

BEGINNING A CHINESE ANTIQUE COLLECTION #1

General Sources

Before we talk about what specific or basic knowledge is required to start a collection, we'd like to summarize several acquisition sources, attitudes and strategies you should bear in mind when browsing for potential treasures.

Outdoor antique markets – where style and quality vary the most. Although there are occasional surprises, the odds have declined in recent years. It is not a bad strategy to first assume a piece is a re-



East Corner, a two-floor gallery, established in 1999 in Greenwich Village

production, no matter how attractive, and then carefully checking. Prices are generally flexible; however, swimming among a flood of fake Chinese antiques, the fraud potential is greater.

Large antique centers - usually located in older buildings, are home to a large number of dealers, each with a small booth or space. If you find an attractive piece, start asking questions about: the period, material, use, style, amount of restoration, etc. If the dealer cannot answer questions to your satisfaction, move on or remember to significantly discount the price. Negotiation is generally accepted at such places.

Independent Antique Store – You are usually never



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more than a short walk or ride to an antique shop. Service levels and expertise will vary greatly so it is important to feel comfortable that the staff has a deep knowledge of the merchandise. Most independently owned shops focus on a specific area of collection, can provide accurate and credible information. A shop with excessive consignment pieces moves the proprietor into a landlord role instead of an antiques investor. The only way to establish a relationship with an owner is by investing time, asking questions and doing research. Remember to always ask for the best price.

On-Line Auctions and shops – although no other environment requires buyers to be as skeptical as with an anonymous seller, this doesn't mean you can't find excellent pieces for reasonable prices. When shopping online, it is important to have a rapport with the seller. This requires multiple e-mails and phone calls if possible. During this conversation, you must ask questions to ascertain the legitimacy of not only the piece, but of the seller.

As a beginner, find the time to wander each of these potential acquisition sources. Pay attention not only to good things but low-quality items, even junk, only by seeing more and thinking more, can you know more. Comparison helps to develop a real keen eye.

PIECES OF THE MONTH

Unglazed white porcelain (*Sheng Ci*) vase with a high shoulder, carved and molded with floriated scroll bearing two large *Baoxiang* (Buddhist flower) on four sides, mid 19th century, Qing dynasty, Jingdezhen Ware, Jiangxi province. Size: 8.5" H



A rare and finely potted bottle vase with Fencai design of peach motif, Tongzhi mark (1862-1874) and of the period or later, late Qing dynasty, Jingdezhen Ware, after imperial style
Size: 6.5" H



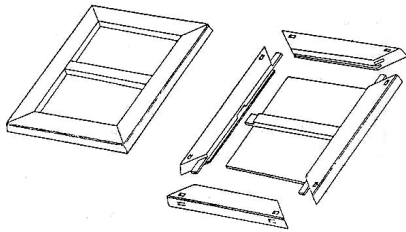
Small Taihu stone, vertical type, from the Tai Lake area, Jiangsu province, one of the most collectible traditional Chinese scholar's rocks for bring natural view and Qi energy to indoor areas, with handmade fine rosewood base
Size: 16" H (with base)



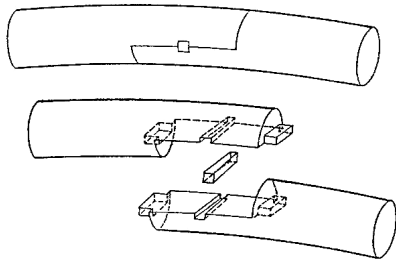
CLASSICAL CHINESE FURNITURE MAKING #5

Joinery

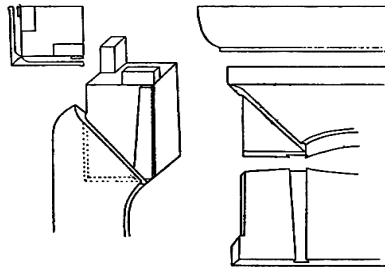
The art of joinery in classic Chinese furniture reached its climax in the Ming (1368-1644) and early Qing (1644-1911) period. Since hardwood is very dense, a craftsman can make all kinds of very complicated and ingenious joints. When joining members, metal nails are never used and glue is always secondary to the joinery. Joinery is the sole method by which members can be connected one to another on any surface regardless of whether they are thick or thin, slanted or vertical. It is the means by which members are connected so judiciously that a piece looks well from any angle. These techniques have already exerted a great influence on furniture-making in other countries and will be still more influential in the future. Here are some examples:



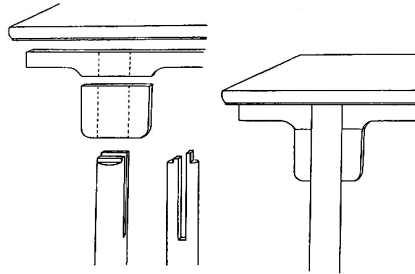
Assembling a mortised-and-tenoned frame with a floating panel



Peg tenon joint connecting section of curved rest



Embracing-shoulder tenon connecting the tabletop, waist, apron and leg



Elongated bridle joint

SIGNIFICANCE OF CHINESE TRADITIONAL AUSPICIOUS PATTERNS #5

Foshou

The Buddha's-hand citron is a fruit prized for its resemblance to the long-fingered hands of the Buddha. Elegantly carved from jade or hand painted on porcelain, the plant calls to mind two hands emerging from leafy cuffs and loosely cupped in the Buddhist meditation gesture.

The name of *Foshou* is nearly homophonous with the Chinese words "blessings" and "longevity". It can also be combined with peaches and pomegranates, thus forming the three plenties: abundance, longevity and offspring.

By the Ming dynasty (1368-1644) plants, including flowers of many varieties had entered the repertory of major decorative motifs. The Buddha's-hand citron, the Buddhist lotus, and the Daoist fungus of immortality had symbolic and religious value;

others (peony chrysanthemum, prunus, and pine) conveyed auspicious wishes or wealth, blessings, long life.



Foshou, jade pendant



Fencai stacked cosmetic case with *Foshou*, butterfly and double-happiness motifs, 19th century



Iron-red vase with *Foshou*, bat, and longevity sign motifs, 19th century



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