



Smithsonian
*Freer Gallery of Art and
Arthur M. Sackler Gallery*

The J.T. Tai & Co. Papers

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Table of Contents

Collection Overview	
Administrative Information	1
Biographical / Historical	1
Scope and Contents	1
Arrangement	2
Names and Subjects	
Container Listing	
Series 1: Stock Records	3
Series 2: Collector & Institution Binders	5
Series 3: Consignment	6
Series 4: Sales Slips	7
Series 5: Conservation Records	8
Series 6: Photographs	9

Collection Overview

Repository:	Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery Archives
Title:	The J.T. Tai & Co. Papers
Date:	1950-1997
Identifier:	FSA.A2023.01
Creator:	Tai, J.T. (1911-1992)
Extent:	7.2 Cubic feet (12 document boxes)
Language:	English .

Administrative Information

Preferred Citation

The J.T. Tai & Co. Papers, FSA.A2023.01. National Museum of Asian Art Archives. Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.

Biographical / Historical

TAI Jun Tsei (Dai Runzhai 戴潤齋 1911–1992; born Dai Fubao), or J.T. Tai as he was known in the West, was an incredibly important dealer in Chinese antiquities who shaped American collections of Chinese art throughout the second half of the twentieth century. Indeed, he ranks second only to C.T. Loo in defining the meaning of Chinese art for Western institutions and scholars alike.

Tai began his career at his uncle's small antique store in Wuxi, China. Between 1945 and 1949, Tai regularly sold antiquities sourced in rural China to Lu Wu Antiques Company, an export company that C.T. Loo operated with Wu Qizhou. Lu Wu Antiques exclusively supplied Loo's western business, C.T. Loo & Company with galleries in Paris and New York. Upon the establishment of the People's Republic of China, the government attempted to arrest J.T. Tai for illegally exporting objects. Coming very close to being captured, he and his wife, Pingying Tai (1915–1998), escaped dramatically to Hong Kong, where they slowly reclaimed Mr. Tai's collection from Shanghai. In early 1950, Tai immigrated to New York City with the help of C.T. Loo and established himself as an independent dealer by the fall of 1950. Tai's business flourished and he played an instrumental role in shaping several American collections of Chinese art, Avery Brundage and Arthur M. Sackler were his most important clients. Upon Tai's death in 1992, J.T. Tai & Company ceased doing business.

Scope and Contents

This collection consists mainly of the stock records of J.T. Tai & Co. The majority of stock records are organized by stock number in four series: YT numbers, A numbers, CT numbers, and JT numbers. Stock records for objects sold to buyers who did significant business with J.T. Tai & Co. were often removed to binders dedicated to that purchaser. Series two consists of these binders. Consignment records document objects consigned to J.T. Tai & Co., both sold and returned to owners. Series four through six (Sales Slips, Conservation Records, and Photographs)

are small groupings of limited materials. Sales slips document sales by J.T. Tai & Co. in chronological order. Each line-item records date, buyer, brief description, stock number, and price of a sale. Conservation Records document conservation work J.T. Tai commissioned or facilitated, typically through correspondence. The photographs provide visual documentation of stone sculptures.

Arrangement

Arranged in six series: Series 1: Stock Records, Series 2: Collector & Institution Binders, Series 3: Consignment, Series 4: Sales Slips, Series 5: Conservation Records, and Series 6: Photographs.

Names and Subject Terms

This collection is indexed in the online catalog of the Smithsonian Institution under the following terms:

Subjects:

Art -- Collectors and collecting
Art, Asian

Container Listing

Series 1: Stock Records

Arrangement: Arranged numerically by stock number. These records were originally stored in binders. Folder names and organization reflect the original binder arrangement. J.T. Tai & Co. created four series of stock numbers: YT numbers, A numbers, CT numbers, and JT numbers.

Scope and Contents: An inventory of the stock of J.T. Tai & Co. Each page lists an object, details of its acquisition and details of its sale. Occasionally sketches, photographs, and notes about the object are included.

