

VISION BEYOND BORDERS:

THE LEGACY OF DWIGHT TRYON
AND CHARLES FREER

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IT IS WELL KNOWN THAT Charles Lang Freer (1854–1919), a wealthy railroad industrialist and art collector, gifted to the nation his collection of Asian and American art, along with a museum in which to house it in Washington, D.C. (fig. 11). Yet few people are aware that, after Freer settled his donation agreement with the federal government in 1906, over the course of the rest of his life he also gave small portions of his collection, as gifts or bequests, to several art institutions and college museums in this country.¹ The Smith College Museum of Art was fortunate to be among these institutional recipients, with Freer’s first group of gifts to the Hillyer Art Gallery (as it was then known) constituting its inaugural collection of Asian art in 1913.

Smith was among the first American colleges to include the study of fine arts within its liberal arts curriculum, whose design was described in an 1872 prospectus by the trustees: “More time will be devoted than in other colleges to aesthetical study, to the principles on which the fine arts are founded, to the art of drawing and the science of perspective, to the examination of the great models of painting and statuary”² To reach this goal, Smith College installed an art gallery in College Hall (built in 1875) and made its first acquisitions of original art in 1879. The College also founded its art department in 1882 and a year later dedicated its new art gallery to Winthrop Hillyer, a local businessman who had bequeathed a substantial fund to support its construction and for the purpose of acquiring original art. In 1886, Dwight William Tryon (1849–1925), a successful Hartford-born landscape painter, was invited to instruct studio classes and advise on art acquisitions (fig. 12). During his thirty-seven years at Smith, Professor Tryon took the lead in educating women artists and worked with the College’s first president, L. Clark Seelye (1837–1924), to establish a first-tier college art museum.

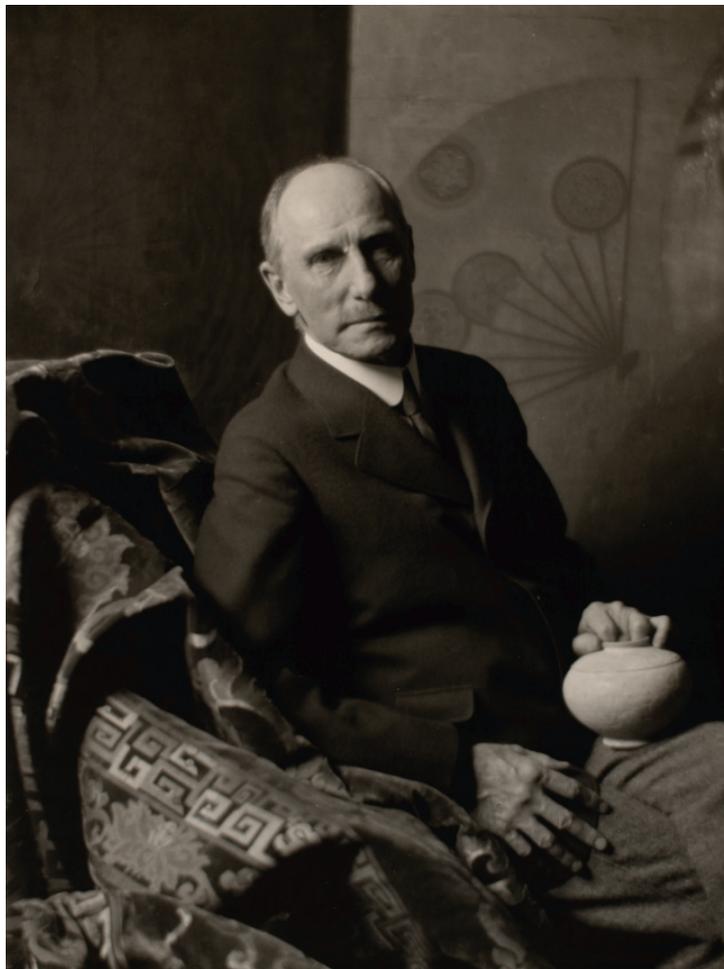


FIG. 11. Edward Steichen. American, 1879–1973. Charles Freer, c. 1915–16. Photograph. Collection of George Eastman House, International Museum of Photography, Rochester, New York.



FIG. 12. Marceau Studio, New York. Dwight William Tryon, 1912. Cabinet photograph. Charles Lang Freer Papers, Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery Archives, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. Gift of the Estate of Charles Lang Freer.

Smith College's acquisition of Freer's gifts and bequests of Asian art mainly resulted from Tryon's association with Freer, who was his major patron and friend for many years. Tryon and Freer had common interests in American and Asian art and jointly contributed to the College's pioneering commitment to displaying and acquiring Asian art at the turn of the last century. Yet given the Museum's strengths in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Western art, the Tryon-Freer relationship and its formative role in establishing a legacy of exhibiting Asian art at Smith College have been largely unexplored in the general history of the Museum. Therefore, this essay, and the *Collecting Art of Asia* exhibition as a whole, seeks to restore the place of Asian art in the Museum's history and to establish a firm base for building on the groundwork that Tryon and Freer had laid together.

