to be the most significant and worthy of study by those embracing that particular conception of the tradition.”\(^{92}\) For instance, the use of fine art vocabulary and museum display techniques on the Tibetan objects in the NYAS The Art of Tibet exhibition and catalogue, authenticated participation and enthusiasm in, until then, an ambiguous art category, as previously discussed in chapter two, Materializing Tibet.

The homogenizing forces acting on Tibetan art are not necessarily visible, but rather, silent collective agreement and/or acceptances by western artworld authorities as to what qualifies as appropriate Tibetan art performances and experiences.\(^{93}\) Homogenization, or ‘McDonaldization’ as it is sometimes referred to, is the standardization of experience.\(^{94}\) Institutions, such as museums, control how and what is delivered and experienced via their monopoly on the selection and exhibition processes. The value creation processes repeat these experiences reinforcing the initial selections. As art theorist Elizabeth Grierson noted, this repetition homogenizes art by reducing difference. She wrote, “In this legitimising process [the ever-circulating discourse of the art-world] difference is too easily obfuscated in the determination and re-inscription of art and its value.”\(^{95}\) Sameness underwrites a determining security of ‘oneness’ across the Tibetan artworld. If everyone’s collecting experiences are moderated by the

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\(^{92}\) Brzyski, A. 2007: 5.


\(^{95}\) Grierson, E. 2007: 534 (Grierson emphasis).
same principles as to what qualify as masterpieces, then the category is stabilized and price less vulnerable to the uncertainties of taste.

I argue that the dominance of aesthetic values in the selective practices of the Tibetan artworld emphasizes the object’s desirability. This desire is not just a passion to own, but also a consuming passion to see, to know, to feel. This passion recognizes the object’s aura, the object’s sacred nature, not as an art or religious object, but ‘sacred in its own sake.’ Tibetan art objects present a case for collapsing Stephen Greenblatt’s concept of two distinct models for the exhibition of artworks, resonance and wonder.\textsuperscript{96} He describes resonance as the ability of an object to convey the “complex, dynamic cultural forces” from which the object originated, whereas, wonder is the power of the object to inspire awe, which stops the viewer in their tracks. Wrapped in western imaginings and the contemporary populous appeal of Tibetan Buddhism, Tibetan art communicates both the timelessness of Tibetan traditions and the capacity to arouse passion.

However, the degraded state of unrestored thangkas hampers their ability to communicate to their audience as they did in the past. The alleged overpainted thangkas restore the worn thangkas to their original aura by returning the three-dimensional texture of the paint, which reflects the light from the peaks and shadows from the darkened valleys. The new work reinvigorates the brushwork and the refreshed lines draw the viewer’s attention even further into the painting. It is interesting to note that when researcher Susan Sayre Batton examined a thangka under the microscope she was astounded by its effect on her. She wrote that,

A sedate and rather stately portrait of an arhat and his attendants was transformed into a dizzying three-dimensional exploration. Everywhere there are glimmers of gold and delicate brushwork not seen with the naked eye. Glistening azurite in the attendant’s robe, glittering malachite washes of green, dense thickets of complicated colour wash, intricate patterns pulling the viewer right into the labyrinth of line and angle. Transfixed for a moment...\textsuperscript{97}

\textsuperscript{96} Greenblatt, S. 1990: 42.
\textsuperscript{97} Batton, S. 1998.
Although she was looking at a worn thangka under the microscope, at this proximity Batton was witnessing the impact of a freshly painted thangka. An impact that I too witnessed standing in front of a thangka in the *Himalayas An Aesthetic Adventure*. The resonating beauty was something to behold, almost too brilliant under the harsh museum spotlighting, my desire was to witness its shimmering beauty in a darkened alcove. There was also hesitation that this thangka was *too* perfect, out of place in a mausoleum for old and (dis)placed objects.

Batton was also witnessing at close quarters the thangka as the original artist and/or patron might have desired. But over time, the original brilliance is dulled by everyday ritual practices and storage conditions and the thangka’s intangible essence, its aura, is diminished. This means the experience of the twentieth century audience when viewing a worn thangka is less than the original artist had intended. The significance of the diminished aura to the western Tibetan artworld returns the discussion to authenticity and overpainting.

As previously noted the western gaze is constructed to expect particular objects to exhibit certain characteristics. This public acceptance is built upon the continuous selection and exhibition of artworks by museums, which repeatedly reinforces western expectations. Over the last forty years, the selection of Tibetan art has been progressively refined, guided by an aesthetic appreciation shaped towards notions of unblemished beauty. Contrary to this notion, is that the majority of Tibetan objects have been ravaged by time and use, which creates an increasing disparity between twenty-first century expectations for beautiful old thangkas and the reality of supply. Equally, there is a gap between the price tags for restored Tibetan masterpieces and the prices of those unrestored.

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98 At the time of consecration, the deity pictured is invited into the image, which then embodies the deity as previously noted.
Even if the alleged practice of overpainting represents a small proportion of acclaimed Tibetan masterpieces, the fact remains that the selection pressures of the Tibetan artworld create an homogenizing effect of what is authentic Tibetan art. The alleged overpainting is only a symptom of these pressures. The overpainting controversy also highlights the interrelationship of not only aesthetics and price tags but also the importance of claiming authenticity. In an article on the relationship of aesthetics to economic value, Mark Sagoff states, "The question arises whether higher and higher prices are paid because art is regarded as priceless or whether, on the contrary, art is regarded as priceless in order to protect or increase the prices that are in fact paid for it." The dual relationship of authority to authenticity, and the subjective nature of aesthetic values attached to price tags, raises the same conundrum within the Tibetan artworld. Which begets the other—aesthetics or price?

Western authority to project authenticity on non-western objects reflects western prominence within the global community. The ability to authorize and control knowledge is important to the maintenance of global status. Museums have historically represented the Other in a cultural construct of 'timelessness,' where timelessness implies a distance—a longevity—an aura that will not and does not diminish over time by shifts in fashion or style. New York Times art critic Holland Cotter states that this concept of timelessness is an "ethnographic fiction, a political-control concept." He continues to note that changing traditions are contrary to a stable market. Cotter wrote that continuous shifting traditions "is exactly what you don’t want to know about if you are trying to shape an aesthetic canon, or a viable market, or a scientific taxonomy that will allow you to explain the world in a certain way, to keep certain hierarchies intact."

Tibetan art, like much of Asian tradition, is included within the western art canon because the objects are said to transcend time. As previously discussed,

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100 Rosenstein, L. 1987.
101 Cotter, H. "From the ferment." 2002.
public expectations are heightened through selection and exhibition to particular notions of masterpieces and these weigh heavily in the representation of art. For example, Asian art curator, Vishakha Desai relates the attitude of her ‘museum professional’ colleague. They were looking at an eighth century Thai bronze Maitreya.\textsuperscript{102} Desai wrote that “He explained that he could enjoy the images as great works of art because they ‘transcended’ their time and place; the label information simply amplified his visual pleasure.”\textsuperscript{103} She continues that her colleague found the traditional [Maitreya] exhibition rewarding because it “mirrored his expectations of what Asian objects should look like: distant, timeless, ageless, quiet and elegant.”\textsuperscript{104} Desai suggests that the conflation of ‘antiquity’ with ‘authenticity’ constrains research, and I suggest curatorial entrepreneurship and audience desire inhibits innovative museum exhibitions. The focus on particular artefacts because they ‘fit’ the prerequisite of a ‘timeless masterpiece’ limits selection choices. Artefacts are selected because firstly, they are old, and subsequently because they are: unique; made from precious materials; they have a particular history; or, are of exquisite workmanship. The museums discursive script judges the necessary qualities. By the same process, tourist and domestic wares are denied a place in the ‘authentic’ Tibetan story. In the same way, innovative contemporary Tibetan art has been denied access to the market.

