



Chinese Museums join the Virtual Collection of Masterpieces of Asian Art

VCM in China

In December 2008, the Director General of the State Administration of Cultural Heritage of the People's Republic of China, Mr. Shan Yixiang stated:

"The Virtual Collection of Masterpieces will enhance the understanding of the Chinese time-honored history and splendid civilization, as well as promote the communication and cooperation among international museums. The State Administration of Cultural Heritage is in favor of this and will spare no effort to support it."

On Monday the 9th of November 2009, Prof. Zhang Bai, Vice Director General of the State Administration of Cultural Heritage, the President of the Chinese National Committee of ICOM and Dr. Steven Engelsman, director of "Museum Volkenkunde" (National Museum of Ethnology of the Netherlands, Leiden), a Leading Partner of the VCM consortium, will sign an agreement to have Chinese museums participate in the Asia-Europe cooperation project Virtual Collection of Masterpieces. The signing ceremony will take place at the Shanghai Museum in the first floor's meeting room the afternoon of the 9th of November 2009.

It is expected that approximately 30 to 40 major Chinese museums will add their masterpieces to the VCM before the ICOM General Conference in Shanghai in November 2010.

History of the VCM

The Virtual Collection of Masterpieces (VCM) started as an initiative of the Asia Europe Museums Network (ASEMUS) and has been supported by the Asia Europe Foundation (ASEF). Its main aim is to stimulate cooperation between Asian and European museums, as Museum-directors are aware that there are many Asian collections in European museums.

Out of a debate on sharing the knowledge of these collections came the idea of a common presence on the Internet. This presence should be driven by the participating museums themselves, but should also have a common format, which would need to be recognisable for the visitors. It has then been decided to embark on the concept of Masterpieces, well known by all.

The concept of Masterpieces

Museums all over the world take pride in masterpieces; they publish special catalogues of masterpieces, they identify them in their exhibitions, they use them as icons, and they are the first objects that many visitors flock to see in a museum. They are special. People are fascinated by those pieces of art and culture of such quality that they transcend the ordinary to speak across time about cultural expression and achievement.

In 2007 the Virtual Collection of Masterpieces was launched in Gyeonggi, Korea and now counts 70 participating museums from Asia and Europe which have combined their efforts to provide some 1400 objects and exhibitions on-line on a shared platform.

You can have a look at: <http://masterpieces.asemus.museum/>