Freer never married, but pursued his true love—Asian (though then termed “Oriental”) art—which he enthusiastically collected for more than two decades.³ In fact, his collecting choices rarely conformed to those of his contemporaries during the late nineteenth century. When most American collectors were only interested in European master paintings and sculpture, Freer began by collecting contemporary American art and focused on a few artists he liked, including the famous expatriate artist James Abbott McNeill Whistler (1834–1903). Although less well known than Whistler, Dwight Tryon was also a key member of Freer's circle of artist friends whose works Freer passionately collected. In 1889, Freer first met Tryon in New York City, where Tryon had established a studio after spending nearly five years studying art in France.⁴ In Tryon's studio, Freer was immediately attracted to Tryon's outdoor scenes and purchased his first Tryon painting—*The Rising Moon: Autumn* (the Freer Gallery)—an exceptional work that would soon help Tryon win two principal awards in international art exhibitions.⁵ Freer's aesthetic sensibility and taste responded well to the subtle colors and carefully structured composition of Tryon's paintings.

Believing that Freer was one of the few people who truly understood his work, Tryon offered to decorate the wall panels of the living and reception rooms in Freer's Detroit home, a proposal Freer happily accepted in 1891. Anxious to meet his patron's expectations, Tryon spent two years finishing a set of seven paintings that included four seasonal landscapes, two seascapes, and an ethereal landscape.⁶ These paintings contributed to a harmonious atmosphere that Freer sought to create in his home, where his collections of art were displayed in

settings decorated in subdued color schemes. The Tonalist experiments Tryon pursued during this long project greatly shaped his later stylistic development. In particular, Tryon must have considered the principles of Asian art in order to cater to Freer's taste. While commenting on the successful application of colors in the first panel painting of this project, *Springtime*, Tryon told Freer that the color and formal elements of this painting reminded him of some very old Japanese works, which encouraged his search for an indefinable mingling of real and ideal in this landscape (fig. 13).⁷ In the following years, Freer became Tryon's principal patron and assembled a group of more than seventy works by this artist, which eventually became second in size only to his collection of Whistler's paintings. Freer repeatedly expressed his admiration for the evocative scenes and mood shifts of different seasons and times of day in Tryon's landscapes, which he thought often possessed a poetic splendor rivaling nature herself.⁸

At the suggestion of artist and collector friends such as Whistler, Freer, then in his thirties, began to collect Japanese art. His first acquisition of quality was a small fan painting by Ogata Korin (1658-1716), purchased from a New York dealer in 1887.⁹ Attracted by the aesthetic principles of the Orient, Freer expanded his collection as his interest grew over time. It is not surprising that the paintings of both Whistler and Tryon played a key role in shaping Freer's vision for collecting Asian art, allowing him to better appreciate subtleties of color and texture with his cultivated eye.¹⁰ The elaborate surface quality of Tryon's work, for instance,

FIG. 13. Dwight Tryon. *Springtime*. 1892. Oil on canvas, 38 x 83¼ in.; 96.8 x 211.4 cm. Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. Gift of Charles Lang Freer, F1893.14.





FIG. 14. Alvin Langdon Coburn, American, 1882–1966. Charles L. Freer comparing Whistler’s *Venus Rising from the Sea* to an Islamic glazed pot, 1909. Platinum print. Charles Lang Freer Papers, Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery Archives, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. Gift of the Estate of Charles Lang Freer.

particularly attracted Freer, leading him to compare Tryon’s *Daybreak–May* (the Freer Gallery) with a Japanese ceramic piece that belonged to the painter. Freer told him, “I think when you put the finishing touches to the sky you must have in mind the pink flush on the big white bowl.”¹¹ This comment calls to mind a photograph showing Freer examining Whistler’s *Venus Rising from the Sea* side-by-side with a piece of Babylonian pottery and searching for parallels in these two works of very different origins (fig. 14). Similarly, Freer compared the surface of Tryon’s painting with the glaze of Japanese ceramics, appreciating Tryon’s subdued, suggestive layers of color that found their echo in the tonal changes of the ceramic glaze. Like Whistler, who creatively applied “oriental principles to express occidental feeling,” Tryon also sought to achieve a resonance of color and texture in his landscape paintings.¹² Interestingly, a later photograph of the studio in his Harperley Hall apartment shows that Tryon displayed Asian ceramics and prints, from which he could draw inspiration while painting (fig. 15).

Indeed, Freer was among the first American collectors who learned to appreciate elements common to the arts of the West and the East and to dedicate himself to sharing his inspiration through his collections. Freer’s friend and consultant in Asian art, Ernest Fenollosa (1853–1908), formerly the curator of Japanese art at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, once described Freer’s collection and refined taste this way: “A mural painting by Kano Eitoku, a tea bowl by Kenzan, and an oil seascape by Whistler achieve similar delicate tonal effects.”¹³ In fact, this pioneer collector specifically aimed to acquire works that would create a



FIG. 15. Tryon in his studio at his Harperley Hall apartment, New York, c. 1920. From Henry C. White, *The Life and Art of Dwight William Tryon* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1930), 120.