Conclusion

The presentation of masterpieces to the public and the consumer involves the display of taste, which in turn necessitates a careful and disciplined selection process.\textsuperscript{105} I have argued in this dissertation that the value creation processes reinforce the selection and exhibition practices of museums and that this practice is driven by connoisseurship. While aspects of these judgements may be

\textsuperscript{102} Photograph of Maitreya included in the Desai article. Desai, V. 1995: 169, fig. 1. Another larger coloured print with accompanying descriptive text is included in the recent text on the Asia Society’s Rockefeller Legacy. Fisher 2006: 122, fig. 123.
\textsuperscript{103} Desai, V. 1995: 170.
\textsuperscript{104} Desai, V. 1995: 171.
\textsuperscript{105} Bourdieu, P. and Haacke, H. 1995: 10.
Chapter Seven - The Ideal Image

contested, such as the alleged practice of overpainting, the final word is returned to the museum professionals, who are also recognized as connoisseurs. Art historian Mieke Bal reminds us of this when she states, “The connoisseur is, before all else a judge.” 106 The connoisseur uses the benefit of owning the pure gaze and the knowledge to verify their claim to make judgements—they know what is beautiful, what is authentic and how the art market operates. 107

Similarly, in 1929 under oath, connoisseur Bernard Berenson stated the following in reference to authenticating,

When I see a picture, in most cases I recognize it at once as being or not being by the master it is ascribed to; the rest is merely a question of how to try to fish out the evidence that will make the conviction as plain to others as it is to me. 108

The connoisseur both authenticates and authorizes. It is their opinions and/or selections, which influences both the collector and audience’s expectations. The inclusion of alleged overpainted thangkas in exhibitions is sufficient to cast them as authentic. The overpainted thangkas ‘sing sweetly’ to the public because they meet expectations. The overpainting allegations raised by the three authors were dismissed owing to their lack of connoisseurship to see that the thangkas authenticity had not been unduly compromised. The re-positioning of an object’s value to authenticity and aesthetics, rather than to iconography or object integrity, reconfirms Walter Benjamin’s statement that “the concept of authenticity always transcends mere genuineness.” 109 By endorsing overpainting, Tibetan artworld authorities highlight the importance of aesthetics in the representation of Tibetan art. 110

Ivan Gaskell comments that the collecting emphasis on aesthetics and art history discourse has been a “very effective means of expunging the sacred qualities of

109 Benjamin, W in Arendt, H. 1969: 244.
110 This does not infer that the Tibetans would necessarily oppose overpainting and the primacy of aesthetics. They also paint over artworks, but their value criterion is not associated with a monetary outcome but a sacred association.
objects.”111 However, I argue that museums do not so much expunge, but add a
new gloss, by the critical installation of aesthetic values. By (re)presenting
artworks in a hushed arena and under intensified light, the museum, according to
George Wolfe, removes sensory distractions, thereby intensifying sensorial
experiences of the object.112 At the same time, as Ruth Phillips noted, museums
continue to exist as “purpose-built” exhibition containers because they locate
material objects within a discursive structure which permits access and explains
“spiritual and aesthetic experiences.”113 The public exhibition of masterpieces
silently fixes the interrelationship of authority, aesthetics and authenticity,
which terminates in a price tag for those objects within the value creation
processes.114

Gallery director, Jane Kallir bluntly warned “the danger of a collector driven art
world is that money will trump knowledge.”115 There is a danger that the desire
of many to own private collections of masterpieces will destabilize the
prescribed means of acquiring such masterpieces. In this chapter, the art market
has demonstrated that it is flexible and accommodating to consumer demands
and because authenticity is negotiable, it too is flexible. At this point, it is
important to recall the interrelationship of authenticity to connoisseurship’s
power to select and thereby construct public expectations. In doing so, those
with authority in the artworld configure both the public’s desire to witness these
expectations and the elite collector to own these expectations.

Sitting on the roof of the world, Tibet has always had an indefinite time to
distance relationship—utopian, lost, remote, forbidden. Historical mapping put
Tibet over there, on the horizon, hidden behind mountains. Since then Tibet has
been mapped, however multiple conflicting interpretations of its historical
culture keeps Tibet out of focus. Since the flight of H.H. the fourteenth Dalai
Lama a large number of Tibetan artefacts have entered the western market,

111 Gaskell, I. 2003: 150.
114 For insurance purposes museums also have to put a price on their possessions.
many have been transformed into fine art through the application of western art history and restoration technology. These same objects (re)present Tibet, not as its culture is now, but as a culture trapped in historical western imaginings—the magical mythical world of timeless tradition. The presence of these objects in the west underscores the fact that they have been (dis)placed, lost from their original setting—a monastery altar, a private altar, a patron’s gift. These objects were never intended to be western commodities.

In 1954, art historian Hermann Goetz wrote

True, great masterpieces are eternal, they carry a message common to all mankind and thus appealing to the depths of the human soul beyond the accidentalities of time and country, social class and cultural tradition. But this does not imply that they are independent from those circumstances. Though they grew to heights beyond time and space, they are likewise rooted in a special soil and can, thus, be fully appreciated only with and acquaintance of that background.¹¹⁶

The (re)presentation of Tibetan objects, especially as the artworks are subjected to western consumer desires and art market activities, include selecting, exhibiting and sales demands.¹¹⁷ As material representatives, artworks represent not just the artist, but also all those within the group.¹¹⁸ Despite Tibet’s geographic remoteness, Tibetan art which resonates with a sense of timelessness. Tibetan art invokes nostalgia—memory, loss and desire. Tibetan artefacts exist in today’s world as historical artefacts reconstituted—salvaged from a past—and (re)presented as commodities within the value creation processes of the global art market.

¹¹⁶ Goetz, H. 1954: 4 (Goetz emphasis). In this same article, Goetz noted that a problem with displaying such items as Tibetan thangkas and sculptures, which he states are minor arts, need their “original atmosphere.”
¹¹⁷ Burroughs, B. 1932: 172.
In conclusion, I return to the original stimulus for this dissertation, the 2003 Chicago exhibition *Himalayas An Aesthetic Adventure*. My motivation to investigate the transformation of Tibetan artefact into art was the curtailment of particular questions during the plenary session at the conclusion of the exhibition symposium. Issues such as provenance, caretaking and Tibetan participation surrounded these questions. Consequently, I set out to examine the commodification of Tibetan art and the mechanisms of value creation entailed in this process, a topic according to art historian Joseph Alsop that is seldom explored,¹ namely the impact of western collecting on indigenous art. In this dissertation I specifically raised the impact of the selection pressures of aestheticization on Tibetan objects. In researching these outcomes, it became clear that the dominant and institutionalized discourse of aesthetic appreciation had not only affected the way the west viewed Tibetan objects, it has also affected the meanings attributed to and the status of the objects themselves.

