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FREER GALLERY OF ART

Smithsonian Institution

SECOND PRESENTATION
of the
CHARLES LANG FREER
MEDAL



Washington, D. C.

May 3, 1960

SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION
FREER GALLERY OF ART

PRESENTATION

of the

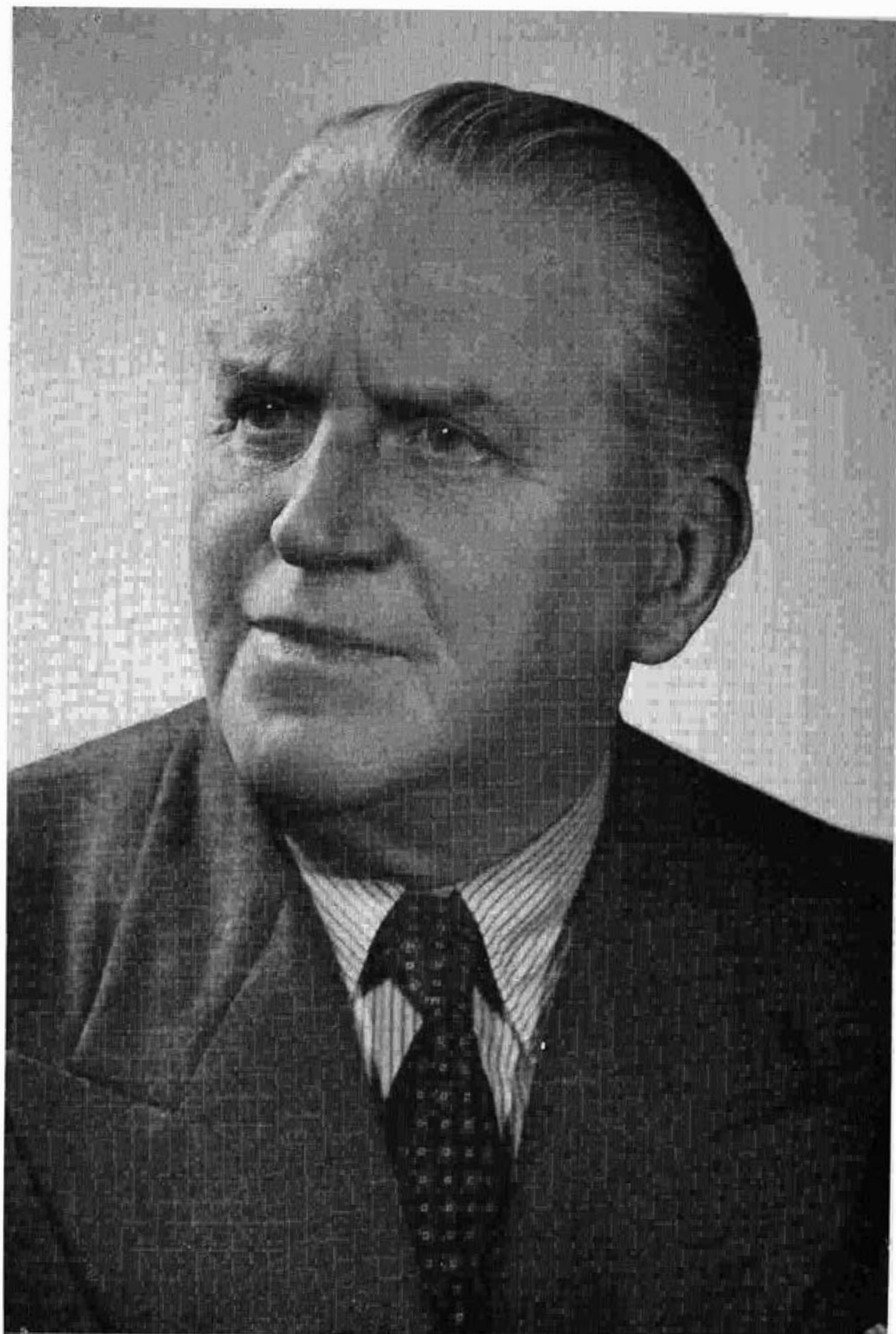
CHARLES LANG FREER MEDAL

to

PROFESSOR ERNST KÜHNEL



Washington, D. C.
May 3, 1960



PROFESSOR ERNST KÜHNEL

FREER GALLERY OF ART
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Freer Gallery of Art
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FOREWORD