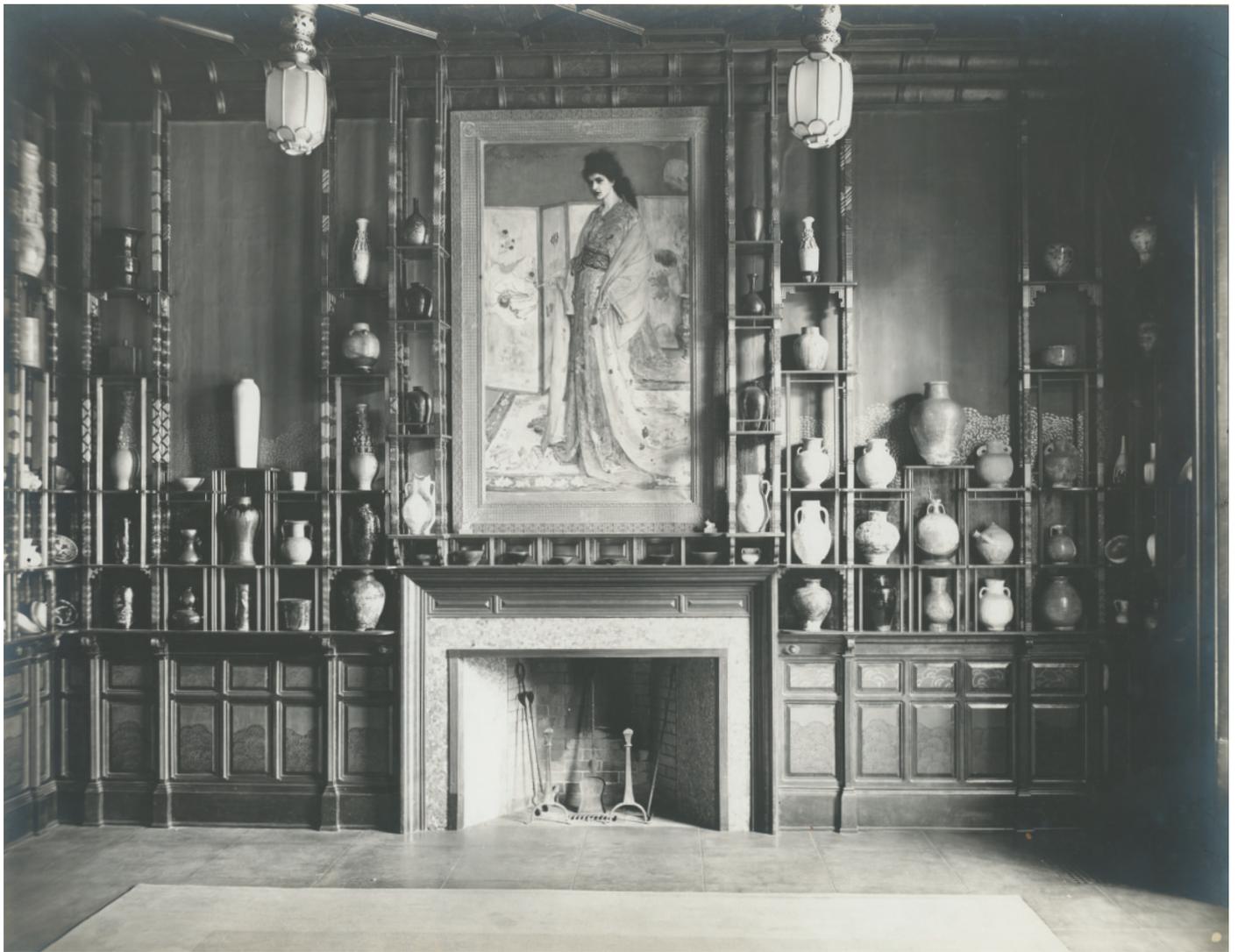


FIG. 16. George R. Swain. American, 19th–20th century. James McNeill Whistler’s Peacock Room in Charles L. Freer’s Detroit residence: north wall, *La Princesse du pays de la porcelaine*, 1908. Glass negative. Charles Lang Freer Papers, Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery Archives, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. Gift of the Estate of Charles Lang Freer.

harmony of beautiful surfaces, forms, and colors from different regions and cultures, presenting a balance within his collection and revealing an ultimate sense of beauty (fig. 16).¹⁴ This fruitful artistic synthesis, therefore, became Freer’s powerful personal statement as an eccentric collector of Asian and American art.