The containment of audience-generated questions at the Chicago plenary session suggested alternative discourses. Their curtailment without protest also demonstrated the dominance of institutionalized art knowledge and illustrated what anthropologist Carole McGranahan refers to as arrested histories. She defined historical arrest as:

> a practice in which pasts that clash with official ways of explaining nation, community, and identity are arrested, in the multiple senses of being held back and, thus, delaying progress²

The plenary session questions that were unsatisfactorily answered in Chicago were not a matter of forgetting or selective memory, but collective

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acknowledgment of official Tibetan art discourse. The Tibetan artworld representatives present were aware of other narratives, such as the contentious issues of looting, pillaging, provenance, repatriation, caretaking, faking and lack of Tibetan voice. But they also understood that these topics were not for public discussion, despite the fact that this was the first and only opportunity during the symposium to ask these questions of the presenters.

Given the continuing Tibetan diaspora and the high profile debates over repatriation in other artworlds, it was inevitable that a member of the public would raise similar questions to the high-profiled public and private collectors present, in particular, whether they saw themselves as caretakers rather than owners of the Tibetan art they had acquired. After a short desultory discussion to this question and follow-up enquiries, an ‘impassioned’ elite collector in the audience stood up and asserted his right of object ownership because he had a bill of sale. There was a swell of positive acknowledgment and applause. But this overt and demonstrative display of the rights of western consumption only highlighted the absence of any indigenous Tibetan presence and voice at the symposium. It also highlighted the extent to which the Tibetan artefacts had been transformed by the west to the exclusion of Tibetan participation.

Aesthetic appreciation continues to dominate and silence alternative discursive spaces. The transformation of indigenous artefacts into fine art uncouples indigenous entitlements and creates art commodities. But at the same time, the western artworld discourse appeals to indigenous narratives and associations to reinforce western access to knowledge, western authority and the authenticity of the objects and their aesthetic status. In 2001, historian Michael Carrington wrote in reference to the looting of Tibetan monasteries during the 1903-04 British Mission that “knowledge was thought to be the most important profit of

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3 The symposium had given the opportunity for a number of profiled Tibetan art collectors to talk about their passion for collecting Tibetan art, their collections and experiences.

Access to knowledge and its production remains an important profit and its access is guaranteed by ownership of the Other's heritage. It is knowledge that dictates which narratives are written and therefore become generally known.6

The materiality of historical objects, especially fine art, presumes an authentic and stable presence, which explains the general distaste for fakes and the discernment between masterpieces, art and souvenirs. Anthropologist Howard Morphy wrote that "art is a particular way of acting in the world."7 Whether art is performed, contextualized or decontextualized it is a cultural marker for an identifiable culture—not lost or living. And while the west may transform the Tibetan artefact into fine art, the object continues to be Tibetan.

As is the case for many non-western art forms, western collections of Tibetan art have been constructed upon the salvage paradigm. Anthropologist James Clifford noted that this salvage paradigm is built on the premise that the Other culture is, in his words, "inevitably undergoing fatal changes."8 Time is conceptualized as a linear function of past, present and future, which structures history, memory of a past or lost tradition, that is both valourized and written by us—the west. Furthermore, as salvage agents the museums and collectors assume the authority to authenticate the material representations which 'best' identifies what is lost. Anthropologist Virginia Dominguez commented on the status of us (west) to them (Other). She wrote,

The implicit hierarchical nature of otherness invites seemingly innocuous practices of representation that amount to (often unknowing) strategies of domination through appropriation.9

Furthermore, Dominguez noted that by writing the Other, the west writes an otherness, thereby appropriating the Other's representations and (re)presenting

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7 Morphy, H. In press.
8 Clifford, J. 1987: 121 (Clifford emphasis).
them as our discovery and/or knowledge. She stated “We normally write their history but in our terms.” The western acts of salvaging (re)presents the cultural heritage of Other people within western keeping and more importantly, western ownership.

I established that from the time of Herodotus to the early twentieth century Tibet held a significant fascination in western imaginings. Two central diverging themes emerged from early travellers’ tales of Tibet. One represented Tibet as a lost utopia, while the other cast Tibet as a nation corrupted by the devil. I propose and argue that these themes continued to inform the transformation of Tibetan artefacts into art. This is highlighted by the institutionalisation of Tibetan art in 1969 by the New York Asia Society (NYAS) exhibition, The Art of Tibet. The promotion of selected Tibetan objects as fine art by this elite institution set in motion an ‘informational’ cascade leading to their re-evaluation. The exhibition coincided with the tenth anniversary of the flight into exile of H.H. the fourteenth Dalai Lama. His flight and continued exile heightened the changed circumstances that the Tibetan people were living under, both inside and outside Tibet. The burgeoning American sentiment on behalf of the Tibetans proved a convenient symbolic representation of the evils of Communism for U.S. citizens. The American government was under pressure over their handling of the Vietnam War and increasingly, protests against the war were erupting into violent events. Tibetan objects represented symbols of loss and (dis)location, which made them suitable objects for (re)presentation as propaganda icons against Communism.

At the time, America was also experiencing its own socio-political upheavals. The United States was undergoing a social revolution. Notions of personal identity popularized by Freud and Jung were merging with America’s notions of the inalienable rights for all Americans. This shift in concepts of self identity was at odds with pre WW II conservatism. The do it yourself analysis of self which began

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11 Second sentence in the U.S. Declaration of Independence.
in the late 1950s and early 1960s, invited exploration of new ideas and concepts of how to live. The acceptance of Tibetan material culture and Tibetan Buddhism by groups of Americans was a consequence of factors such as: the influx of Tibetan material culture into the west, the desire for spiritual experimentation by countercultural groups and the rediscovery of westernized Tibetan Buddhist wisdom popularized by Madam Blavatsky prior to the twentieth century. The arrival of Tibetan Buddhist teachers in the late 1960s also capitalized on historical western imaginings and popular sentiment towards their plight.

While a small number of American art institutions had been collecting Tibetan artefacts since the turn of the twentieth century, many more started to acquire isolated examples after 1959. This motivation to collect Tibetan objects was the result of an increased awareness of Tibetan culture under threat, especially the flight of H.H. the fourteenth Dalai Lama and his followers to India in 1959. Those fleeing from Tibet brought objects with them that they were forced to sell to survive. This resulted in the increased visibility of Tibetan objects in the marketplace. At the same time, the movement of Tibetan Buddhist teachers into the west prompted western interest, especially for young Americans that were searching for personal meaning. They found comfort in the Tibetan idols, which visually enhanced their own sense of self. Therefore, I argue that an equally important motivation to transforming Tibetan artefacts into art was the institutional and private collector fear of the loss of collection value arising from the counterculture youth’s fascination and use of Tibetan objects. The swirling colours, movement and textures of Tibetan objects—its ‘exoticness’—was to many who were seeking change, a symbol or gesture of defiance and hope against the odds.

