

The Jay Gates Collection: ART OF CHINA & JAPAN

Organized as part of the **Wooster Forum 2014: East Asia**, this exhibition showcases recent gifts to The College of Wooster Art Museum (CWAM) from Jay Gates, Class of 1968. A native of Kansas City and graduate of the College, Gates studied art history with his Senior Independent Study advisor Arn Lewis, Emeritus Professor of Art History. After leaving Wooster, Gates received an MA in art history from the University of Rochester, and went on to a significant career as a curator and director at a number of major art museums. These include curatorial positions at the Cleveland Museum of Art, The Saint Louis Art Museum, the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art (where he was also the Assistant Director), and the Spencer Museum of Art. His directorships include those at the Seattle Art Museum, the Dallas Museum of Art, and the Phillips Collection. Gates taught at a number of institutions throughout his career, most recently at Wooster where he taught First Year Seminar and Museum Studies as the Pocock Family Distinguished Visiting Professor. Gates gave this group of Chinese and Japanese materials to the CWAM in honor of Arn and Beth Lewis.

As to how permanent collection materials are utilized as part of the CWAM's teaching mission, Walter Zurko, Professor of Art, and Kara Morrow, Assistant Professor of Art History, explained it best in a press release announcing this gift. "A major advantage of teaching from real objects in a studio art class is that they engage students directly in ways photographs (of such objects) cannot begin to address," said Walter Zurko. "Teaching with actual historical material creates an immediate sensory link between students and the object that can result in new levels of interest, scrutiny, and understanding. For example, in viewing an actual Chinese, Han Dynasty (206 BCE–CE 220) cocoon-shaped earthenware jar, and seeing the maker's fingerprints impressed into the fired clay and the vitality of the fluidly painted design up close, students attain a much better idea of how the vessel was constructed and decorated. Also, by having the ability to peer into the dark interior of this distinctive form, one begins to consider how or why such jars were used; was its purpose to store grain or water, as its form suggests, or could it have been used as funerary ware?" And, as Kara Morrow commented, "Such objects help the students to become real scholars, and even more importantly, the cultural meaning of each provides students and members of the community with an opportunity to enrich our understanding of the world outside of Wooster. Having access to these objects allows students to add an experiential dimension to their education. Instead of having a class in which we tell them about things, bringing these objects into the classroom enables students to explore and discover for themselves, and to me that is a core mission of a liberal arts education."