Freer’s experiences of traveling in Asia also helped him to appreciate Tryon’s art and to find a spiritual resonance between the East and the West. In a letter written to Tryon from Japan, where he spent two months sightseeing and viewing art in many famous cities, Freer said:

*I also sympathize with your affection for the character of New England scenery, but I think one grows to greater intimacy, keener appreciation of the object he most loves after his memory has been toned by other agreeable impressions—shadowy recollections of unknown places, glimpses of faraway coasts and strange horizons leave a mysterious something which I think, in part, is the basis of what we call the imagination. . . .*¹⁵

Soon after his return from Japan in 1907, Freer received Tryon’s new painting *The Sea: Evening*, which embodied an overwhelming feeling of the vastness and power



FIG. 17. Dwight Tryon. *The Sea: Evening*. 1907. Oil on canvas, 30 x 47 in.; 76.2 x 121.8 cm. Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. Gift of Charles Lang Freer, F1907.151.

of the sea (fig. 17). The subtle gradation of dark blue in this seascape also reflects a cold austerity that possibly inspired Tryon while traveling to Maine earlier that year. In a letter to Tryon, Freer expressed his excitement about the quality of this painting, comparing it to the famous masterpieces he saw in Kyoto:

*It is a wonder! Marvelously convincing, tremendously powerful and extremely dignified. Nothing could be more truthful and, at the same time, so subtle. . . . Certainly, I have seen nothing more suggestive of that particular mood of the sea. The coloring is very beautiful, and its directness recalls the work of the great masters of the early Kano school—Sesshu, Sesson, and Masunobu. In one of the great Kyoto temples, there is an ink painting of a huge waterfall by a Sung painter called Okamatsu. . . . I believe it to be one of the greatest pictures in existence. You, I am sure, would be fascinated by it. Its great qualities are simplicity, line, and notan (light and dark). . . .*¹⁶

Freer particularly compared Tryon to one of the best Asian masters, Wang Wei (699–759) of Tang-dynasty China, citing the work of both artists as sources of spiritual inspiration. In his reply, Tryon agreed that artists of different cultures and periods all had the ability to capture, in form and composition, the subtle effects of nature, because they all belonged to a timeless community of creative individuals.¹⁷ Indeed, the artist and his patron shared a refined taste and belief that came to fundamentally shape their views of art education and collecting: the

great artistic traditions of West and East had parallels in capturing the wonders of nature and conveying spiritual inspiration.

As a dedicated collector, Freer by no means only wished to possess works of art as symbols of personal cultivation and wealth. Instead, he regarded himself as the guardian of fine examples of art, which he intended for the education and inspiration of others. In late 1904, Freer proposed a plan to give much of his collection to the nation, along with a fund for the construction of a gallery to house it and for making future purchases. With the help of his brother, William L. Freer, and President Theodore Roosevelt, the Smithsonian Institution accepted his proposal in early 1906.¹⁸ In the following years, Freer managed to expand his donation to the nation and amassed the majority of his Asian collection. He particularly wished for it to be used to teach students and specified in his will that special arrangements be made for students and scholars to view any objects not on exhibition. In 1923, the Freer Gallery of Art finally opened in Washington, D.C., housing more than 9,000 works, one of the largest collections of Asian art at that time.

Aware of the dedication of his friend and the significance of his collecting mission, Tryon introduced Freer to a promising exhibition opportunity within the Smith community. With Tryon's help, Freer organized the first public exhibition of his Asian collection at the Hillyer Art Gallery in February 1897, a year after his initial trip to Japan. This exhibition, which included twenty-six Japanese paintings and four screen panels, was among the earliest Asian art exhibitions in New England.¹⁹ A local newspaper, the *Daily Hampshire Gazette* (February 17, 1897), reported that this exhibition was received with great enthusiasm by Northampton residents and about six hundred visitors attended the opening. The public was delighted by the fantastic display of paintings in the large gallery and by the exceptional quality of Japanese art, about which most knew little. This response inspired nearby Williams College to invite Freer to bring his show to its own campus that same year. The warm reception in western Massachusetts, as well as the rising public interest in Japanese art, encouraged Freer to withdraw completely from the railroad business and devote himself, over the next two decades, to collecting Asian art.

From their correspondence, we know that Tryon was very pleased that Freer offered this introductory Japanese art exhibition as an opportunity for the Smith

community to appreciate art from other cultures and the principles it shares with Western art. He particularly praised a number of interesting paintings, including Kuroda Toko's *Carp*, which is now at the Freer Gallery of Art (fig. 18).²⁰ Interestingly, Tryon himself was a lover of boating and fishing and often enjoyed summer outdoor activities on the coast of New England. Surely Freer was remembering this pastime of his old friend when he sent Tryon a Ming-dynasty hanging scroll of a giant jumping carp, a work that Tryon eventually gave to the Museum in 1921 (cat. no. 9).²¹ Influenced by Freer, Tryon also began to collect Japanese prints and Chinese ceramics in the mid-1890s, receiving occasional gifts over the years as well as a bequest of Asian antiquities from Freer.

Of course, Freer was a significant influence in persuading Tryon of the important role that art from non-Western cultures could play in the development of students' ability to create and appreciate art. In a letter to Tryon, Freer wrote, "the appreciation of beauty could be strengthened, deepened, and broadened by intelligent comparative study," suggesting that Asian art should be used to help students of Western art search for ultimate beauty.²² Tryon certainly had learned through Freer's exhibition the value of Asian art for teaching students and offering viewers inspirational moments, especially at a time when the Arts and Crafts Movement began to thrive in New England. As a result, in March 1901,

FIG. 18. Kuroda Toko. Japanese, 1785–1846. *Carp*. Edo period, first half of 19th century. Hanging scroll: ink and color on silk, 17³/₄ x 33³/₄ in.; 44.9 x 85.8 cm. Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. Gift of Charles Lang Freer, F1896.92.