Having established the how, when, where and why Tibetan artefacts began their transformation into fine art in 1969, I turned to the issue of the value creating processes, which supported this transformation. Paramount in this course of transformation was the 1969 exhibition itself, and its associated phenomena, including the production of an authoritative art catalogue and critical art
reviews. The NYAS attracted the attention of art critic John Canaday who wrote a half-page review in the April 13 Sunday *New York Times* only days after it opened. He stated,

Thus for the studious and the conscientious the exhibition can supply something better than an introduction to an esoteric subject. But I found it most rewarding from, I admit, the limited point of view of an eye that sought only to be delighted, and was.\(^\text{12}\)

Canaday noted that while the exhibition and catalogue were introducing a complex new art category, the general reader would also enjoy the Tibetan art spectacle without specialized knowledge. Other exhibition reviews were written to encourage Asian art enthusiasts and taste arbiters to re-evaluate Tibetan art by attending the exhibition or buying the catalogue. For example, the Harvard art curator John Rosenfield wrote a critical review for the *Oriental Art* journal and Pal wrote an article for the British-based journal, *The Connoisseur*. All these reviews were written to authorize and authenticate the re-evaluation of Tibetan art.\(^\text{13}\)

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**Matters arising**

The two exhibitions highly significant to the argument presented, were *The Art of Tibet* (1969) and *Himalayas An Aesthetic Adventure* (2003). They were held 34 years apart and were both curated by Pratapaditya Pal. The rise of Tibetan art from the categorization of the devil’s idols in the late nineteenth-early twentieth century to the determining transformation of artefacts into art in 1969 took almost 70 years. The rise of Tibetan art to masterpiece in the twenty-first century took less than 30 years. Current values—the price tags—for Tibetan art are based on subjective assessments of aesthetic qualities and the desire for these qualities. Prices are also related to the impression that the supply of


Tibetan art is finite, especially after the Chinese Red Guard were said to have destroyed over 90% of Tibet’s monasteries in the 1960s and 1970s. In 2003, New York Himalayan art dealer Carlton Rochell (ex. Sotheby’s) replied to—

**Question:** How much is left in Tibet, if anything?  
**Rochell:** As much as 90% was torched or dynamited.\(^{14}\)

However, French Tibetologist and early collector, Lionel Fournier, who has travelled extensively throughout Tibet and surrounding regions documenting Tibetan Buddhist art *in situ* argued to the contrary. In an interview to the question,

**Question:** Can you comment on the destruction of artworks during the Chinese Cultural Revolution?  
**Fournier:** It is about time we set the record straight. What has been lost during the Cultural Revolution represents the very tip of the iceberg. Tibetan history is marked by constant internal political struggles between different religious schools and between monasteries and monarchs. In these often bloody wars, which went on for centuries, plunder and razing of entire monasteries have resulted in much more loss! One also forgets the destruction caused by the frequent raids in history by foreigners: Mongols, Indians, Manchus and British. For example, with a few cannons, the military expedition of General Younghusband in 1904 destroyed a significant part of Gyantse, the most important monastic complex of Tsang. If I compare Giuseppe Tucci’s photographs with those of Anagarika Govinda taken before and my photographs taken after the Cultural Revolution, some buildings have indeed been completely destroyed by Red Guards, others have suffered from natural disasters or simply lack of maintenance, but most of the photographed ancient sites are still largely the same.\(^{15}\)
Fournier’s observes that the Chinese did not destroy 90% of Tibet’s cultural heritage is supported by Pal’s statement made during his interview with Jane Casey Singer before the 2003 Chicago exhibition.

**Question:** What question are you exploring?

*Pal: ...*

My only mandate is to select what I consider to be about 170 of the most beautiful objects that I can get hold of. It will of course be a subjective choice—you may not agree with my definition of beauty. But I’ll tell you one thing, the sources from which I could borrow in 1969 were just a handful compared to today. Not only has there been an explosion of art coming out of Tibet into Western collections, but the types of materials are more diverse—terracottas, stones, mural fragments, and so on. Even with paintings - I can essentially ignore what has been included in all previous Nepalese and Tibetan art exhibitions. That is how much the material has expanded in the last decade.16

It could be argued that the insatiable western demand for museum-quality art—bigger and brighter—is a greater threat to the Tibetan heritage which remains in situ, than the historical damages inflicted by internal Tibetan Buddhist feuds, foreign sorties and the recent Chinese activities. The “explosion of art” referred to by Pal is the result of looting and smuggling activities. Fournier noted that Tibetans also conduct these activities, and that no Tibetan monastery is safe. What does this silence say about the power of western consumption and it’s (re)presentation of Tibetan art? In 1975, an art historian wrote in frustration “stop looting by refusing to authenticate.”17 Indeed, all those involved in the artworld, including art historians, dealers, collectors, anthropologists, museum curators and trustees, have responsibility for their own actions in authorizing and authenticating.

I argue that western attitudes of what is Tibetan art are built upon the authority of the western artworld. The creation of a Tibetan art discourse and its dispersal transformed initial curiosity into significant appreciation. Institutional

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professionals, elite private connoisseurs/collectors and leading dealers responsible for selecting and authenticating Tibetan artworks played and continue to play key roles. The archaeologist Laurajane Smith refers to the power and knowledge held by such groups as “technology of government.” This access to power and knowledge regulates the Tibetan artworld. It is institutional knowledge and opinions which (re)presented Tibetan art. Institutions not only authorized what objects would qualify as Tibetan art, but also the narratives to be used to describe, interpret and justify their selections. Reinforcing their expertise and authority to authenticate objects is their discourse and their accumulated participation and performance in the value creation processes of writing, curating, exhibiting, buying and/or selling Tibetan art.

The artworld authenticates and promotes what is Tibetan art. I argue that the alleged overpainting controversy is an example of the constructedness of the authority and authentication processes. Nor should the reliance on and the interrelatedness of public institutions to the art market and elite be overlooked. The public acceptance of museums as repositories of heritage, culture and memory—personal and collective—bestows upon the museum the custodianship of representing the Other on our collective behalf.

Role of museums

I argue that museums were responsible for the production of a Tibetan art discourse. They had a critical and ongoing role in validating the re-evaluation of Tibetan art generated from the 1969 New York Asia Society Tibetan art exhibition by their continued exhibition and collection of Tibetan art. Apart from a storehouse for cultural artefacts, museums are important in the construction of an historical public narrative, which identifies our (western) relationship to the Other. Art historian David Carrier wrote “A museum aims to provide a lucid plan,
making its presentation of art clear in our memory.** Museums are trusted institutions, authorized to collect, to interpret and represent the exotic Otherness. Museum historian Susan Crane stated “Museums are not supposed to lie to us ... we rely on museums as well as on historians to get the past right for us.”** Engagement with art objects is also an engagement with memory—personal and collective, museums are the vehicles through which the west, in many cases the museum, provides the only significant experience of the Other.

Museums write narratives, which invisibly inscribe onto objects such features as cultural representativeness, cultural tradition, timelessness and universal aesthetics. Such narratives are coded in descriptions. In illustration 189a-b the two images of Medicine Buddha Bhaishajyaguru illustrate how the 2003 Chicago expedition dealt with similarity, difference, uniqueness, authenticity and authority. In the last paragraph of the descriptions for this work, Pal noted how the same deity is rendered unique through use of colour and composition. While the time span of 200 years has created two thangkas in contrasting styles, each has its own aesthetic underpinnings, such as the “iconic variety and chromatic diversity” (illus. 174a-b) compared to the soothing effect of the muted tones in the earlier thangka. The wording and lyrical prose, along with the confident announcement of such statements as “typically Newar manner” highlights the writer’s access to a store of knowledge and underwrites his expertise and authority.

I demonstrated that public art museums and auction catalogues with their poetic entries and the glossy images created value. However, they also created an “uneasy dilemma,” a phenomenon noted by art historian and journalist Souren Melikian. He asks the question out loud, “should looted works be published?”** I have argued that catalogues and the public performances at New York Asia Week are critical in the value creation processes. Pal stated that, his primary goal for

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20 Carrier, D. 2003b.
the 2003 Chicago exhibition was to highlight the aesthetic nature of Himalayan art. He said he wanted to establish a “yardstick for beauty” because aesthetic value “generally” determined its price tag.  

