

Marlborough

MUSEE GUIMET

Sèvres
1740

De neige d'or et d'azur

CHU TEH-CHUN

À LA MANUFACTURE NATIONALE DE SÈVRES

MUSÉE GUIMET, PARIS
JUNE 10 - SEPTEMBER 7, 2009

The Directors of Marlborough Gallery are pleased to announce that Chu Teh-Chun, the French painter of Chinese origin, will exhibit an exceptional series of ceramics entitled *De Neige, d'Or et d'Azur* (Of Snow, Gold and Sky Blue) at Musée Guimet, Paris, from June 10-September 7, 2009. Following an initiative of Marlborough Gallery, Chu Teh-Chun produced this series of ceramics at La Manufacture Nationale de Sèvres in 2008 and 2009: each ceramic is a unique porcelain jar painted by the artist in the famous "bleu de Sèvres" (blue of Sèvres) highlighted with gold. This exhibition will mark the first time that a series of contemporary ceramics will be exhibited at Musée Guimet, one of the most important western art institution in the field of Asian art.

For *De Neige, d'Or et d'Azur*, Chu Teh-Chun chose an oval form – the model SR 22 of La Manufacture – reminiscent of the famous jars of the Yuan dynasty (13th-14th century). Each ceramic was first glazed to prepare the surface for Chu and then painted by the artist with various shades of blue and other colors that were successively hardened in a kiln. The famous *bleu de Sèvres* - sky blue - is based, like all blue colors used on ceramics, on an ancient Chinese formula imported into France during the 16th century. But since its inception in 1740, La Manufacture de Sèvres has produced its own secret composition of this magical color. Today, no other Manufacture can replicate this color, not even in China. The snow-white porcelain of Sèvres is also exceptionally hard and thin, producing a particular sound and receiving colors like no other.



The final layers of the ceramics, the last highlights, were painted by Chu with pure gold paint produced in Sèvres in a very small quantity. With the assistance of the Sèvres artisans, three hundred hours of work were necessary to complete each unique ceramic. A number and a stamp applied on the bottom of each jar identify each work and each is guaranteed by a photographic certificate registered by both the Manufacture de Sèvres and the studio of Chu Teh-Chun. During the course of this project, Chu Teh-Chun was assisted by Jean-Paul Desroches, one of the most important experts in Chinese ceramics and Chief Curator of the Chinese department of the Musée Guimet. Desroches opened for Chu the underground ceramics reserves of the museum and displayed for him the thousands of pieces in the museum's collection; most of them never seen by the public. Through this extraordinary opportunity, Chu revisited the long tradition of ceramic production in China and particularly fell in love with some very important pieces of the Tang (7th-10th century) and Yuan periods. This collaboration between Chu Teh-Chun, La Manufacture de Sèvres and Jean-Paul Desroches is the best example of a modern Chinese painter merging the great-

est traditions of two old cultures – the Chinese and the French - in the ceramic medium. The form and color of the ceramics emulate in an expressive manner the Tang tradition and the blue and white Chinese tradition of the Yuan period, modernized and improved by La Manufacture de Sèvres. Such collaboration would be impossible to repeat in these ideal conditions.

Jean-Paul Desroches has written an important book that documents through texts and numerous illustrations every step of Chu's creation at La Manufacture de Sèvres (Editions La Martinière/ Abrams, August 2009). Desroches remarks in the book: "Connoisseurs of ceramics will immediately appreciate the originality of this decorative series. The pure materials, noble forms, and enchanting motifs are largely



inspired by Far Eastern aesthetics. The subtle relationship between art and nature is fully explored here, in ways similar to traditional Chinese painting and calligraphy... Thus each vase urges the beholder to make a circular journey – one with neither beginning nor end – through a land of plenty, rich in intersecting paths that encourage everyone to find his or her own way.”



Pierre Levai, President of Marlborough Gallery writes in his foreword to the book: “Chu Teh-Chun early answered the call of western painting that he embraced with a Chinese soul to develop an unequalled universe. La Manufacture de Sèvres, in an opposite movement, adopted then developed throughout its history the secrets of the wonderful technique of the ceramic, invented by China.”

Chu Teh-Chun was born in 1920 in Jiangsu Province, China, to a family of doctors and Chinese painting collectors. In 1935, the same year as the painter Zao Wou-Ki, Chu joined the School of Fine Arts in Hangzhou, the first contemporary school of painting in China, founded by Lin Fengmian after he returned from France. After his studies, Chu taught at the National Central University of Nanjing and dedicated himself to a “Western” painting style which at that time in China meant a choice for the media of oil and of color.

In 1949 Chu left China and moved to Taiwan where he became a teacher at the Fine arts department of the National University. Six years later, Chu left Asia for Europe, arriving in Paris where he became a regular visitor of the Louvre and attended drawing lessons at the Académie de la Grande Chaumière. After starting in a figurative style, the work of Nicolas de Staël inspired him to meditate on non-figuration and on the necessity of “vision” rather than “representation,” indeed, an essential principle of Chinese painting. Chu’s aim, consistent with the post-war European trend, was the search for a “new reality” through naturalism, intuition and spontaneity: a unification of Eastern and Western concepts.

Since 1958, Chu’s work has been the subject of almost one hundred solo exhibitions, including a large traveling show in 1997 at the Museum of Fine Arts, Beijing, which traveled to Hong Kong and Taipei, and retrospectives at the Shanghai Art Museum, 2005, and The Ueno Royal Museum, Tokyo, in 2007. Numerous monographs have been written about his work, most recently by Pierre Cabanne in 2000 and Pierre-Jean Rémy in 2006. Chu was the first artist of Chinese origin to be elected to France’s prestigious Académie des arts et lettres and he is a Chevalier de la Légion d’Honneur. Chu’s work can be found in over fifty museums worldwide, among them the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, France; Fonds National d’Art Contemporain, Paris, France; Guangdong Museum of Art, Canton, China; Musée Cernuschi, Paris, France; Musée d’art moderne de la Ville de Paris, France; Musée des beaux-arts André Malraux, Le Havre, France; Shanghai Museum of Art and the Shanghai Opera House, Shanghai, China.

De Neige, d’Or et d’Azur, Chu Teh-Chun a La Manufacture Nationale de Sèvres, ROTUNDA OF MUSÉE NATIONAL DES ARTS ASIATIQUES-GUIMET



June 10 – September 7 2009
6, place d’Iéna, 75116 Paris
Open everyday – 10 am to 6 pm
closed on Tuesday
Curator: Jean-Paul Desroches

This exhibition is produced by the Musée Guimet and La Manufacture Nationale de Sèvres