Tryon arranged for Freer to have a second exhibition in the Hillyer Art Gallery, which featured thirty-five *ukiyo-e* paintings from Freer's recent acquisitions.²³ Not long before, Freer had purchased several genre paintings from the former Fenollosa collection, and was particularly interested in the unconventional styles and artistic innovations of *ukiyo-e* artists. Thus, instead of providing an ensemble of examples from different schools, Freer chose to exhibit these genre pictures to offer viewers "the keener pleasure and more direct knowledge of the aims and methods of the principal masters of the school which was first to break away from academic practices."²⁴

After his second trip to Japan in 1907, Freer became increasingly interested in Chinese art, because he had learned from Japanese collectors that it was the source of inspiration for many Japanese and Korean works. He also found that few collectors were competing over an increasing supply of Chinese art which, when compared to Japanese art, was still undervalued. Therefore, Freer made two special, long trips to China, where he found many acquisition opportunities and brought back a large group of beautiful antiquities.²⁵ Because the majority of collectors did not bother to make their own search in China, Freer was able to seize the opportunity to obtain paintings believed to be works of Tang and Song painters, a focus that he enthusiastically pursued for the remainder of his life.²⁶

However, in May 1911, just a month after his return from China, Freer suffered a sudden stroke that prevented him from undertaking any further international travel. Yet he did not lose his strong sense of mission to bring works of art from the Far East to America. Instead of traveling to Asia himself, he now focused on buying works from dealers in the U.S. and agents in Asia. He also began to assist the development of Asian art collections in new public and academic museums across the country, for example, with a special gift to the Oberlin College Museum of Art, in the hope that appreciation of Asian art would eventually take root within college museums in this country.²⁷ Freer also showed a willingness to preserve Asian art objects in their original contexts. He not only joined in the successful lobbying for the American government's inspection of imported antiquities to keep out those with questionable provenance, but also planned on founding a school of archaeology to conserve and excavate antiquities in Beijing.²⁸

It is in this context that Smith College received its first gift of Asian art from Freer in January 1913, a gift comprising twelve carved wooden and lacquer panels with various floral and figural subjects. Given that the College previously had almost no Asian art, Tryon and Alfred Vance Churchill (1864–1949), the chief curator

and first director of the Hillyer Art Gallery, were deeply aware of the value of Freer's gifts and the potential for further assistance from this generous collector. Soon after the arrival of his gifts, they selected some of them to display in the gallery. Through Freer's introduction, Laurence Binyon (1869–1943), keeper of Oriental prints and drawings at the British Museum, was invited to give six consecutive lectures on Oriental art at Smith in November 1914.²⁹ The College also invited Professor Masaharu Anesaki (1873–1949), the founder of the first religious studies program in Japan, to present a talk that month on Japanese Buddhism. In fact, Freer loved to invite scholars to give lectures and often persuaded museums to organize educational programs linked to Asian art exhibitions based on his loans.³⁰

A valuable byproduct of the lecture invitations was the expert help that the Museum would soon receive. With money from the Hillyer Fund, on behalf of the Museum, Binyon purchased in Europe more than thirty representative Japanese prints. After the renovation of the interior of the second-floor galleries, a selection of these prints, along with gifts of ceramic wares from Tryon and a few others, was added to complete the inaugural gallery installation of Asian art. A photograph taken around 1915 records Tryon and Churchill working together in a room next to the Asian art gallery, which was among the earliest such display areas set aside for Asian art in college museums of that time. Japanese prints and Chinese woodcarvings are displayed on two walls of this gallery, while ceramic works are gathered on shelves and pedestals (fig. 19).³¹ The tasteful installation of this gallery demonstrates the accomplishments of Tryon and Freer in their effort to develop the Museum's collection in the early years of the twentieth century.

In 1915, Freer moved from his Detroit home to a New York City hotel room in order to have easier access to his doctors. There, despite failing health, he continued purchasing large quantities of art and assisting the development of a few museums that he favored by offering advice on their acquisitions of Asian art and providing loans to their exhibitions.³² Freer also helped some private collectors of Asian art, including Eugene and Agnes Meyer of New York and Margaret W. Parker of Detroit, who were inspired by him to eventually donate their Asian collections to other museums in this nation. Through offering both gifts of art and his personal expertise in collecting, Freer managed to encourage his fellow Americans to recognize and appreciate the beauty of Asian art.