The production of an aesthetic benchmark in relation to subjective aesthetic judgements confers on museums and their professional staff the authority to authenticate. For Melikian the museums’ reliance on loaned exhibits and the enhancement of these objects via the museum provenance, which they gain as a consequence of their inclusion, in the exhibition is the core of the dealers’ and scholars’ dilemma.

**Aestheticization**

I have argued that the authority of provenance for objects lent to the museum also substantiates the authenticity of the objects. I recognize and detail how the supply/demand pressures for Tibetan museum-quality masterpieces impact directly on the objects themselves. I demonstrated that the alleged practice of overpainting is a consequence of the ‘over-aesthetization’ of Tibetan art and the inability of the art market to meet demand.

It has long been argued that Tibetan objects are underpriced when compared to European art and therefore forgery has not been a major issue. For example, *New York Times* art critic, Holland Cotter asks rhetorically, why has Asian art become popular now? He answers his own question, “There are many good reasons. Buyers, institutional and private, are realizing they can pick up a drop-dead masterpiece from India, Tibet or China for a small fraction of what a third rate Italian Renaissance painting costs, not to mention a goodish Picasso.”

However, the rapid rise in prices for selected Tibetan objects in the last twenty years has shifted the dynamics of the supply-demand chain. Forgery of Tibetan objects is difficult to detect because many artisans practicing today belong to

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lineages of artisans, who have handed down techniques and materials used in the past (illus. 175a-d). Furthermore, the current attractive prices and the poverty of source nations such as Nepal and Tibet is sufficient incentive. A visit to the Durbar Marg (central district) of Kathmandu and the metal workshops of Patan provides many examples of deities or objects executed ‘in the style of.’

Establishing a provenance to counter the suspicion of looting and forgery is a major concern for collectors and museums. Consumer behaviour researchers Russell Belk, Melanie Wallendorf, John Sherry, Jr. and Morris Holbrook stated that “The nature of authenticity is negotiated through collection.” A recent innovation in auction catalogues is to state when the present owner acquired the object, particularly significant if the objects have not been associated with an important collection or exhibition. For example, in the 2007 Christie’s GOPI-1878 auction previously mentioned in the New York Asia Week chapter, the provenance data for lot number 121, a gilt bronze figure of Nagaraja originating from Densatil monastery, was simply given as “Acquired by the present owner in 1991.” A further innovation was the inclusion of photographs of the seller’s living room in which a number of the Tibetan objects for sale were on display. While such intimate photographs are a marketing strategy in other auction categories, it is not usually employed in Indian and Southeast Asian art catalogues (illus. 176).

The auction house stated that the 49 objects under discussion belonged to a ‘private Roman collector’ and their provenance was categorized into three groups. The first group comprised five objects which were acquired in the 1980s. The second group of eight objects, which were acquired “circa 1991”

25 In a preliminary research visit to Kathmandu in 1999, I was fortunate to gain access to the inner sanctum of some dealers’ premises. During one visit I shown a replica of an object which had been published in a recent exhibition catalogue, despite the lack of Tibetan evidence for its form or function. The question then becomes why are there two very similar objects surfacing at a similar time. Are they copies? Fakes? Or the genuine from the same Tibetan atelier? Tibetan dealers regularly stock in the style of sculpture.
where all fragments from the Densatil monastery, destroyed by the Chinese Red
Guard in the 1970s (illus. 177a-g).29 The remaining 34 objects constituted the
third group, they were acquired during a ten year period between 1985-1995.30
None of these objects were noted to have previously featured in exhibitions or
catalogues. However, the auction catalogue does establish further credentials
for them by noting similarities to other artworks previously published. The
Densatil artwork was referenced directly to the destroyed monastery. The
auction catalogue reference photographs were similar objects are shown in situ
(illus. 177a-b). The establishment of a provenance is becoming increasingly
important to the selling price. The doyen of Asian art dealers Robert Ellsworth
noted in an interview that “Provenance is worth one-third of the price of goods,
especially if it is Asian.”31

To know when the object entered the western art market and who has
subsequently owned it, establishes the objects’ authenticity. As I have discussed,
the appearance of so many Tibetan objects in the west over the last century is a
reflection of foreign intrusion by western and Chinese powers and this resulted in
the release of Tibetan objects onto the western art market. I argue that the
dispersal of Tibetan objects and the western role of salvaging and caretaking
Tibet’s lost heritage are at variance with current emphasis western collecting
and indigenous object provenance to prove legal acquisition. Outspoken
connoisseur George Ortiz champions the inalienable right of private ownership.32
He claimed that the “secret” removal of many objects benefits humanity by
saving these objects. In his opinion, private collectors are vital for a healthy
artworld. Ortiz stated

The collector is protector, educator, benefactor—whatever his
personal motives he offers the product of his work, his creative
groupings to all. To ask whether art needs collectors is almost as
absurd as to ask whether children need their mother.33

31 Mason, B.S. “Provenance is worth one-third the price.” 2000.
32 Ortiz, G. 1995.
33 Ortiz, G. 1995.
To reiterate the impact of aesthetization on the (re)presentation of Tibetan objects in this conclusion, I step back from the overpainting controversy and propose another form of aesthetization, that is, the valorisation or memorialisation of ruin/destruction.\textsuperscript{34} I refer to this valorisation as the \textit{cult of nostalgia}, whereby western romanticism prompts an admiration for ruins and desire for remnants of lost worlds. This endows Tibetan art with a supportive sentimentality that is inextricably linked to these historical western imaginings. Archaeologist Michael Shanks noted that collectors seek nostalgia in objects which represent the past. He wrote that nostalgic objects combine "gratification and distress: being sometimes the presence, and sometimes the absence of that which is desired."\textsuperscript{35} The objects embody the past, providing the collector or audience with the opportunity to identify, perhaps even empathize with, the Others loss.

For instance, the audience may emotionally engage and empathize with the hacked and armless image of \textit{Bodhisattva Manjusri} (illus. 178a).\textsuperscript{36} Those marks acquired over time document the object's biography in the terms of multiple events. However, which event is narrated depends on the discursive space selected. Missing limbs and evidence of damage such as axe marks or bullet holes sustain this tension. The objects may appear mute, but their visual discourse is loud—missing heads and limbs speak according to what the audience has learned to know and to see. At the same time, the ongoing representation of ruins and their fragments is largely in the hands of those that select, exhibit and write.\textsuperscript{37} For example, museum authorities chose to select damaged sculptures, which show evidence of being torn from their accompanying mounts or incomplete (illus. 178b-f). These sculptures and fragments, like the \textit{Bodhisattva Manjusri} are valourized because of their damage. However, torn and worn thangkas are not

\textsuperscript{35} Shanks, M. 1992: 99-100.
\textsuperscript{37} Stoler, A.L. 2008.
given the same nostalgic grace. The nostalgic pressure operating on thangkas is to return them to a state commensurate with their original painted condition.