On February 25, 1956, occurred the one-hundredth anniversary of the birth of the late Charles Lang Freer, who founded the Freer Gallery of Art. To mark this occasion, a medal was established in his memory and presented to Professor Osvald Sirén of Stockholm, Sweden, before some 300 guests in the auditorium of the Gallery.

On May 3, 1960, the second Charles Lang Freer Medal was presented to Professor Ernst Kühnel of Berlin, Germany, before 325 guests in the Gallery auditorium.

On the rostrum were His Excellency Mr. Ardeshir Zahedi, Ambassador of Iran, Mr. Franz Krapf, Minister of Germany, Professor Ernst Kühnel, Dr. Richard Ettinghausen, Curator of Near Eastern Art, Freer Gallery of Art, and Dr. Leonard Carmichael, Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution.

On the following pages will be found the program and exercises accompanying the presentation.

A. G. WENLEY

Director

Freer Gallery of Art

Washington, D. C.

May, 1960

SECOND PRESENTATION
of the
CHARLES LANG FREER MEDAL

May 3, 1960

Opening Remarks
LEONARD CARMICHAEL
Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution

PROFESSOR KÜHNEL'S SCHOLARLY ACHIEVEMENTS

Richard Ettinghausen
Curator, Near Eastern Art
Freer Gallery of Art

PRESENTATION
by
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Professor Ernst Kühnel

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OPENING REMARKS

By DR. LEONARD CARMICHAEL

Secretary, the Smithsonian Institution

*Mr. Ambassador, Mr. Minister, Your Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen:*

I call you to order on a notable occasion in the history of the Freer Gallery of Art. This convocation marks the second presentation of the Charles Lang Freer Medal that was established on February 25, 1956 to commemorate the one-hundredth anniversary of the birth of the late Charles Lang Freer. At that time, this special medal was presented to an outstanding scholar for his contributions to the knowledge and understanding of Oriental art. The natural choice on that occasion was the leading historian of Chinese art, Professor Osvald Sirén of Stockholm. Professor Archibald G. Wenley, the distinguished Director of the Freer Gallery presented it to Dr. Sirén.

However, due to the wide interests and catholic taste of Mr. Freer, his collection comprises not only Chinese and Japanese art, but also the arts of India, Persia, and of the Near East. Although in Mr. Freer's

lifetime the possibilities of acquiring outstanding pieces of Near Eastern art and in particular pieces of the Islamic period were still rather limited, he nevertheless did establish here a great collection in this field.

The Freer Gallery became a part of the Smithsonian Institution through the generous gift of this outstanding industrialist and lover of art just as the parent organization came to the American people through the foundation endowment of the great English scientist James Smithson.

In its basic law, largely written by the sage John Quincy Adams, the Smithsonian Institution is directed to maintain a gallery of art, and today, this requirement is fulfilled by having as bureaus, the National Collection of Fine Arts, the National (or Mellon) Gallery of Art and this highly specialized Freer Gallery in which we are now gathered. These three bureaus dedicated to study in the arts enrich the work of the seven other bureaus by their association.

The Chancellor, the Regents, and the staff of the Smithsonian Institution are proud of the Freer Gallery because of the unique character of its collections and for the outstanding research done by its scholarly staff.

When we looked at the contemporary scholars, in the whole world, in this specialized and important field for a person who in an outstanding and scholarly way has furthered our knowledge of the arts of the Near East during the last two thousand years and has, at the same time, kept up a warm relationship with the work of the Freer Gallery, we naturally turned to the great Dr. Ernst Kühnel.