Box 1, Folder 1-4	YT 1-500 SOLD, 1950-1956
Box 1, Folder 5-8	YT 501-1000 SOLD, 1953-1966
Box 1, Folder 9; Box 2, Folder 1-2	YT 1001-1500 SOLD, 1954-1976
Box 2, Folder 3-6	YT 1501-2000 SOLD, 1955-1969
Box 2, Folder 7-8; Box 3, Folder 1-2	YT 2001-2500 SOLD, 1955-1971
Box 3, Folder 3-6	YT 2501-3000 SOLD, 1956-1971
Box 3, Folder 7-8; Box 4, Folder 1-2	YT 3001-3500 SOLD, 1967-1976
Box 4, Folder 3-5	YT 3501-4000 SOLD, 1959-1976
Box 4, Folder 6-9	YT 4001-4500 SOLD, 1961-1975
Box 5, Folder 1-3	YT 4501-5000 SOLD, 1961-1976
Box 5, Folder 4-6	YT 5001-6000 SOLD, 1964-1976
Box 5, Folder 7-9; Box 6, Folder 1	YT 6000- Stock, 1970-1991
Box 6, Folder 2	Mr. Tai, Stocks, Claimed, Sold YT 1-3499, 1952-1976
Box 6, Folder 3-5	YT Stock 1-3000, 1953-1967
Box 6, Folder 6-9	YT Stock 3001-5000, 1958-1973

Box 7, Folder 1-3	YT 5001-5800, Sold, 1964-1983
Box 7, Folder 4-7	YT 5801- Sold, 1970-1986
Box 8, Folder 1	Jen Chai Stock "A", 1962-1973
Box 8, Folder 2-5	[A 1-561], Sold, 1962-1985
Box 8, Folder 6-7	CT Stock & Sold, 1952-1965
Box 9, Folder 1-5	JT 1-650 Sold, 1950-1971
Box 9, Folder 6	Tai Stock and Pce Sold, 1966-1997
Box 9, Folder 7-8	Pieces donated by J.T. Tai & Co. To: Foundation "YT" and "A" Numbers

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

Series 2: Collector & Institution Binders

Arrangement: Arranged by buyer, then by stock number.

Scope and Contents: Stock records sold to collectors and institutions who did a significant quantity of business with J.T. Tai & Co. were removed from the numerical series and placed in binders dedicated to that purchaser. Individual stock records in these binders document the stock numbers from the original series J.T. Tai & Co. created. Stock numbers moved to these binders will not be included in series one.

Box 10, Folder 1-3	Sackler Purchases Vol. I, 1952-1964
Box 10, Folder 4-7	Sackler Purchase Vol. II #3810-, 1960-1966
Box 10, Folder 8	Uda Pearl, 1956-1973

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

Series 3: Consignment

Arrangement: Arranged alphabetically by consigner.

Scope and Contents: Records of objects consigned to J.T. Tai & Co. These stock records document whether the object was sold or returned to the owner.

Box 11, Folder 1 Consignments, 1956-1978

Box 11, Folder 2-5 Consignment Sold or Returned, 1954-1974

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

Series 4: Sales Slips

Arrangement: Arranged in chronological order.

Scope and Contents: Sales slips document sales by J.T. Tai & Co. in chronological order. Each line-item records date, buyer, brief description, stock number, and price of a sale.

Box 12, Folder 1-3	Sales Slips, 1973-1997
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[Return to Table of Contents](#)

Series 5: Conservation Records

Arrangement: Arranged in chronological order.

Scope and Contents: Records of conservation work J.T. Tai commissioned or facilitated. Typically these materials take the form of correspondence with the conservator.

Box 12, Folder 4	[Conservation Records], 1971-1990
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[Return to Table of Contents](#)

Series 6: Photographs

Arrangement: Arranged in original order.

Scope and Contents: Photographs of stone sculptures.

Contents:

Box 12, Folder 5-6	Stone Sculptures
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[Return to Table of Contents](#)