The discursive space addressed in the descriptive text of Bodhisattva Manjusri valorizes the sculpture, invoking nostalgia and survival against historical adversity. The catalogue states, “Even in its present state it makes a magnificent ruin and is still a compelling spiritual presence.” The text concludes, “This moving and gentle figure is still radiantly graceful despite its misfortune.” The reader is left to imagine the historical trajectories that may have caused the damage inflicted upon this sculpture. What was the cause for the apparent frenzied hacking to Manjusri’s forehead and abdomen, the missing arms and part leg? Iconoclasm? Treasure seeking? War or a natural disaster? These are all tantalizing possibilities stimulating the observer’s imagination. Furthermore, with no indication of provenance or previous location except a Newar atelier, where has it been in the intervening thousand years? Also silent is the discursive space of how it came to be in the United States.

I have argued throughout this dissertation that in (re)presenting Tibetan objects the west re-inscribed them with new values and new stories. Entering the twenty-first century the west continues the process of Tibet-making. However, the western imaginings of Tibet are now less based on myth and more on memory invoked as nostalgia for a lost culture, which is inscribed directly onto the objects themselves.

Narratives can not only evoke memory but also desire to own a souvenir of that memory. In her discussion on tourist experiences anthropologist Regina Bendix noted the interrelationship of consumption to experience, place and memory. Artworlds capitalize on the same “intertwining” of narrative to memory by fixing objects in the past. At the same time, they use the distant but timeless past to counter present day indigenous knowledge. The existence of these objects in the

western present verifies the artworld’s narrative of loss and destruction. Objects are valorised because they are survivors.

Due to Tibet’s distance and perceived ruin, the object becomes the focus of ruin and loss, further distancing the object from its indigenous contextual setting. In addition, unlike the Elgin Marbles held by the British Museum, which were taken from the Parthenon in Greece, many of the Tibetan objects can not be tethered to a specific place. There are no romantic ruins. The objects are the sole survivors. “No doubt the aestheticization of the Orient provides a register in which the West can safely exercise authority over the other, especially when the ancient beauty of the Orient appears fragile, requiring preservation and other forms of intervention by the West to survive.” The incompleteness of these objects speaks eloquently of a by-gone era when they were whole.

Value creating

Within the scope of this research, I identified five elements that were essential in the transformation of artefact into art. They are: burgeoning collection interest; public visibility, including art market and museum visibility; converging market and exhibition activity; the development of an art discourse; and socio-political acceptance. Tibet’s origins began in western imaginings, in the act of making Tibet through travel stories and missionary tales. During this time, the exotic and magical fused with observation. Polo and Mandeville were a product of their times in the same way that I argue Nieuhoff’s dislike for Catholicism and Jesuit priests influenced how he drew devil-worshipping Tibetans to look like Jesuit priests. By the late nineteenth century, Tibet had taken on a material form—a cultural identity represented by devil dances, and crafted idols. Museums such as the American Museum of Natural History (AMNH) under Franz Boas’ direction and the Newark Museum’s serendipity encounter with missionary Albert Shelton, had resulted in large Tibetan collections being assembled for

41 For a range of opinions, see Beard, M. 2002; Merryman, John Henry, 2009; Webb, T. 2002.
these museums. By the 1930s, New Yorkers had the opportunity to experience a Tibetan object display at the local public museums. In addition, New Yorkers could visit the strong contingent of Asian art dealers, who also exhibited Tibetan objects. However, I argue that for many Americans it was not until the flight of His Holiness the fourteenth Dalai Lama that Tibet and its material culture ‘materialized’ from western imaginings.

In the *Materializing* chapter I argue that Tibetan Buddhism arrived on the scene at a time when the west was searching for ways to experience the self in terms of Jungian and Freudian psychotherapy. Tibetan Buddhism provided a platform by which Tibetan objects could be discussed. Gradually art history fused, borrowed and wrote over the experiential and spiritual narratives of the Tibetan objects with an aesthetic appreciation of the Buddhist forms. America’s shifting socio-political scene, both internationally and domestically brought with it intergenerational, gender and racial tensions. The campaign against the perils of Communism resulted in America’s participation in the Korean and Vietnam Wars and the subsequent protests against American involvement were highly visible.

The transformation of Tibetan artefacts into art was introduced during this unsettling period. It was not the case, that Tibetan objects were all of a sudden available, rather it was the case that Tibetan art became visible at this time to the public gaze. Displays of Tibetan objects, particularly in the context of constructed altars had been available to the public for over 50 years before the 1969 exhibition. The marketing of the 1969 Tibetan art exhibition by the elite New York Asia Society (NYAS) required that their members, collectors and audience re-evaluate what is Tibetan art. I proposed that the fact that the NYAS hosted this exhibition and that they had borrowed from a variety of influential sources created an ‘informational cascade,’ the momentum from which facilitated the re-evaluation of selected Tibetan artefacts and their transformation into an art category.
The 1969 NYAS exhibition presented selected Tibetan objects within the exhibition accoutrements of fine art—spotlights, labels, personal transportable audio tapes. An important addition to these accoutrements was the art exhibition catalogue, an essential element in the transformation and value creation processes. The catalogue is evidence, a scripted witness to the political, economic and social practice of re-historicizing objects. Historical cultural production and practices are re-constituted, transfixed by western constructed representations of the Other in the production and (re)production of images and text. Museum academic Haidy Geismar discussed how value is created in the corresponding presentation of museum exhibit to auction catalogue image. ⁴³ Value is created on the construction of a timelessness, exhibited by both the enduring catalogue and by the representation of the objects.

The New York Asia Week exploits and expands upon the museum (re)presentation of Tibetan art as objects of aesthetic appreciation to engage the consumer’s desire to own museum-quality objects. The dealers use recent Tibetan art exhibitions and auction catalogues to source and cross reference current aesthetic movements. The March New York Asia Week, in particular, is a critical annual event for all serious Asian art collectors and dealers who strive to have the best collection they can put together. It is also a suitable time to launch and promote a specialized range of objects, such as the London-based Rossi and Rossi Gallery who promoted a collection of eighteenth to nineteenth century Tibetan tantric carpets in 2008 (illus. 179).

I argue that New York Asia Week played an increasing role in the commodification of Tibetan art. Originally only one week long, it is now stretched over almost three weeks. With the auctions, the Uptown and Downtown Fairs, and over 180 dealers, Asia Week offers a feast for Asian art enthusiasts who have the stamina. I discussed the importance of performance and witnesses in the social process of consuming status objects. ⁴⁴ Communication

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academic Charlene Elliott noted that the public demonstration of the possession of wealth is essentially a display of identity. She stated that “taste is about surface, representation, and the advertising of self,”⁴⁵ where taste is display of wealth. The commodification of indigenous non-western artefacts by the fine art paradigm and the value created by western ownership reduces the original ritual intent of the Tibetan owner or donor to this display in the western context of a museum wall, elite living room or the pages of an auction catalogue (illus. 180a-b).⁴⁶ Participating and/or performing during New York Asia Week are important in signifying membership to a subculture and individual positions within that subculture.

**Authorizing—Absence of Tibetans**

In general, there are few appearances of Tibetans at New York Asia Week events and the auctions. Their absence is marked, especially as Tibetans appear vocal in other spheres, such as politics and religion. The Tibetan presence at the 2003 Chicago exhibition was negligible,⁴⁷ so much so, that a member of the audience commented at the plenary session on their absence and their lack of inclusion. The responses to this question were basically that the Tibetans are simply not interested. In these western constructed discourses argument is commonly condensed to the following observation—once the Tibetan objects are worn, the Tibetans don’t care for them and the objects are discarded. However, this would appear at the very minimum to be a contrary statement to the layers of objects stored in monasteries.

