

Percival David Foundation of Chinese Art
Founded 1950
Collection of Chinese Art, Books, and Manuscripts



The Percival David Foundation of Chinese Art was founded in 1950 to promote the study and teaching of Chinese art and culture. It was formed by Sir Percival David, Baronet (1892–1964), who gifted the collection to the University of London that same year. The Foundation remained an independent body with its own board of trustees. At a ceremony on June 10, 1952, the collection of the Foundation was installed in a townhouse at 52, Gordon Square in Bloomsbury, London (the former home of Percival David) and converted as a gallery, library, study, and teaching establishment attached to the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS). The head of the Foundation was also a professor of Chinese art, a chair established by Sir Percival in 1931. In 2007, due to financial difficulties highlighted by the university, the Foundation building was closed and the collection was transferred on loan to the British Museum. There, Sir Joseph Hotung provided funds for new galleries to display the collection. The galleries opened in 2009 and are part of the Sir Joseph Hotung Centre for Ceramic Studies.

The collection of the Foundation consists of some 1,400 items of Chinese ceramic dating to the Song, Yuan, Ming, and Qing dynasties, supplemented by 150 monochrome porcelains that were originally collected by the Hon. Mountstuart Elphinstone (1779–1859). Among the ceramics collected by Sir Percival David were inscribed pieces acquired from the former imperial collection. The Library contains items in East Asian and European languages, many of them rare or unique.

Literature

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