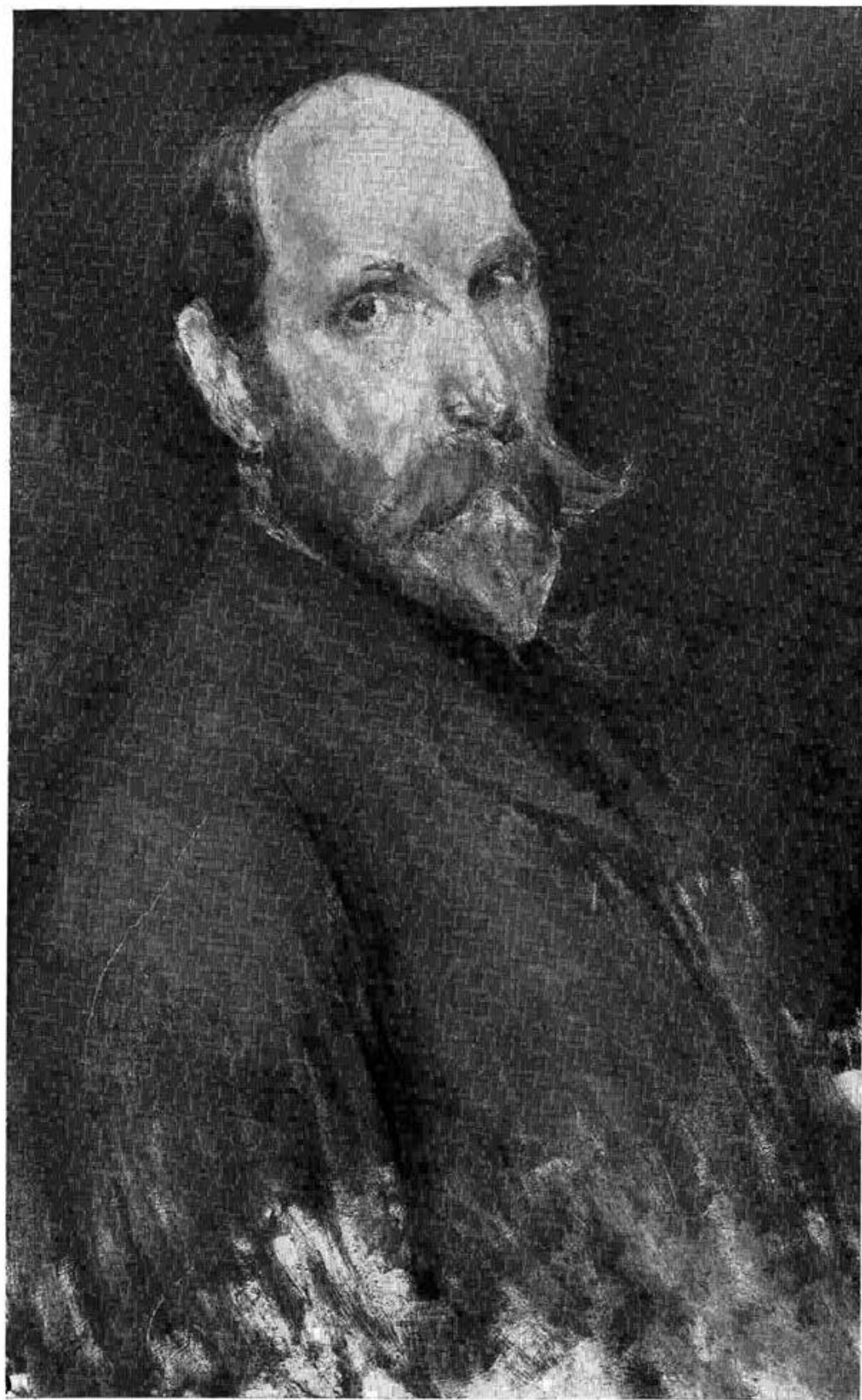
The occasion of this gathering is the final session of the Fourth International Congress of Iranian Art and Archaeology. I am well aware that to all of you who are attending the Congress, the name of Professor Kühnel has great meaning. He has been and continues to be a teacher and friend on whose wisdom all scholars in this field have relied in many ways. Many of you have written him for his opinion on difficult problems. You have quoted him in your research publications. As an expression of your esteem and affection, 35 of you from 10 different countries have, in his honor, brought out a volume of essays dedicated to him on the occasion of his 75th birthday. This *Festschrift* was edited by our own distinguished Dr. Richard Ettinghausen, who always remembers with gratitude Dr. Kühnel's help and instruction in his early professional years and in his years of mature scholarship as well.

