

MEDIA RELEASE

New Exhibition of Chinese Snuff Bottles At The Asian Civilisations Museum Is Nothing To Sniff At

In conjunction with the exhibition featuring 355 snuff bottles from one of the world's best collections, the museum will also launch a new acquisition fund for its Chinese collection

[11 July 2007, SINGAPORE] From tomorrow, get a sneak peak into the world of the Emperor, aristocrats and literati of the Qing dynasty, through the elegant art of the Chinese snuff bottle. The Asian Civilisations Museum's (ACM) new exhibition ***Chinese Snuff Bottles from the Sanctum of Enlightened Respect III*** features 355 snuff bottles from the world-renowned collection of local collector Denis Low, and will be on show through 7 November 2007. Together with the exhibition, an accompanying catalogue authored by the collector will be also be launched today at 7.00pm at the ACM by Guest-Of-Honour Professor Tommy Koh, Chairman of the National Heritage Board.

The double launch also coincides with the launch of a fundraising campaign championed by Denis Low for the ACM's Chinese collection. On display at the Kwek Hong Png China Gallery at the ACM, the Chinese collection has been built up over the past 14 years largely with government grants and some donations.

"This campaign has raised over \$300,000 to date, which will go towards filling some of the gaps in our Chinese collection. As a young museum, building our collection is a vital concern and we are extremely thankful for the support that we receive. In particular, Mr. Low is a good example of the spirit of cultural philanthropy, having been unstinting in his support of the museum, both in terms of championing this fundraiser and lending these new additions to his collection for

this wonderful exhibition,” enthused Dr Kenson Kwok, Director of the Asian Civilisations Museum.

The exhibition *Chinese Snuff Bottles III* is the third instalment in a series of exhibitions from the collection of Denis Low, which is acknowledged to be one of the world’s best. The inaugural exhibition at the ACM in 1999 featured 250 bottles, followed by a second exhibition of 333 bottles in 2002. This exhibition now features 355 snuff bottles on public display for the first time, including masterpieces from the 17th century onwards.

The taking of snuff, which was powdered tobacco mixed with aromatic substances, was a habit formed initially by the ruling classes of the Qing dynasty that soon became fashionable among the merchant class and the rest of the country. Tiny portable containers called ‘snuff bottles’ were used to store the powdery substance, which was then retrieved by the user with a miniature spoon within each bottle. Smoking tobacco was forbidden in China at the time, but snuff was acceptable because it was believed to have medicinal properties, including the treatment of colds, headaches and stomach problems. Beautiful snuff bottles were soon crafted and sought after by the wealthy as prized possessions, status symbols and even fashion statements.

Highlights from the exhibition include a cinnabar lacquer masterpiece which is decorated with five bats. The formal layout and exquisite quality of the carving indicate a palace provenance and a similar example features in the Beijing Palace Museum collection. The exhibition also features examples made from costly materials such as jade, e.g. an intricately carved Imperial floral jadeite *hulu* (葫芦). Exquisite craftsmanship is also the mark of bottles made from less valuable materials such as glass. Inside-painted bottles feature a technique of painting by inserting a specially made bamboo brush into the bottles to paint designs in reverse on its internal surfaces. One such bottle features a delicately illustrated scene from the Chinese classic *Dream Of The Red Chamber*. The stunning array

of bottles on display for *Chinese Snuff Bottles III* is made of almost every available kind of material from porcelain, glass and jade to ivory, coral and hornbill.

“When I began collecting 28 years ago, I never imagined that I would one day be putting on not one, but three exhibitions from my collection. I am very glad to be able to share it with the public once again, and I truly hope that the exhibition will be enjoyable to visitors and help to spur an even stronger interest in Chinese arts and heritage,” said the collector, Mr. Denis Low.

The exhibition Chinese Snuff Bottles From The Sanctum Of Enlightened Respect III will be on show at the ACM's Shaw Foundation Foyer till 7 November 2007. Admission to this exhibition is free. The exhibition catalogue is available at the ACM's Museum Shop and major bookstores at a special price of S\$250 per catalogue till 7 November 2007 (Normal price is S\$350 per catalogue thereafter).

About the collector

An eminent connoisseur, Singaporean collector Denis Low is a Director and Patron of the International Chinese Snuff Bottle Society and Patron of the Singapore-Chinatown Snuff Bottle Society. His passion for this miniature art form has culminated in a collection that is hailed as one of the best in the world today. Amassed over 28 years, the naming of the Sanctum of Enlightened Respect is inspired by the collector's Chinese name. Mr. Low has been a member of the Board of the Asian Civilisations Museum since 2003.

About the catalogue

An accompanying 432-page catalogue *Chinese Snuff Bottles: Treasures from the Sanctum of Enlightened Respect III* will be launched in conjunction with the exhibition. The catalogue is the third volume on the outstanding snuff bottle collection of Denis Low. Written by the collector, it provides a unique opportunity for readers to gain an insight into the mind of a world-class collector.

About the ACM Chinese Collection

Housed in the Kwek Hong Png China Gallery at the ACM, the Chinese collection explores the common threads that bind China's varied regions. Highlights of the collection include a well-known collection of white Dehua porcelain, also known as 'blanc de Chine'.

Admission Charges

Admission Chinese Snuff Bottles From The Sanctum Of Enlightened Respect III is free, admission charges to other galleries apply.

Adult	: \$8
Concession	: \$4 (Full-time students and age 60 years and above)
Family Package	: \$20 for maximum of 5 persons

- Free for children under 6 years old and below and NHB Season Pass Holders.
- Discounted admission on Fridays, 7pm – 9pm.
- Admission charges may vary during special exhibitions.

About the Asian Civilisations Museum

The Asian Civilisations Museum's mission is to explore and present the cultures and civilisations of Asia, so as to promote awareness and appreciation of the ancestral cultures of Singaporeans and their links to Southeast Asia and the World. The Asian Civilisations Museum first began its operations at Armenian Street in 1997, which closed at end-2005, and will re-open in 2008 as a brand new Peranakan attraction. ACM's new flagship at the historic Empress Place Building opened on 2 March 2003.

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Opening Hours

Mondays : 1pm – 7pm
Tuesdays – Sundays : 9am – 7pm (to 9pm on Fridays)