

February 4, 2005

To: The President's Cultural Advisory Committee

Re: Response to Request of the People's Republic of China
to the Government of the United States of America
under Article 9 of the 1970 UNESCO Convention

From: Mimi Gardner Gates, Director, Seattle Art Museum

As art historian, curator and now museum director, I have spent the past forty years focusing on the history of Chinese art and culture. In addition to teaching and curating Chinese art at Yale University for almost twenty years, I have overseen the organization of major exhibition and publication projects, including *Bones of Jade, Soul of Ice: The Flowering Plum in Chinese Art* (Yale, 1985), *Master of the Lotus Garden* (Yale, 1990), and *Ancient Sichuan* (Seattle, 2000 /01).

Speaking on behalf of my institution, The Seattle Art Museum, and the Association of Art Museum Directors, I would like to express deep respect for the cultural patrimony of the People's Republic of China, sincere concern for its preservation and the curtailment of looting.

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However, as committee members are undoubtedly aware, China's request extends far beyond the statutory authorization, including objects that are not archaeological, i.e. calligraphy and painting, textiles and furniture, ceramics and porcelain, scholars' objects in bamboo and wood, architectural elements etc. and works of art less than 250 years old

To place a blanket prohibition on the import of all Chinese objects would have a detrimental effect on American museums, freezing their Chinese collections and curtailing their mission to promote broad understanding of and in depth scholarship on Chinese civilization, a mission ever more important in our global age.

We propose that the committee urge the Chinese to define specific areas for prohibition from import into the United States of those works that are most important to the Chinese people and indicate the measures the Chinese government will take in concert with US import restrictions to protect those works.

It is also our hope that China will follow Japan's excellent example in implementing clear export documents for all objects the

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government approves for export. More effective, active self-regulation by the Chinese government of approved Chinese art for export would benefit not only China but all nations of the world and significantly curtail illegal activity such as looting and smuggling.

Thank you for your kind consideration.