This audience will also recall that the first copy of this publication was presented to Dr. Kühnel at an international congress in Ankara in which he had actively participated and also served as a distinguished spokesman for the attending members. It, therefore, seems most fitting for those of you who have come here to help us in the spirit of James Smithson, the scholarly founder of the Smithsonian Institution, and Charles Lang Freer, the scholarly founder of this Gallery, honor Professor Kühnel as the recipient of the second Charles Lang Freer Medal.

Sir, I have been informed that beginning in 1926, three years after this Gallery opened, you have visited Washington and the Freer Gallery during seven trips,

coming often to study the treasures in this museum and to be ready for consultation with our staff. It gives all of us great pleasure to express our admiration for your fine work and your outstanding career.

I shall now ask my distinguished colleague, Dr. Richard Ettinghausen—Curator of Near Eastern Art at the Freer Gallery—to say a few words about the scholarly life of our eminent guest, Dr. Ernst Kühnel, before I officially present the Freer Medal in the name of the Chancellor and the Regents of the Smithsonian Institution.



PORTRAIT OF CHARLES LANG FREER
 Oil Painting by James McNeill Whistler
 About 1902
 Freer Gallery of Art (03.301)

PROFESSOR KÜHNEL'S SCHOLARLY ACHIEVEMENTS

By DR. RICHARD ETTINGHAUSEN
 Curator, Near Eastern Art, Freer Gallery of Art

*Mr. Ambassador, Mr. Minister, Your Excellencies,
 Ladies and Gentlemen:*

For one who has been associated with Professor Kühnel for nearly 30 years, first as assistant, later as colleague, and at all times as friend, it is a great pleasure to speak about his scholarly achievements. Such a task fills one, however, with a certain amount of awe and trepidation, especially if one has to give such an account in a few minutes.

Professor Kühnel, vital and exuberant as we see him among us, has managed to write in the last 55 years no less than 385 publications—imagine, 385 publications, of which 30 are books or individual pamphlets. Many of these represent new insights and are based on extensive original research. In many instances his findings have, therefore, opened for us wide, new vistas in the various branches of Islamic art. These 385 publications encompass every branch of Islamic art from architecture to woodcarving, and cover all the main areas between Morocco and India. Particularly important have been his contributions in the field of carpet weaving, where Professor Kühnel wrote general handbooks, specific research papers, and lately two detailed catalogues of the Spanish and Egyptian holdings of one of the largest and

most versatile carpet collections in existence, that of the Textile Museum here in Washington. He has also been most successful in his work in the field of Persian and Indian miniature painting, textiles, ivory carving, and the arts of Moorish Spain and North Africa. While all of this reflects the work of a scholar working in the good old German tradition, it should be stressed that unlike some writings produced in that tradition, Professor Kühnel's publications have always been lucid and readily convincing. They are all due to an ever searching mind of great alertness, revealing powers of both synthesis and analysis. In this respect he resembles the recipient of the first Freer Medal, Professor Sirén. It is also noteworthy that not only did these two scholars start their careers at the same time, in 1906, but both began in the field of Italian art. It is a testimony to their perception and open-mindedness that they did not feel restricted to such a traditional subject of research, but reached creatively to the enchantments of a more unusual, though more difficult, branch of the history of art. Professor Kühnel was able to be particularly successful in his chosen field because of his command of Oriental languages, which helped him not only in his research in the Oriental historical sources, but also established him as a distinguished Arabic epigraphist.

