

My Favourite Museum

The Burrell Collection, Glasgow, Scotland

By Helen Guy

We invite our readers to submit a short (300-400 words) article about a favourite museum, sculpture garden or non-commercial gallery in Asia, Australia or New Zealand or to write about an Asian collection elsewhere in the world. Please send submissions to Susan Hunter, Features Editor, at susanfhunter@mindspring.com



In a city where the main museum/art gallery displays a collection of stuffed animals and a haggis next to furniture designed by Charles Rennie Mackintosh, The Burrell Collection is a breath of fresh air.

The artefacts are the personal collection of Sir William and Lady Burrell, collected during his career in shipping and donated to the City of Glasgow in 1944. The building that now houses the collection was the result of an architectural competition. Parts of the collection, such as arches and stained glass windows, have been incorporated into the building, which can best be described as 'modern' and features lots of glass and timber with an open aspect to the park where the building is located.

The collection is not entirely Asian in origin. It also includes paintings from Renaissance Europe; sculptures from ancient Greece and Rome; and an amazing collection of glasses and dishes that would pass as contemporary in CK Tangs or Robinsons, but actually date back hundreds of years.

For me, however, the highlight is the Oriental collection that makes up about 25% of the 9000 objects, and which includes Chinese ceramics, jades and bronzes. There are also many items of Isnik pottery and Islamic metalwork.

The Chinese ceramics represent the Neolithic period to the Qing dynasty, including a Neolithic urn, Han Dynasty lidded jars and architectural burial objects, a Tang horse and tomb guardian and Song Dynasty celadon bowls. The Yuan and Ming dynasty ceramics include objects made for export, both to Europe and the Middle East. The collection, however, goes beyond the objects displayed in the China gallery at ACM and includes ceramic roof tiles featuring mythical animals and demons.

The bronzes include *jue*, *xian* and *gui* vessels featuring taotie symbols, as well as drums and weapons. The jade collection includes jewellery, handles for blades used as weapons and, of course, beautifully carved ornaments and vessels. There is a 'champion vase' in both the jade and the bronze collections – an early sports trophy, thought to have been awarded to the winner of an archery competition.

When I first visited the Burrell Collection, I was awed by the experience. Life in Singapore was as far from my thoughts then as Mars is now. Maybe unknowingly, however, that visit ignited a flame that eventually led me to Southeast Asia. When I returned to the Burrell Collection recently, I discovered that my docent training in Singapore had given me a new appreciation for the beauty, diversity and quality of the artefacts on display in Glasgow.



The Burrell Collection

Pollock Country Park
2060 Pollockshaws Road
Glasgow, Scotland

Opening Hours

Mon to Thurs and Sat 10:00 am - 5:00 pm
Fri and Sun 11:00 am - 5:00 pm

Free admission to all Scottish Museums.

Helen Guy arrived in Singapore on the first day of Chinese New Year 1989, following her partner – who has now been her husband for almost 20 years. Soon after moving into a black and white house, she attended a Monday Morning Lecture on black and white houses and was immediately hooked on FOM. She was one of the first docent trainees at ACM and also has served as a member of the ACM training team.
