The collection of Far Eastern art, stored away during the war, has not been on view as a whole since 1941. The Museum’s material in this field is outstanding in both scope and quality, and it includes many objects which rank as masterpieces. Thus the reopening of the Far Eastern galleries in January was an important step in the Museum’s readjustment to peacetime conditions. For many the exhibition will occasion a reacquaintance with old friends as well as an introduction to a substantial body of new material. For our younger public it offers a wholly new field of art to explore. For all of us it is an opportunity to become familiar with the cultural background of those Far Eastern countries—China, Japan, India—so prominent in current news.

Among the familiar objects in the group of early Chinese bronzes the Tuan Fang altar is unusual in being a nearly complete set of ceremonial bronzes of the Shang and Chou dynasties. A handsome Shang vessel for pouring wine is an important new accession (see p. 155). In its simplicity and breadth of form and in the economy and restraint of its ornament, this vessel is a masterpiece of early bronzework. The animal head on the cover and the rich green of the surface corrosion give it a subtle charm. Another rare and interesting piece is the recently acquired bronze of the Middle Chou period from the collection of Mrs. Christian R. Holmes (see p. 155). Since it does not open, it could not have been a container of any sort. A small round hole and four slits in the center of the underside suggest that it is a finial, possibly belonging to a palanquin or a chariot. Most prominent in the lively decoration of the finial are the birdlike creatures which crown the top and ascend the sides.

The cave sculptures of Yün Kang are among the earliest works of Buddhist art in China, where Buddhism reached a developed form in the fifth century. The Wei kings who ruled at that time established it as the state religion and sponsored the building of the cave temples of Yün Kang. The Buddha image and other art forms, originally formulated in the provincial school of Gandhara, were carried from India to China by Buddhist pilgrims traveling along the

ABOVE: Japanese screen panel, attributed to Koyetsu. Lent by Horace Havemeyer
great trade routes of Central Asia. The sculpture of the period of the Six Dynasties is well represented in the Museum and has been enhanced by several new pieces of great importance. Outstanding in its monumental size and high quality is the bodhisattva from a cave temple at Yün Kang, recently given to the Museum by Robert Lehman (see p. 156). Having been for many years on view as a loan, it is already familiar to many. From a small cave near the left end of the cliff from which the Yün Kang temples were hewn comes the lovely head of a bodhisattva given to the Museum by Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr.

The Museum acquired in 1938 two gilt-bronze altars of the Wei dynasty; the more elaborate of the two, inscribed and dated 524 A.D., provides a welcome landmark for the dating of Chinese sculpture. These two altarpieces and a third example in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, are the only large and nearly complete early Buddhist altars as yet found in China.

Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr., was the munificent donor of a large and distinguished group of Far Eastern objects given to the Museum in 1942. The collection includes such varied works as two handsome mortuary pillars of the Han dynasty, a splendid late Sui bodhisattva, and a fine Cambodian head of the Khmer period. Chinese sculpture is further represented by an early Wei bodhisattva from Yün Kang, a head of a Lohan from the caves at Lung Mên, and the head of a bodhisattva from the T’ang caves at T’ien Lung Shan. In addition there is a large group of gilt-bronze statuettes ranging from the Wei to the Sung dynasty, a Sung wood figure of a boy, a gilded dry-lacquer bodhisattva—all outstanding in quality. Several examples of Indian sculpture of the Gupta period and of Cambodian sculpture in both stone and bronze were also included in Mrs. Rockefeller’s gift.

Another fine addition to the collection of Buddhist bronzes is the small gilt-bronze seated Buddha, formerly in the possession of Mrs. Christian R. Holmes. This figure, although small, reveals with great clarity the full forms and calm nobility of T’ang sculpture.

There are on view many examples of Chinese wood sculpture. Among the recent acquisitions is a particularly graceful polychrome wood bodhisattva of the T’ang dynasty (see p. 157). Of the greatest importance for the dating of a large group of wood sculptures are two dated wood figures of Kuan Yin, the bodhisattva of mercy. The earlier of the two pieces is a standing figure of the Yüan dynasty. The date corresponding to 1282 was found inscribed on the inside of the small block that seals the internal treasure chamber containing various offerings. The second figure is seated, with heavier forms and more elaborate details. The inscription on the inside of the back gives a date equivalent to February 18, 1385, placing this figure at the beginning of the Ming dynasty. The testimony of these dated pieces helps support the theory that the invasion of Genghis Khan and the subsequent establishment of a Tatar dynasty in China did not interrupt the development of Chinese sculpture. Therefore it would appear that the late Sung tradition was carried through, without a break, into the Ming dynasty.