Formidable as these achievements must seem to you, Ladies and Gentlemen, they only reflect one aspect of Professor Kühnel's activities. Professor Kühnel's time and efforts have been to a very large extent dedicated to the Islamic Department of the famous Berlin Museum, of which he was Director from 1931 to 1951,

enriching it continually to make it one of the leading and richest collections of Iranian and Islamic art. Likewise he has been very successful as a university teacher. As such he was associated primarily with the University of Berlin, though he also lectured extensively for the University of Cairo. As if this were not enough he even managed to be a distinguished excavator, having been the Field Director of the excavations of the ancient capital of Ctesiphon, near Baghdad, which reestablished the important art of Sasanian Iran.

I am sure that this brief account of Professor Kühnel's activities must have left you somewhat breathless. It would, however, be entirely foreign to the nature of our honored guest if we were to treat him as an Olympian figure who should be approached with a great deal of awe. On the contrary our Professor is a man of genial character with a great sense of humor, which expresses itself even in many different languages. I do not know how I could make this clearer than by telling you of an early experience which I had when I was working under him in the Berlin Museum. He must have thought that the shy young man from the provinces needed some "pepping up," so about this time of year, when all the trees in the neighborhood of Berlin were in bloom, he invited me to come with him to one of the suburbs to celebrate the season. First we went to a beer garden where we drank a local brew of white color, which, for some strange reason, was called beer and was drunk with a "shot" of raspberry sauce. After we had a good bit of it, accompanied by band music, we went to see the side shows and finally ended up at a shooting gallery.

Needless to say Professor Kühnel weathered this unusual experience better than I and proved the better shot. And I might conclude that with all the many impressions that I got during my internship at the Berlin Museum this particular afternoon stands out most vividly in my memory.

Considering the energy of Professor Kühnel, we should be hearing a lot about him and see many more of his publications. Since Professor Kühnel celebrated his 75th birthday two and a half years ago somewhere in the wild mountains of Luristan in Western Iran, he has not only written and lectured extensively but travelled in Spain, Italy, Austria, Turkey, and quite recently in this country as far west as California, always in search of Iranian and Islamic art or spreading the word about its beauty and significance. We are happy that you, Professor Kühnel, have found time in the midst of all your activities to come to this Congress, to preside over it, finally giving us a chance to catch up with you on this quiet afternoon to express our special admiration for your person and our appreciation of your work.



PRESENTATION OF THE CHARLES LANG FREER MEDAL

By DR. LEONARD CARMICHAEL

Dr. Kühnel:

On behalf of the Chancellor and the Regents of the Smithsonian Institution, I hereby present to you this second Freer Medal. The citation reads as follows:

"For Distinguished Contribution to the Knowledge and Understanding of Oriental Civilizations as Reflected in their Arts."

Sir, will you be willing to address us at this time?



THE CHARLES LANG FREER MEDAL



Dr. Leonard Carmichael presenting the Charles Lang Freer Medal to Professor Ernst Kühnel.

PROFESSOR KÜHNEL'S ADDRESS

Mr. Secretary, Mr. Director, Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen:

It is for me a great and unexpected honor, that the authorities of the Smithsonian Institution and of the Freer Gallery of Art decided to present to me the medal created in memory of Charles Lang Freer, that great collector who did so much for the exploration of arts of the East. I am very conscious of the fact that my efforts for a better understanding of the arts of the Near East are modest and remain limited. I also believe that I deserve this unique honor hardly more than other scholars working in this field. If I accept it nevertheless, and accept it with my profound thanks, I do so particularly because it signifies for me an even closer tie with the Freer Gallery of Art which I *always* admired and regarded as a model museum.

I still remember my first visit to this Gallery in 1926. At that time the collection was not yet as splendidly presented as it is now, and most of the objects were still in the storerooms. Nevertheless, I was surprised by the wealth of important objects which Miss Grace Guest could show me, including those from the Near East. In my later visits I noticed again and again how the selective principle of the founder of the museum had led to acquisitions of astonishing quality which supplemented the already existing collection in the most felicitous manner. There I found exquisite objects which had belonged

to the treasures of such famous collections as those of the Imperial family of Austria, of the Mughal Emperors of India, the former royal house of Iran, the Duke of Arenberg, George Eumorfopoulos, Friedrich Sarre, Dikran Kelekian and others. And I have to confess that only now, in their new home did they present themselves in their most appropriate and telling manner.

