



## SOCIETY FOR ASIAN ART PRESIDENT'S REPORT 2022-2023

After three years, as we finally seem to be emerging from COVID-19, I have to recognize that we will probably never go back to "like it was before." Adapting to the pandemic forced us to learn and adopt new ways of connecting. With Zoom webinars and meetings, we were able to continue with our wonderful lectures and programs, opening them to audiences that would not have been able to travel to San Francisco. With technology, we gain audiences but also lose the personal connections from coming together in person. I hope in the coming year we will be able to move more to the center where all of you feel comfortable coming together but at times when this is not possible will be able to participate without leaving home. Thank you for maintaining your membership and participating in our programs.

As you read the Committee Reports that follow, I hope that all of you will continue to support and attend the various programs, travel and social events. Without you, our membership, board and committee members, there would not be a Society.

Our Annual Book Sale chaired by Ehler Spliedt was expanded to four days this April with the money added to our yearly donation of \$18,000 going to support the C. Laan Chun Library of the Asian Art Museum.

As this fiscal year draws to an end, I want to thank all of the Board members for their work and especially those that will be leaving the Board after serving the maximum six years.

Thanks to Susan Lai, our Office Manager, who keeps all this working smoothly, the staff and curators at the Museum and all of you for your continued support.

Best regards,

Marsha Vargas Handley  
President

## COMMITTEE REPORTS

### EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

#### Arts of Asia

The Arts of Asia Committee (AOA) runs two 14-lecture series each year, presented by the SAA. Each series is designed with a theme and the assistance of an Instructor of Record. Speakers are scholars and curators selected for their particular expertise.

AOA started a three-part series in spring 2022, beginning with *Gifts of Rivers and Resources: Art and Power in Ancient Asia*. The Instructor of Record for all three parts was Sanjyot Mehendale, Professor in the Department of Near Eastern Studies and Chair of the Tang Center for Silk Road Studies at the University of California, Berkeley. In fall 2022, AOA presented the second part, titled *Forging New Connections: Asia in the First Millennium of the Common Era*. It was our first completely hybrid series, meaning in-person lectures simultaneously broadcast on Zoom. Approximately 180 people registered. *Forging New Connections* was designed to be a survey of Asian cultures with attention to how they used their natural resources and trade routes in the first millennium of the common era. As examples of our topics and speakers, Prof. Michael Frachetti of Washington University in St. Louis spoke on his archeological work disclosing villages built and inhabited by what had previously been perceived as purely nomadic groups in Central Asia; Dr. Helen Evans of New York's Metropolitan Museum spoke on early Armenia at the cross-roads of the Silk Road; and Padma Kaimal of Colgate University spoke on the stone temples of ancient South India.

AOA presented the third and final part in spring 2023 titled *Global Connections: Asia and the Arts in the Second Millennium of the Common Era*. It has again been a hybrid series but this season we also broadcast Zoom only lectures on the large screen in Samsung Hall. Our speakers included Uranchimeg Tsultem of Indiana University who spoke on Mongol Networks, Forrest McGill of the Asian Art Museum spoke on Miraculous and Threatening Waters in Mainland Southeast Asia, and Munis Faruqui of the University of California, Berkeley spoke on Visualizing the World: Miniature Painting and the Mughals.

The coming fall 2023 series is titled *Views From the Other Side* and will begin on August 25, 2023 with an introductory lecture by Forrest McGill, titled *A Curious Affair – Toward an Understanding of Art and Globalization*. Other lectures in the series will include Prof. Mia Yinxing Liu, a former visiting curator at the Asian Art Museum, currently at Johns Hopkins University, who will be speaking on Dialogues between Photography and Ink Painting in Modern Chinese Art, and Prof. Aida Yuen Wong, who will be speaking on Early Twentieth Century Influence of Japanese Art on Indian Artists and Indian Modernism.

The committee is grateful to John O'Shea and Michael Mersereau of the Asian Art Museum and to SAA Office Manager Susan Lai for their invaluable help in making the series work well both in-person and on Zoom. Susan has also been invaluable for keeping the entire Arts of Asia program organized. The Arts of Asia Committee consists of co-chairs **Lawrence Mock** and **Edith Benay**, and committee members **John Kouletsis**, **Peggy Mathers**, and **Kathleen Slobin**.



## Literature and Culture of Asia

The Literature and Culture of Asia Committee presented a three-meeting series in fall 2022 to continue our discussion on the multi-volume Ming dynasty Chinese novel, *Chin P'ing Mei*. This work covers the Ximen household through its destruction and the dispersal of its surviving members. Professor Stephen Roddy led the discussions, with an overview of the last volumes of this epic. In Spring 2023, the committee presented a three-meeting series entitled 'Gathering Plum Blossoms,' focusing on a select group of Japanese poems. Dr. John Wallace led the discussions, as well as supplying the course materials online.

The committee was chaired by **John Nelson**, and now by **Gloria Garaventa**. At present, the only committee member is **Pamela Royse**.

## Study Group

The Study Group Committee aims to organize day or half-day events and workshops that delve deeply into various topics of interest to our members.