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⁴⁷ I use negligible in case there were Tibetans and I did not observe them at either the symposium or the first days of the exhibition opening to the public. The Tibetan Alliance of Chicago reports that in 2010, the local community of Tibetans had grown to 300 from the original 100. Tibetan Alliance. 2010. There are 7 Tibetan Buddhist aligned meditation centers in just Chicago. Anon. “Be a Buddhist.” 2007. Furthermore, the visit to nearby Bloomington in 2010 by H.H. the 14th Dalai Lama was his sixth visit. His older brother, Thubten Norbu had been a professor at the Indiana University and founded the Tibetan Mongolian Buddhist Cultural Center in 1979. Sheckler, J. “Dalai Lama Pays Sixth Visit.” 2010.
I suggest that this argument is fostered as a further justification for the trading of Himalayan art and to deflect discussion on provenance and repatriation. If it is assumed by the west that the indigenous Himalayan population does not appreciate such beautiful works of art then it is only logical that the western collections are the appropriate responsible caretakers. Ironically, a translation included in the 2003 Chicago catalogue provides evidence that Tibetans valued their ritual objects. On the back of an eleventh century Buddha Sakyamuni thangka is written that this thangka along with other precious objects including, "108 clay Buddha images, statue of Maitreya cast in India and containing relics" and copies of manuscripts were deposited in a stupa (illus. 136). The titles of these manuscripts included those translated into Tibetan by the eleventh century Tibetan lama and translator, Gos Lotsava. The stupa in which all these objects were placed was dedicated to him. If the stupa had not been desecrated and opened this thangka would have remained in memoriam to Gos Lotsava.

The uncaring attitude attributed to Tibetans for their art is also contradicted by an observation at the 2004 Sotheby’s Indian and Southeast Asian Art auction held in March during New York Asia Week. I witnessed two young Tibetan men determinedly bid for a Maitreya sculpture, they paid over USD$50,000—the auction house estimate was USD$8,000-12,000 (illus. 181).\(^\text{48}\) They arrived just before it was auctioned and left immediately after the purchase had been secured. Their focussed attention is evidence that ‘Himalayan’ people do value their ritual objects, and if necessary they are prepared to participate in the western art market in order to secure precious objects.

Tibet is caught in a dilemma, it has no source nation status to stop desecration and seepage of art across borders to wealthy nations such as the United States. Furthermore, the Chinese caretakers have at best been ambivalent towards Tibetan material heritage. Sometimes destroying, trafficking and smelting down objects and conversely on other occasions restoring temples. Throughout the last

sixty years, the Chinese have also destroyed Tibetan cultural heritage by harvesting its latent wealth—originally smelting the sculptures for their metal content, now the objects are more likely to be sold onto the art market. Journalist Bai Fan quoted Beijing-based Han Chinese scholar Wang Lixiong, to have stated, "During the Mao era, they considered the artifacts dross and destroyed them. Now, they see them as merchandise and sell them." With a history of Chinese violence towards Tibetan culture, those Tibetans in-exile, led by H.H. the fourteenth Dalai Lama, have encouraged western institutions and private collectors to acquire Tibetan art for the purpose of saving it, confirming the salvage arguments. In his Foreword to the published conference papers on defining Tibetan art styles held in London, 1994, H.H. wrote,

Our cultural traditions, which have assimilated many influences, form a distinct part of the world's precious common heritage. Humanity would be the poorer if they were to be lost. Although those of us in exile have made every effort to preserve and promote them, we will not succeed in isolation. We require help and support. ... It is my hope that the conference and the conference proceedings will fulfil several aims... lastly, to ensure that the study of Tibetan art takes its rightful place alongside that of the world's other great art traditions. We must also try to deepen the ordinary person's understanding of Tibetan art through clear and authentic explanation. Too often in the past Tibetan culture as a whole has been misunderstood due to misinterpretations of its artistic symbols.  

His Holiness the fourteenth Dalai Lama is active in endorsing and encouraging the west to salvage and protect Tibet's cultural heritage. One further example, in an endorsement of the 1996 Marchais Museum catalogue H.H. wrote,

I am grateful to my friends at the Jacques Marchais Center of Tibetan Art for preparing a catalogue of the museum's valuable collection ... a catalogue containing authentic explanations of Tibetan artefacts will therefore be of great help to the museum's visitors.

51 Lipton, B. and Ragnubs, N. 1996: v. The message from the Dalai Lama sits directly after the title page, with his official insignia at the top and his signature at the bottom.
Chapter Eight · Conclusion

The Dalai Lama carries authenticity and authority, but politically he is in a subservient position to the Chinese and must play the role of supplicant while at the same time reinforcing the relevancy of his position. As discussed in the introduction he has created himself as a globally recognised ‘loved marked’ brand. His association with ideas of compassion, wisdom, peace and altruism stand in sharp contrast to other political leaders. He has employed his position to promote the belief that the Chinese have, and continue to, destroy Tibetan heritage and he calls upon the west to participate in saving Tibet’s culture. However, such calls are tantamount to authorising the looting of Tibetan monasteries and the removal of their ritual objects to the west.

Another reason for [Tibetan art] popularity is that, unlike collecting other better-known areas of ancient and ethnographic art, buying Tibetan art has no stigma attached. In fact, it is even politically correct to do so. No less a personage than the revered Dalai Lama is completely in favour of Westerners collecting, and thereby saving, objects that might otherwise not have survived. So much of Tibet’s heritage was destroyed by the Chinese, explains Mr Eskenazi, and the Dalai Lama has stated repeatedly that he is glad that people have preserved and promoted Tibetan material. This has enabled museums to buy with a light heart. 52

In so doing, the objects may be safe from Chinese designs but they have entered the western capitalist system and are locked into either private ownership or public collections. Their current price valuation on the art market almost guarantees their inaccessibility for Tibetan ritual use.

In an article inspired by the recent establishment of a Tibetan repatriation collection by Tibet House New York (THUS), art historian Kavita Singh explores the dilemma surrounding the Tibetan experience in their attempt to protect their own cultural heritage. 53 She noted that Tibet is not a conventional case,

53 This repatriation collection started at the behest of H.H. the 14th Dalai Lama, its destination is uncertain, however, its ultimate purpose, expressed by western Tibetan scholar Robert Thurman, is to restore “important treasures to the Tibetan people.” The collection was advanced with the donation of 140 objects from the Riverside Collection (the ex-Roerich Museum collection). Overseeing the exchange was H.H. the 14th Dalai Lama. Ulhfelder, A. 2004.
especially when the cause of the threat to Tibet’s cultural heritage remains current.\textsuperscript{54} Singh also noted that the dilemma for Tibetans and westerners is the ‘necessity’ to turn a blind eye and condone illegal acts such as looting and smuggling and reinterpret these as moral actions.\textsuperscript{55} The issue is complex and Singh’s paper is thought provoking, but while Tibetans remain without voice or presence within the western constructed Tibetan artworld, their participation in this debate is marginalized.