I have been asked to say something at this occasion about the genesis and later development of the public and private collections of Near Eastern art. Even though I have to be brief I will have to go back about one hundred years to give you a proper survey.

At a time when there was a trend to gain new artistic inspirations from an historical analysis of the achievements of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, there arose also a new appreciation of fine workmanship. Forceful personalities endeavored to revive and foster the old crafts. At this time craft schools and museums of decorative arts were founded which tried to deepen our understanding of the material and ornamental possibilities of the so-called applied arts and to give them full recognition. This movement started in England, and it also got its momentum there. The South Kensington Museum was probably the first institution which set itself the aim to offer craftsmen a carefully selected collection of examples of widest possible range so as to provide technical and ornamental inspirations for the contemporary work. The idea was enthusiastically followed in other countries. It was only natural that when one was not satisfied to take only occidental examples as models, one became also aware of the technically out-

standing products of the Orient, which were to be seen in the various World Exhibitions; and one realized that to some extent they had kept a remarkably high level of technical competency until recent times. As time went on a more critical attitude was gained and one tried to find for the museums the real masterworks in various techniques dating from the great periods of the past.

Thus it came to pass that in the second half of the nineteenth century private persons as well as public collections became seriously interested in Near Eastern art objects. It seems that this active appreciation started in England earlier than anywhere else. Sir Augustus Franks, the acting director of the British Museum from 1866 to 1869, already had made some steps in this direction, enriching the museum with a number of valuable objects. In 1878 the Henderson Bequest added important items, mainly pottery and pieces of metalwork. At the same time the South Kensington Museum (later officially called the Victoria and Albert Museum) always guided by technical as well as historical considerations, endeavored to enlarge even further its collections from the Islamic world; it systematically purchased objects, for the departments of textiles and ceramics and glass.

It was also in England that, in 1885, a first exhibition of "Persian and Arab Art" was organized by the Burlington Fine Arts Club. It presented more than 600 pieces, mostly pottery; a special catalogue was published by Henry Wallis who soon became known as an enthusiastic admirer of Persian luster ware. In 1891 he published the catalogue of the Godman Collection which consisted mostly of luster vessels and luster tiles. This

was the first serious study of the important ceramic production of the thirteenth century.

In France several private individuals had taken a great interest in Islamic metalwork and other forms of Near Eastern art. It was Gason Migeon who was eager to build up a special Islamic Section within the Department of Medieval and Renaissance Art in the Musée du Louvre. With much care and a great deal of taste he eventually installed there a series of objects in a special set of rooms. Since he was always in touch with the French collectors and amateurs he was also able to organize in 1903, the first really important exhibition of Islamic art in the Pavillon de Marsan, which was followed by a splendidly illustrated publication. In 1907 Migeon published his *Manuel d'art musulman*, the first comprehensive handbook of Islamic art which tried to present the evolution of the different crafts. It was based on very careful studies. This work stimulated collectors and scholars to concentrate their efforts on special branches in this field.

The first major collection of Islamic Art in Germany was formed by Friedrich Sarre. From 1897 on he undertook several journeys and explorations in Iran and Asia Minor from where he brought back a remarkable and exquisite collection. Wilhelm von Bode, the great organizer of the Berlin museums, then persuaded him to give this collection as a loan to the newly formed Islamic Department. This department von Bode had conceived and founded in 1904 around the façade of the eighth-century desert castle of Mshatta, which had been presented by the Sultan of Turkey to Kaiser Wilhelm II; and

von Bode, himself, had given a series of important oriental carpets which revealed him as the first discriminating collector who had fully grasped the artistic beauty of one of the most characteristic products of the Near East.