Freer continued his support of Smith College through gifts and advice on art education.³³ He learned from Tryon of the work being done there and sent



FIG. 19. Interior view of the second-floor gallery of Asian art in the Hillyer Art Gallery, with Beulah Strong, Dwight Tryon (seated), and Alfred Vance Churchill, c. 1915. Smith College Archives.

photographs of his collection with an inquiry about the Museum's interest in further gifts. In the winter of 1916, he asked Tryon to bring to Smith a panel painting, *The Flying Duck*. In May 1917, Freer personally selected a group of teaching samples, including eighteen Japanese and Chinese paintings, nine ceramic works, and three gilt bronze Buddhist sculptures from Siam. He wrote to Churchill, "Return of strength has enabled me recently to go through the collection in my care, and from it I have chosen for presentation to Smith College certain objects which I consider may be useful to your students, and which I trust, if agreeable, you will accept with my compliments."³⁴ To facilitate these gifts, Freer prepaid their packing and shipping charges and provided short notes on their provenance. The value of his gifts was recognized in a letter from Churchill to College President Marion L. Burton: "It is a representation of the art of the East, which of late years is coming to be more and more considered by the best judges, and it will be of particular value in the teaching of abstract qualities of design in the courses in Design given at Smith College."³⁵

Freer's assistance to the Museum in collecting Asian art was cut short by his death on October 25, 1919. Yet he still remembered the Museum's future development in his last days and particularly noted in his will a bequest of

additional artworks to support art instruction at Smith College. Based on Freer's specific wish, his executors provided additional examples of East Asian paintings in 1919 and 1920, along with over a hundred etchings, lithographs, and engravings by French and American masters.³⁶ The Museum, in turn, organized an exhibition in Freer's memory, *Oriental Paintings and Lacquers from the Permanent Collection of the College, Bronzes and Pottery Lent by T. Ono* (November 26–December 19, 1919). Garrett C. Pier (1875–1943), a scholar of Oriental art and friend of Freer, was invited to offer an exhibition lecture on Chinese influence on the painting and sculpture of Japan. After the arrival of the final objects from Freer's bequest, they were all exhibited in the gallery in May 1920.³⁷

If Freer sought to donate and exhibit his collection as a way of nurturing public appreciation for Asian art, Tryon passionately used his art and knowledge to teach students in museums and studios. As Alfred Churchill recalled, Tryon would leave his studio work in New York and come to Northampton every two or three weeks during the semester. His train normally arrived Thursday afternoon and he then read in the Forbes Library that night. His studio classes on Friday morning often had more than sixty students. During his stay on campus, Tryon loved contact with young minds and was always ready to provide inspiration. He often spoke with enthusiasm of his own teacher, the French Barbizon painter Charles-François Daubigny (1817–1878), and his friend Whistler, whom he considered one of the great artists of his time. It is not surprising that Tryon also spoke about Freer, one of the great connoisseurs of American and Asian art.³⁸

In addition to his teaching duties, Tryon was always interested in promoting the Museum as a means of fostering and supporting education in the arts. He not only employed his own connoisseurship skill and exquisite taste to make suggestions on acquisitions, but also used his reputation and personal connections to encourage artists to give their works to Smith. Tryon continued to give his own works during his tenure at Smith, including *River Maas at Dordrecht* (1881) and *October Fields* (1914), which represented his early and late landscape styles, respectively.³⁹ Following his guidance, the Museum assembled a large number of exceptional works that demonstrated the development and achievements of American art in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Like his friend Charles Freer, Tryon believed that access to and knowledge of non-Western art would foster a more general appreciation of universal principles

of beauty. It is noteworthy that Tryon himself had contributed to the growing Asian art collection at Smith—he made his first gift of Asian art in early 1914, soon after Freer gave his twelve carved panels. In 1921, Tryon gave the Museum his collection of seventy-five Japanese *ukiyo-e* prints, which he believed would have value in cultivating students' taste in art and design. The Museum received an additional bequest from his widow, Alice, in 1930, including some eighty pieces of Asian ceramics and metalwork.⁴⁰ More importantly, this art professor and his collector friend shared the view that unique works of art should be available to the public. The pioneering gesture of Freer to donate his collection for public benefit must have inspired Tryon's gift to the College of his own art collection, along with an endowment for future art purchases.⁴¹ Convinced that the exhibition space of the old Hillyer Art Gallery was inadequate to provide a comfortable, spacious environment for students to study art, Tryon also donated funds to build a museum to house the College's growing art collection. A two-story Neo-Georgian style building, designed by Frederick L. Ackerman (1878–1950), a close friend of Tryon, became the new home of the Smith College Museum of Art, which opened to the public in September 1926 (fig. 20).⁴²

Given that the systematic collecting of Asian art was just beginning in this country during the early twentieth century, Freer's and Tryon's donations to the Museum demonstrate a pioneering vision of the value of non-Western art to a liberal-arts education. Through his gifts to the nation, Freer successfully made his personal quest to bridge East and West into a public venture. He also spread the

FIG. 20. Exterior view of the new Tryon Art Gallery (next to the old Hillyer Art Gallery), 1926. Smith College Archives.



seeds of Asian art among numerous college museums to enable more students to be exposed to Far Eastern art and culture. Tryon, on the other hand, used his friendship with Freer, as well as the donation of his own collection, to bolster art education and collecting at Smith College.

In short, these two close friends were partners in a pioneering venture—they explored the aesthetic resonance they found between Eastern and Western art and collaborated to spread knowledge and appreciation of Asian art. Their efforts, of course, successfully laid the groundwork for Smith College’s commitment to collecting and displaying Asian art to support a global curriculum. Their vision, ideas, and enthusiasm have inspired generations of Smith students and faculty members to learn about the art of Asia and to appreciate the cultures of others.