Last June, the Study Group had a Zoom lecture by artist Youngmin Lee on Korean traditional cloth wrapping art—bojagi. Participants learned the history, styles, and technique of bojagi in addition to Youngmin's recent projects beyond her pieces collected by the Asian Art Museum.

The first in-person lecture, since 2020, was held last September by Professor Henry Spiller on the influence of traditional Indonesian music, specifically gamelan, on Western composers. The audience was treated to visual and audio examples of such cultural musical cross-pollination.

In January, we had a show-and-tell ceramic shards workshop led by Dr. Bruce Bartholomew, where participants examined more than 200 shards to learn the evolution of Chinese ceramics from the Neolithic period to the Qing dynasty (7,000 BCE to 20th century).

On a rain-free day in mid-March, members and non-members enjoyed a spring day and early cherry blossoms in Hakone, Saratoga; besides the guided garden tour, we had author Ann Waltonsmith illuminate for us Hakone's 100-year history, and we had, as a special treat, a demonstration of a formal tea ceremony.

The Study Group Committee is chaired by **Debbie Wong Ottman**, with members **Margaret Edwards**, **Tom Ihrig**, and **Pamela Royse**.

## EVENTS FOR MEMBERS

### Member Events

The Member Events Committee is chaired by **Nazneen Spliedt**. Members of the committee were **Margaret Booker**, **Jim Brown**, **Kalpana Desai**, **Annie Dorsey**, **Anne Adams Kahn**, **Phyllis Kempner**, **Debbie Wong Ottman**, **Greg Potts**, **Ehler Spliedt**, **Graeme Vanderstoel**, and **Sylvia Wong**.

During the past year, we started organizing a few in-person talks at the Asian Art Museum as well as a few outings to nearby places and visits to galleries and museums while continuing to hold many lectures on Zoom.

In-person events included a guided walk of Japantown, a visit to a gallery in Bodega Bay and to the Chinese Historical Society Museum, our Annual Holiday party, and the Annual Spring Dinner. Zoom talks were well attended though the in-person talks attracted a smaller audience, as members seem to be hesitant to attend in-person events.

Between July 2022 and June 2023, the Committee organized 15 + presentations in person and/or on Zoom, covering a broad range of topics from ancient to contemporary art, culture, and history. Our speakers/scholars were from the Bay Area as well as from around the country and overseas including curators, SAA Advisors, and other experts in various fields.

### Upper Category Member Events

The Upper Category Member Events Committee provides programs for members supporting the SAA at the Contributor, Donor and Sponsor membership levels. The committee co-chairs are **Anne Adams Kahn** and **Trista Berkovitz**. Committee members include **Sheila Dowell**, **Pamela George**, **Nancy Jacobs**, **Candace Zander Kahn**, **Phyllis Kempner**, **Ehler Spliedt**, and **Charita Thakkar**.

The fall season began in October with a lively presentation and conversation with local artist Jennifer Wofford at the AAM. This was followed in November by a curator tour by Alessa Alexander of the Ruth Asawa "Faces" installation and the "East of the Pacific" exhibit at the Cantor Arts Center at Stanford.

A winter program featured a Zoom studio tour and q&a session with the artist Ala Ebtakar in January. This was followed in February by a conversation in a private home with LACMA curator Linda Komaroff, who presented photos of objects chosen for upcoming LACMA exhibitions while explaining her reasons for having selected them.

The spring season kicked off with a Sponsor only reception in a private home with AAM director Jay Xu, who shared insights into problems facing museums in a post-COVID world in addition to describing upcoming AAM exhibitions.



The final Upper Category program for the year was a trip to Iwasawa Oriental Art in Los Gatos to experience kodo, the Japanese tradition of incense appreciation, which was presented by the visiting Tokyo calligrapher and kodo master, Kihachiro Nishiura.

## Travel

The Travel Committee is chaired by **Marsha Vargas Handley**, with members **Neaera Baer, Margaret Booker, Lynne Brewer, Kalpana Desai, Sheila Dowell, Kalena Gregory, Mary Hunt, Anne Adams Kahn, Bianca Larson, Greg Potts, Sharon Roe, and Gail Uilkema**.

SAA Travel is back with the first trip of the fiscal year being to Mongolia with a small but enthusiastic group (June 28-July 15) followed in October with a larger group traveling to Oman and the Gulf States. In January 2023, we traveled to Indochina (Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos) with the scholar Julian Brown and to Kansas City in April 2023. In May 2023, we will finally make it to Japan on our 2020 trip that has been rescheduled four times. The next fiscal year will see trips to Washington, DC/Baltimore, Morocco, and Paris.

## PUBLICATIONS AND PUBLIC RELATIONS

### Library/Book Sale

The Library Committee is chaired by **Ehler Spliedt** with member **Kirk Gibson**. The SAA continued its support of the AAM library with a monthly donation of \$1,500, for a total of \$18,000 for the year. This money helps buy new books and subscriptions to a wide variety of periodicals.