On a small section of the balcony in the north wing of the Museum are displayed a few chosen examples of Indian sculpture. The figure of a dancing apsaras in high relief is a fine example of medieval Indian sculpture of the tenth century (see p. 158). The sinuous lines of this bejeweled figure reveal a general continuation of the elegant Gupta tradition. In this later period the handling has become less sensitive, more virtuoso. Two relief fragments with Buddhist subjects from a stupa at Nagarjunikonda in Madras are illustrative of stone carving of the South Indian school of Amaravati in the second century A.D.

The extensive collection of Chinese and Japanese paintings has recently been enlarged and enriched by the addition of two important collections, the A. W. Bahr collection of Chinese paintings in 1947 and the Howard Mansfield collection of Japanese art in 1936. Of the former, only the Ch’ing Ming scroll has been on public view. However, in the present installation, further examples from this distinguished collection can be studied and enjoyed. Foremost among the early Chinese paintings is a landscape attributed to the T’ang dynasty (see p. 159). This hanging scroll painting represents
conventionally drawn mountain peaks and rocky ravines among whose crags and gullies float wonderfully stylized white clouds. The two small human figures conversing on a bridge which spans a mountain stream give scale and meaning to the scene. This is a familiar device which integrates man into nature, showing him as a small but essential part of the grand universal scheme. This important landscape painting reveals a broader treatment and more decorative approach than the more familiar Sung landscapes.

Another unique painting from the Bahr collection is the precious Vimalakirti Sutra (see p. 160). This hand scroll was written and painted in a monastery in Yün-nan during the Sung dynasty. The sutra, a collection of sacred Buddhist writings, is dated to correspond with the years 1116 or 1118. The scroll contains chapters 5 to 9 of what was one of the most popular Buddhist sutras. The writing, which is executed in gold on the purple silk, is a fine example of the elegance and refinement achieved in Chinese calligraphy. The frontispiece represents the visit of the bodhisattva Manjusri (Wên Shü) and his retinue to the ailing Vimalakirti (Wei Mo Ch'i). Manjusri was a great missionary bodhisattva and Vimalakirti a renowned dialectician. At this meeting they were discussing the causes of suffering. The scene is lavishly conceived in the T'ang tradition and executed with the refined, elegant sweep of Sung draughtsmanship. The Man Asleep from the same collection is an intimate genre scene delicately executed in the Sung style (see p. 161).

The acquisition of the Mansfield collection, the last important private collection of Japanese art in the West, has greatly enriched the Metropolitan Museum collection in this field. The Mansfield prints were exhibited in 1946, and a selection from the paintings is now on view. There are approximately one hundred, of which many are attributed to famous Japanese painters. They include examples by Soami, Tanyu, Buncho, Ganku, and Naonobu. The Korin decorative school and later painters such as Hokusai, Kiosai, Hiotsu, and Zeshin are also represented. A set of three hanging scrolls is attributed to Kenzan. The paintings represent a spray of cherry blossoms, a solitary full moon, and sparrows and red cherries covered with snow. Kenzan, a celebrated designer of pottery decoration and the brother of the painter Korin, painted during the Tokugawa period (1603-1868).

Mr. and Mrs. Henry O. Havemeyer have been among the few great collectors of Japanese art in America. The Havemeyer collection of both Chinese and Japanese art, but one section of Mrs. Havemeyer's generous gift to the Museum in 1929, has been an important addition to the Far Eastern collection. A splendid Japanese screen, attributed to Koyetsu, was lent to the Museum by Mr. Horace Havemeyer in 1929. This six-panel screen is one of a pair, the other having been in the Museum for many years. In Japan these highly decorative screens are frequently used in pairs and have sometimes been made in large sets. Although screen-painting attained its fullest development in Japan, the origin of the form is found in China during the Sung dynasty (960-1279). The Havemeyer Koyetsu screen represents a landscape with a river and trees executed in a highly conventionalized vocabulary of forms. The composition is skillfully asymmetrical and has been planned with the folding of the screen into different positions kept in mind. The large swirling pattern can thus be broken down into smaller units without suffering any loss in the rhythmic design.
Bronze wine vessel with animal cover. Shang dynasty, about 1558-about 1050 B.C. Height 12 inches. Rogers Fund, 1943

Bronze ornament, possibly a finial. Middle Chou dynasty, 946-about 770 B.C. Height 8¾ inches. Rogers Fund, 1943
Bodhisattva of painted wood. T'ang dynasty, 618-907. Height 33 inches. Fletcher Fund, 1942
Apsaras, or celestial dancer, with attendant. Indian, x century. Sandstone, height 28 inches. Gift of Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr., 1942
Detail from the Vimalakirti Sutra, a painted silk scroll of the writings of the sage Vimalakirti. Chinese, Sung dynasty, dated 1116 or 1118. Length 26 7/8 inches. Fletcher Fund, 1947
Man Asleep. Painting on silk. Chinese, Sung dynasty, 960-1279. Width 11\(\frac{1}{2}\) inches. Fletcher Fund, 1947