The great and decisive event for the further study of Islamic art was the magnificent Exhibition of Muslim Art in Munich in 1910, which is still unsurpassed as to range of objects and the manner of presentation. In about 50 halls, galleries and more intimate rooms, all of which had been specially constructed for the occasion, the most varied objects could be shown at their best advantage. No wonder that for everybody who had the good fortune to visit this exhibition it remained an unforgettable experience. By special solicitation of the Bavarian Court it became possible to bring together objects from everywhere, even those which were usually inaccessible. For this reason one was able to see for the first time treasures from the Imperial Armory in Moscow and Sasanian and early Islamic loans from the Hermitage Museum. In addition there were objects from those Russian private collections, which later became the property of the State. From Vienna the most precious carpets of the Imperial House of Hapsburg arrived. Even from the Sultan's palaces in Istanbul the Exhibition received a number of loans, objects which have only recently been again made available for public inspection. Museums, private collectors, and art dealers from all European countries had supplied pieces, and it was, therefore, for the first time, possible to get a clear conception of each single branch of the decorative arts of the Islamic world.

A superbly illustrated catalogue of the Munich Exhibition of 1910 appeared in 1912. It provided a great deal of new stimulation. Not only in Europe, but also in America, the interest in products of the Near East rose perceptibly. In New York the Islamic objects were administered by the Department of Decorative Arts of the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Previously in 1891 the nucleus for a special department had been provided for by the donation of the Edward Moore Collection. It was greatly enriched by the Altman and Fletcher Bequests of 1914 and 1917, and through the addition of the Ballard Collection of Oriental rugs in 1922. Finally a special department was constituted, which through important purchases and very generous gifts and bequests reached the unchallenged leadership among the public collections which it now enjoys. The Metropolitan Museum served as model for the Boston Museum and other American museums which now started to collect Islamic art in a more extensive or limited manner. The number of American collectors who took an interest in the art of the Orient was quite considerable. Carpets as well as ceramics were particularly desired. It was characteristic of these private collections that nearly all of them were either dissolved later on, or they were donated to public institutions. Two of them deserve special mentioning on account of their well-recognized prominence: those of George Hewitt Myers and Charles Lang Freer.

George Hewitt Myers had started early in life to collect oriental carpets and textiles. Having excluded European fabrics, he wisely concentrated his efforts on the products of the Near and Far East and of pre-Colum-

bian America. He succeeded in a few decades to bring together an unusually rich assembly, which later on as the Textile Museum, was turned into a public institution. Owing to its rich holdings it can hold its own, even in comparison with older textile collections. It was a special satisfaction for me that in cataloguing certain parts of his collection I could be of some assistance to my late friend George Myers.

Charles Freer of Detroit concentrated his efforts in collecting the products of the Far and Near East in a different fashion. He was guided by a fine aesthetic sensibility and an unusually sure grasp of technical and artistic quality. His collections gave him, therefore, a great deal of personal satisfaction and stimulation. Undoubtedly his primary interest was for the art of the Far East, an interest which he shared with his friends Whistler and Stanford White; but soon he also found enjoyment in the ceramics, paintings and other decorative arts of the Islamic East and made every effort to enrich his collection by purchasing outstanding examples. He excluded, however, carpets and textiles. In this manner his collection, which he transformed into a national museum in Washington, does not duplicate the holdings of the Textile Museum; indeed the two institutions supplement each other in an ideal way. The special significance of the Freer Gallery of Art does not however, rest only in having the original outstanding collection brought together by Mr. Freer housed in a very suitable building designed according to Freer's ideas by his friend the architect Charles Platt. Freer had enough foresight to have funds made available for

published a catalogue of this collection. Then I saw and admired the superb collections in Istanbul and Teheran with their nearly inexhaustable treasures. I also had the pleasure to become acquainted with great collectors of somewhat later date. Among these I would like to mention in particular Sir A. Chester Beatty, whose tremendous assembly of Persian, Turkish and Indian manuscripts and paintings rivals the greatest public collections of the world, both in range and quality.

In more than 50 years I have become familiar with all branches of Islamic art. I have also become acquainted with nearly all the museums and private collections devoted to this special field. But I have visited hardly any of them with as much pleasure and enjoyment as I do again and again the Freer Gallery of Art. And so I would like to close this short account with the very appropriate words of John La Farge:

“Freer is a place to go and wash your eyes.”

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