ENDNOTES

- 1 For instance, Freer made gifts to the Oberlin College Museum of Art, the Detroit Institute of Arts, the Minneapolis Institute of Arts, the Peabody Museum at Harvard University, the Memorial Hall of the University of Michigan (the former University Museum), and the Art Department of Williams College. For more information about the institutional recipients of the Freer gifts, see Subseries 5.25: “Art Inventories: Estate Distribution of Personal Property” in the records of Freer’s documents and letters at the Freer Gallery of Art (hereafter Freer papers/FGA archives).
- 2 Smith College, *Image and Word: Art and Art History at Smith College* (Northampton, MA: Smith College, 2003), 154–55.
- 3 Aline B. Saarinen, “Tea and Champagne: Charles Lang Freer,” in *The Proud Possessors: The Lives, Times, and Tastes of Some Adventurous American Art Collectors* (New York: Random House, 1968), 128. Also see Robert E. Fisher, “Charles Lang Freer (1856–1919),” in *American Collectors of Asian Art*, Pratapaditya Pal, ed. (Bombay, India: Marg Publications, 1986), 10–11.
- 4 It is notable that, in that same year, Tryon’s painting, *The First Leaves*, in the Museum’s collection, won the prestigious Webb Prize from the Society of American Artists in 1889. Linda Muehlig, ed., *Masterworks of American Painting and Sculpture from the Smith College Museum of Art* (New York: Hudson Hills Press, 1999), 104–107 (cat. no. 31).
- 5 Henry C. White, *The Life and Art of Dwight William Tryon* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1930), 77–78. Also see Linda Merrill, *An Ideal Country: Paintings by Dwight William Tryon in the Freer Gallery of Art* (Washington, D.C.: Freer Gallery of Art, 1990), 51–53.
- 6 Merrill, *An Ideal Country*, 56–60.
- 7 Tryon to Freer, March 21, 1896, Freer papers/FGA archives. For the discussion of this panel painting, see Merrill, *An Ideal Country*, 112.
- 8 In a letter to his friend, William K. Bixby, who had just acquired his first Tryon painting, Freer praised the subtlety of color and integrity of space in Tryon’s works, and expressed his conviction that viewers could truly experience the wonder of nature after meditative viewing of his paintings. Freer to William K. Bixby, March 5, 1900, Freer papers/FGA archives.
- 9 Linda Merrill, *Freer: A Legacy of Art* (Washington, D.C.: Freer Gallery of Art, 1993), 59.
- 10 Nichols Clark, “Charles Lang Freer: An American Aesthete in the Gilded Era,” *The American Art Journal* 11.4 (Oct. 1979): 68.
- 11 Freer to Dwight Tryon, March 21, 1898, Freer papers/FGA archives. For the image and discussion of this painting, see Merrill, *An Ideal Country*, 130–31 (pl. 22).
- 12 Warren I. Cohen, *East Asian Art and American Culture: A Study in International Relations* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), 50.
- 13 Ernest Fenollosa, “The Collection of Mr. Charles Lang Freer,” *Pacific Era* no.2 (1907): 61–65. James Whistler is a major artist who inspired the European appreciation of blue-and-white porcelain and *ukiyo-e* prints during the second half of the nineteenth century. Influenced by this artist friend whom he first met in 1890, Freer apparently believed that subject matter was not important. He instead believed that it was absorbed by the beauty of form in the lyrical world of vision and thus loved to compare the textural and tonal quality of historically or culturally unrelated works to appreciate the varied but perfectly balanced trends that collectively conveyed a harmony in art.
- 14 David P. Curry, “Charles Lang Freer and American Art,” *Apollo* CXVIII, no. 258 (Aug. 1983): 174–76.
- 15 Freer to Tryon, June 17, 1895, Freer papers/FGA archives.

