

**Jun Tsei Tai****1911–1992****Dealer of Chinese Art**

TAI Jun Tsei (Dai Runzhai 戴潤齋 1911–1992; born Dai Fubao), or J.T. Tai as he was known in the West, was an incredibly important dealer in Chinese antiquities who shaped American collections of Chinese art throughout the second half of the twentieth century. Indeed, he ranks second only to C.T. Loo in defining the meaning of Chinese art for Western institutions and scholars alike. Before opening his own shop, Fuyuanzhai guwandian (福源齋古玩店), in cosmopolitan Shanghai, Tai began his career at his uncle's small antique store in Wuxi, China.

Between 1945 and 1949, Tai regularly sold antiquities sourced in rural China to Lu Wu Antiques Company, an export company that C.T. Loo operated with Wu Qizhou. Lu Wu Antiques exclusively supplied Loo's western business, C.T. Loo & Company with galleries in Paris and New York. Upon the establishment of the People's Republic of China, the government attempted to arrest J.T. Tai for illegally exporting objects. Coming very close to being captured, he and his wife, Pingying Tai (1915–1998), escaped dramatically to Hong Kong, where they slowly reclaimed Mr. Tai's collection from Shanghai.

In early 1950, Tai immigrated to New York City with the help of C.T. Loo and established himself as an independent dealer by the fall of 1950. The August 21, 1950, edition of the *New York Times* announced the grand opening of J.T. Tai's Madison Avenue gallery, J.T. Tai & Company, noting: "Two-thirds of a fabulous group of porcelain vases, bronze bowls and figurines fashioned from precious stones have arrived from Hong Kong and the remainder is expected in less than three months." Tai's business flourished and he played an instrumental role in shaping several American collections of Chinese art, but Avery Brundage and Arthur M. Sackler were his most important clients.

While cultivating the tastes of patrons, consigning collections, and managing the stock of his gallery, Tai also invested heavily in New York real estate, purchasing several buildings, including one on East 67th between Madison and Fifth Avenues, which became the second home of J.T. Tai & Company. In 1983, Tai formed the J.T. Tai & Co. Foundation as the philanthropic arm of

J.T. Tai & Company. Under his direction, the foundation began donating scholarship grants to medical students and schools before widening its donations to include medical research, the American Red Cross, and other local and national charities. Upon Tai's death in 1992, J.T. Tai & Company ceased doing business.

#### **LITERATURE**

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