The committee, assisted by a wonderful group of volunteers, organized the Annual Society Book Sale which took place in the Loggia of the Museum on March 30 – April 02, 2023. It was the first 4-day Book Sale and included a First Free Sunday at the Museum. This year's sale netted over \$14,000. The entire proceeds were donated to the library as part of the SAA annual donations to the Museum.

### Newsletter

The Newsletter Committee edits and publishes the bi-monthly SAA Newsletter, which informs members of ongoing SAA activities and ways to register for them. The latest issue can be found on the SAA website. The Newsletter is now only offered digitally.

The Newsletter Committee was chaired by **John Nelson**, who stepped down in February, and joined by co-editor **Susan Lai**.

### Social Media

We are pleased to report that The Society for Asian Art's Facebook page now has over two hundred followers. This means that these people will not only see the SAA's posts when they make a point of seeking out our page, but they are also notified whenever we make a new post.

What does it mean when we boost a post on Facebook? When we post something that is of particular importance, we want as many people as possible to see it. To accomplish that, we pay a small fee, which in turn publishes a boosted post to more people in our target audience than would usually see it. An example is that we recently boosted the post about the Annual Book Sale. This post was particularly appropriate for boosting because it was something we wanted both members and non-members to know about.

What does it mean when we pin a post to the top? Ordinarily, posts are listed in order with the most recent ones going to the top of the list. However, like with boosting, pinning a post to the top lets the post skip the line, and go directly to the top and stay there, until we unpin it. Then, if we don't choose to delete it, it goes back in chronological order. Usually, in the lead up to an Arts of Asia lecture series, we both pin and boost the list of all the lectures in the series. Once the series begins, we post a banner (or notice) for the upcoming lecture in the series. It takes the "Pin to The Top" position. Once that lecture is over, we both unpin and delete the banner post.

When do we delete posts? The timing of deleting posts can vary. Like with the book sale and Arts of Asia lecture posts, once an event is past, we delete it. This also happens when committee chair asks us to publicize things like Literature Courses and Study Groups and the event is over. What tends to stay a long time are the wonderful pictures members submit from our SAA trips. Pictures of you all doing interesting things in amazing places stay posted for quite a while. Your pictures, just like announcements of programs, just might make a casual Facebook viewer want to join our organization.

The committee is chaired by **Candace Zander Kahn**, with member **Anne Katz**.



## DEVELOPMENT AND OUTREACH

### Advisors

The SAA Advisory Board for the year consisted of 21 Advisors and 3 Advisors Emeriti. We were sorry to lose our longtime Advisor Emerita Dr. Joanna Williams this year. Three Advisors retired this year, and two new Advisors were added. The committee welcomes recommendations, particularly scholars from fields not already represented.

The committee arranged a lunch for the Advisors hosted by the SAA Board, where members could meet and interact with our Advisors.

The committee is chaired by **Nazneen Spliedt**, with members **Jeanne Dorward**, **Kirk Gibson**, and **Pamela Royse**.

### Membership

Our membership decreased 8.5% during the 2022 calendar year, reversing last year's gain. We appreciate those of you who continued to support us during this trying time. In particular, we thank those of you who have renewed or joined us at the Upper Category level, who comprise 35% of households and cumulatively account for 68.6% of our membership income.

We continue to recruit new members and we have welcomed 36 new households during the 2022 calendar year. The restarted travel programs may help to increase membership. We hope that you will help spread the word and invite your friends and family to join us.

The Membership Committee is chaired by **Howard Moreland**, with member **Edith Benay**. We also wish to acknowledge with appreciation, SAA Office Manager Susan Lai.

## ADMINISTRATIVE

### Bylaws and Operating Procedures

The committee periodically updates the SAA Operating Procedures, Bylaws and Policies to keep them current and accurate. The committee is chaired by Secretary **Anne Katz**, with members **Trista Berkovitz** and **Margaret Edwards**.

### Finance

The Finance Committee is chaired by Treasurer **Ed Baer**, with members **Melonie Brophy**, Investment Committee Chair **Sandra Pan**, **Ehler Spliedt**, and **Nazneen Spliedt**.

The committee now meets quarterly to review the SAA's financial status and to ensure that sufficient liquid assets are available for ongoing and future expenses. The committee develops and proposes an annual budget with input from the various committee chairs while fulfilling a variety of accounting and reporting needs. The Chair/Treasurer is also a member of the Investment Committee, facilitating communication as cash flow is reviewed and annual spending policy established.

### Investment

The committee is chaired by **Sandra Pan**, with members Finance Committee Chair **Ed Baer**, **Trista Berkovitz**, **Gary Chou**, and **Howard Moreland**.

We are now in our third year of management by the First Republic Investment Management, Inc. (Inception date of February 2020). Although we are not completely insulated from market volatilities, the portfolios have performed well relative to their benchmark. The portfolios are sufficiently protected from downside drafts and have participated in market upswings. We have also maintained adequate liquidity to take advantage of higher interest rates in the market and tactically moved some cash into the market to move closer to our targeted 60/40 asset allocation goal.