- 16 Freer to Tryon, August 3, 1907, Freer papers/FGA archives. At Chishaku-in Temple in Kyoto, Freer saw this great painting that was traditionally attributed to Omakitsu, the Japanese equivalent for Wang Wei, a famous painter of Tang-dynasty China. But he mistakenly spelled the artist name as Okamatsu. See Merrill, *An Ideal Country*, 144–46 (pl. 33).
- 17 Tryon to Freer, August 7, 1907, Tryon papers/FGA archives.
- 18 Helen N. Tomlinson, *Charles Lang Freer: Pioneer Collectors of Oriental Art*, Ph. D. diss., Case Western Reserve University, Cleveland, 1979, 426–432.
- 19 It is worth noting that most American museums did not have Asian art departments at that time, except the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, which launched its Japanese Art Department in 1890, with Ernest Fenollosa as its first curator. It was not until 1915 that the Metropolitan Museum of Art founded its Asian Art Department by separating it as a unit from its Department of Decorative Arts. For more discussion, see *ibid.*, 666.
- 20 Tryon to Freer, February 20, 1897, Tryon papers/FGA archives.
- 21 Freer probably purchased this painting around 1915. Because of its auspicious implication of good luck, the carp was a popular subject in paintings for reciprocal gifts between friends in traditional China.
- 22 Freer to Tryon, July 7, 1907, Freer papers/FGA archives.
- 23 Merrill, *Freer: A Legacy*, 207.
- 24 Freer to Mary K. Williams, March 4, 1901, Freer papers/FGA archives.
- 25 In 1909, Freer made a special trip to China, where he spent two months visiting many places of great interest, seeing “the real classical Chinese scenery of the ancient Chinese paintings: serrated mountains, varying distances and great water spaces.” (Freer to Frank J. Hecker, September 20, 1909, Freer papers/FGA archives). He also tracked down treasures in the hands of native collectors and visited renowned private collections. Freer’s productive trip in 1909 convinced him to make another foray to China in the autumn of 1910. He spent several months in Beijing and Shanghai negotiating with dealers and visiting private collectors, shipping back several hundred Chinese artworks at the end of his stay. He also visited the Buddhist cave temples at Longmen in Luoyang and traveled by boat on the West Lake in Hangzhou to see the scenes often depicted in Song paintings. Tomlinson, *Charles Lang Freer*, 557–78. For a brief introduction to Freer’s Chinese collection, see Thomas Lawton, “China’s Artistic Legacy,” *Apollo* CXVIII, no. 258 (Aug. 1983): 127–35.
- 26 It is notable that, when Freer pursued old paintings of the Tang, Song, and Yuan dynasties on his trips, most people still believed that medieval Chinese art had survived only in Japan, as was stated by Professor Frederick Hirth in his influential reference book, *The Ancient History of China* (1908). While others were still buying at high prices from dealers based in Japan or America, this astute collector realized there were opportunities to find hidden treasures in China and thus directly contacted local dealers and intermediaries. Tomlinson, *Charles Lang Freer*, 535.
- 27 Oberlin College was another major recipient of Freer’s gifts of Asian art. In 1910, its President, Henry Churchill King, learned that Charles Freer was giving some duplicates from his collection to museums and academic institutions around the country. King quickly wrote to Freer and requested a donation for Oberlin College. In 1912, Freer sent Oberlin a gift of about one hundred Chinese and Japanese paintings, ceramics, and sculptures that he hoped would, in his words, “aid some of your students to a better knowledge of the Far East.” I am grateful to Stephanie Wiles, former director of the Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin College, for providing information about Oberlin’s Freer collection.

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- 28 Cohen, *East Asian Art*, 57–58.
- 29 Summary from “The Annual Report of the President,” *Smith College Bulletin* (1914–1915), 76.
- 30 Cohen, *East Asian Art*, 56.
- 31 The comparison and contrast between pictorial art and ceramic works in the same gallery space reflect a search for aesthetic harmony and unity of different forms and colors, something that Tryon possibly learned from the displays of Asian art in Freer’s house.
- 32 For instance, Freer was a member of the Board of Trustees of the Minneapolis Institute of Arts and an honorary fellow of the Metropolitan Museum of Art. He also lent Japanese paintings to the new Cleveland Museum of Art to support its inaugural Asian art exhibition in 1917. For more information, see Tomlinson, *Charles Lang Freer*, 665–71.
- 33 It is notable that Freer extended his help to the art department through Tryon and Churchill. Churchill once expressed his wish to Freer for the department to receive some lantern slides of Whistler’s paintings for lecture purposes. In his reply, Freer explained that ordinary slides could not capture the elusive quality of his finest Whistler paintings and promised to provide the best slides he had. On another occasion, Freer advised the department when it was looking for a lecturer on Florentine painting, suggesting that direct correspondence with the American School in Rome might help find someone worthy. Freer to Alfred Churchill, February 20, 1914, and March 6, 1916. The records are in the Smith College Museum of Art archives, hereafter SCMA archives.
- 34 Freer to Churchill, May 16, 1917, SCMA archives.
- 35 Churchill to Marion L. Burton, May 22, 1917, SCMA archives.
- 36 The checklist from the Freer estate executors to the Hillyer Art Gallery, March 18, 1920, SCMA archives.
- 37 *Smith College Bulletin* (1919–1920), 43 and 45.
- 38 Alfred V. Churchill, “Tryon at Smith College,” *Smith Alumnae Quarterly* xvii (Nov. 1925): 8–10.
- 39 Henry C. White, “D. W. Tryon—An Appreciation,” *The Hillyer Art Gallery Bulletin*, March 20, 1924, 3–4. SCMA archives. Henry C. White (1861–1952), a Hartford–born artist and biographer of Tryon, was particularly interested in collecting Tryon’s works and documents. His son, Nelson, acquired these paintings formerly in SCMA’s collection. *October Fields* was purchased from a sale of deaccessioned works at Gimbels in the mid-1940s and *River Maas* was purchased from the Museum a decade later.
- 40 Although most of Tryon’s Asian art gifts were unfortunately deaccessioned in later years, surviving registrar’s records that document those objects demonstrate his insightful vision and generosity.
- 41 Merrill, *An Ideal Country*, 87.
- 42 The Tryon Art Gallery was demolished to make way for the new Fine Arts Center in 1970. For more information about the building of the Tryon Art Gallery and today’s Brown Fine Arts Center (renovated 1999–2003, and renamed) see Helen Searing, “A History of the Art Buildings at Smith College,” in *Image and Word*, 43–47.