Tibetans are distanced from their historical cultural heritage once it enters western collection practices, contemporary Tibetan voices are muted, especially as memory belongs to the living societies and not those represented. Historian Pierre Nora wrote,

\begin{quote}
Memory is life, borne by living societies founded in its name. It remains in permanent evolution, open to the dialectic of remembering and forgetting, unconscious of its successive deformations, vulnerable to manipulation and appropriation, susceptible to being long dormant and periodically revived. History, on the other hand, is the reconstruction, always problematic and incomplete, of what is no longer.\textsuperscript{56}
\end{quote}

Once Tibetan art objects enter western collections, the living and memory is (re)presented as history—the past is re-discovered and re-interpreted by those that only connect to Tibetan memory through written words and physical images. It is therefore not surprising that the active Tibetan voice is not contemporary or living Tibetan voices, but historical Tibetan commentators. They are given precedence, such as the words of Milarepa c.1052-1135 quoted at the very beginning of Pal’s introduction to the 1969 catalogue,

\begin{quote}
That all the wealth revealed within my mind
And all the circling threefold worlds contain,
Unreal as it is, can yet be seen—that is the miracle.
\end{quote}

\begin{flushright}
Mila-rêpa\textsuperscript{57}
\end{flushright}

\textsuperscript{54} Singh, K. 2010: 133.
\textsuperscript{55} Singh, K. 2010: 133.
\textsuperscript{56} Nora, P. 1989: 8.
In the 1969 exhibition, Pal acknowledged two Tibetans, the Rev. N. Jigme (associated with the New Delhi Tibet House Museum) and Mr Khyongla Losang, who had read and translated “a few inscriptions.”

In addition, the director of Asia House Gallery (NYAS art gallery arm) Gordon Washburn noted the assistance of H.H. the Dalai Lama’s representative, Mr Phintso Thonden. Over the years, Pal has acknowledged the contribution of a handful of Tibetans. However, as western-trained scholars became available the necessity to use native Tibetan speakers was reduced. This fact was highlighted in the Chicago 2003 exhibition where Pal acknowledged the contribution of translators—Dr Amy Heller and Professor Oskar von Hinüber. While they are accomplished scholars, their native language is not Tibetan. Pal did not acknowledge the participation of any Tibetans in the production of *Himalayas An Aesthetic Adventure*—an exhibition he billed as “the greatest show on earth” of Himalayan art for the last 100 years and for a 100 years hence.

The translations by non-Tibetans were a significant contribution to the scholarly research of the Chicago exhibition.

Is it that indigenous Tibetans’ knowledge continues to be disregarded as unreliable, as it was when Cutting and Vernay dismissed the Tibetans information on the age of artefacts in 1936? Japanese cultural theorist Harumi Befu acknowledged the prejudices of indigenous writers, in his case, Japanese. He noted that even the intellectually-trained indigenous writer who attempts to distance themselves from their personal involvement in the subject matter remains trapped. He wrote that “there is no escaping that the identity they propound or analyse in their writing is their own.”

Befu however, does note the

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60 Pal’s lack of inclusion is in stark contrast to the collection and exhibition practices at the Newark Museum, for example. See Reynolds, V. 1999: 8-21.
61 “The Tibetans would inform us of the great age of certain pieces, but the definite period could not be ascertained.” Cutting-Vernay 1936: [no pagination] the page directly before the artefact entries begins.
counter-argument that the outsider often exoticizes the Other. He wrote that
the outsiders “either try to be objective in their observations or they criticize
what is foreign to their standards of value.” Western museums have attempted
to distance themselves from indigenous contexts through the objectifying
processes of aestheticization.

However, as Befu argues, these standards do nothing to prevent the exoticising
of the Other. On the other hand, the Tibetans in self-exile play a political game
in which they encourage the west to support their cause. Geopolitics historian
Dibyesh Anand wrote “The Tibetan national imagination is a product/process of
strategic essentialism, oriented towards the goal of [Tibetans-in-exile]
reclaiming homeland.” The west has also constructed its own Tibetan
imagination, originally founded on travelers tales, today western Tibetan
imaginings are located in the framing of Tibetan objects as aesthetic
masterpieces.

The valorisation of the western aestheticization of the objects represses other
narratives. Lost in the adoration of beauty are the Tibetan voices and the
objects’ intended message of personal and collective salvation. And at the
same time, the reproduction and (re)presentation of western constructed
Tibetan art discourse and collection practices reinforces the dominant
narratives—authority and authenticity are rehearsed ad infinitum. Philosopher
Elizabeth Grierson wrote “In this legitimating process difference is too easily
obfuscated in the determination and re-inscription of art and its value.” In the
process of creating value the artworld homogenizes, aestheticizes and claims
ownership over non-western heritage. Philosopher Michel Foucault noted how
academic and other specialist disciplines control the production of discourse,

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fixing limitations. This is why the questions raised at the 2003 plenary were supported by the professionals and collectors present.\(^\text{67}\)

The popularity of Tibetan art exhibitions demonstrated that the power of political opportunism and the weight of star curators might be irrelevant to the objects themselves. As already noted the transformation of objects from cultural artifacts or educational tools to aesthetically appreciated ‘fine art’ has meant a re-scripting, a shifting of meanings, a new voice, a new vocabulary. This new voice redirects our visual appreciation by acclaiming that these objects fit within a universal criterion of art-for-arts sake. But this new script has not disengaged or distanced the object from cultural narratives or memory. Rather, re-scripting has selectively employed historical codes/narratives as authentication for the new voice, while continuing to use the familiar cultural images and stereotypes from the past. However, while the objects may carry a script written for them, the popularity of the three differently scripted exhibitions suggests that the objects have their own script, one perhaps more powerful than the contemporary hand can write.

The objects personify a silent visage, resonating with meaning. Is this the result of its transformation from curio to fine art? The reverberating romantic notions of a mystical past? Or, maybe the public is engaged in an unconscious empathetic reaction to the consecrated spirit of the object itself? Whatever the answer, it needs to be acknowledged that the object is also a cultural marker and signifier of Tibet. The objects also perform—they excite an immediacy, an intimacy and continuity of a particular culture which is not lost, dead or dying but alive - encoded on and within each object.

My Western Voice

\(^{67}\) Foucault, M. 1972: 224.
The moral dilemma highlighted by this dissertation is not the transformation of artefact into art but the western transformation of indigenous heritage into western heritage through the act of (re)presentation and consuming. Furthermore, the impetus for such transformation is not because of rogue elements, but rather the culmination of the value creating processes and arrested histories of the artworld of the artworld. The words, images and performances of the Tibetan artworld impact on the Tibetan objects. How they are seen and collected is approved and authenticated by Tibetan artworld authorities.

Nor do I stand outside, I am also implicated in these actions. I employ the same textual and visual devices which constructed and transformed the Tibetan ritual objects into fine art. Like other Tibetan art authorities, I am also associated with restricting the Tibetan’s presence in my research to historical footnotes corralled at the bottom of the page, or as disembodied names certifying the authenticity of an object. Furthermore, this dissertation continues the repetition of Tibet’s status within western constructs, that is, one of (re)presentation.

In both my professional and personal lives, I participate in Tibet’s commodification. Whether exercising my authority as a scholar or my economic power as a consumer, I am trapped in western commodification and global politics. As a scholar, I see my commitment to understanding the implicit nature of my field of research, for example the awareness of my complicity in upholding Tibetan art discourse as it is currently written. The critical analysis leading to this revelation informs institutionalized learning and it is in this way that I contribute to the knowledge store. I present this dissertation as another step in the discussion on the western art representation of the Other, or more correctly the (re)presentation of the material cultures of the Other as western art commodities.