

Chinese Paintings from the Collection of Peter Townsend (1919-2006) (Lots 285-300)

DR. FRANCES WOOD - HEAD OF CHINESE COLLECTIONS, THE BRITISH LIBRARY, FROM 1983-2013.



(From right to left) Peter Townsend, General Zhu De and Victor Hicks, a trade unionist and technician from Indusco in New York.

Peter Townsend was thrown into the turmoil of war-torn China in 1941 and developed a lifelong love for the people and the country. After leaving Oxford University, he arrived in China as a member of the Friend's Ambulance Unit. He remained in China for ten years as international secretary for the Chinese Industrial Cooperatives, based successively in Chengdu, Chongqing, Shanghai and Beijing and travelled extensively throughout China.

The turbulent and cataclysmic 1940's in China proved also to be an extremely important period in Chinese art history. Many of the most prominent artists, who were studying at art schools overseas, chose to return to China to support the war effort. They brought back with them new knowledge, techniques, reputations and awareness of art movements in the West, thereby combining western modernism and Chinese techniques. Art schools in Occupied China emptied as the teachers and students moved to Free China. This westward exodus gave birth to another important feature of these years, the discovery of the peoples and landscape of remote western China.

As Michael Sullivan writes in *Art & Artists of 20th Century China* :

"Artists and writers fell under the spell of the wild beauty and great distances of the Tibetan table, the land and tribes.....as painters discovered a new world in the remote Western provinces (Central Asia and Tibet) they responded with sincerity to their wartime experiences and in so doing, created new styles in which Western realism was at last successfully absorbed."

Peter Townsend worked as international secretary for the Chinese Industrial Co-operatives (Indusco, commonly known as Gung Ho/ Work Together) founded in 1938 by Edgar and Helen Snow (*Red Star Over China*) and New Zealander, Rewi Alley, to create employment for refugees and workers. They established small-scale industrial co-operatives, manufacturing goods to support the war of resistance against the Japanese. By 1941, CIC had established 3,000 cooperatives, with many international supporters including Eleanor Roosevelt and Samuel Goldwyn, together with Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai within

China. The international committee was chaired by Mme Sun Yat Sen and it was through her that Townsend established a friendship with Zhou Enlai.

Through CIC, Townsend became friendly with many prominent Chinese and foreigners including General Zhu De, Guo Moruo, Madame Sun Yat Sen, Zhou Enlai, Wu Zuoren, Xiao Qian, Sir William Empson, Bishop Hall of Hong Kong, Joseph Needham, Michael Sullivan, Owen Lattimore, Israel Epstein, and Henri Cartier-Bresson. Zhou Enlai arranged for him to travel to Yan'an in 1946 to meet Mao.

It was Zhou Enlai who presented Townsend with his first revolutionary woodcut and encouraged him to form a collection. From these beginnings, Townsend assembled a remarkable and rare collection of almost 300 woodcut prints from the 1940's. In 1987, he gave most of this collection to the Australian National Gallery where it has been widely exhibited and studied. Influenced by Soviet graphics and the work of Kathe Kollwitz, the renaissance of Chinese woodblock printing in the 1930's and 1940's was an important and integral part of the resistance movement, alongside cartoons.

One of the most important and significant of the many journeys that Townsend undertook during his time in China, was to join part of a trip in 1943 to Dunhuang. The eminent British scientist, Professor Joseph Needham, established the Sino-British Science Cooperation office in Chongqing in 1942. From this base, he made several trips into war-torn China, visiting scientific and education establishments and helping them obtain much-needed supplies. The longest trip he undertook was from Chongqing to Dunhuang in 1943, to the end of the Great Wall and the Caves of the Thousand Buddhas, accompanied by Wu Zuoren, Rewi Alley and others.

The Mogao Caves, the most important Buddhist site on the Silk Road and the greatest depository of Buddhist art in the world, was silted up and in danger of erosion and continued looting. In 1943, a group of famous artists were meticulously recording, documenting and conserving the works of art with the caves, working under hazardous and extreme conditions. Their role served to highlight the importance of the site and the necessity for preservation and brought it to a wider international audience. The stay in Dunhuang in 1943 made an understandably lasting and significant impression on the people involved. Peter Townsend was among those who lobbied for support from the British Council and, in 1944, the Dunhuang Research Institute was formed. Shortly afterwards, in the aftermath of World War 2, Joseph Needham became one of the founders of UNESCO. Dunhuang is now a UNESCO world heritage site.

Townsend formed a particular friendship with Wu Zuoren, already an accomplished artist and this trip was to prove a significant turning point in his artistic development. The two met on several later occasions in Chengdu during the 1940's and it was on one of these visits that Wu Zuoren gave Townsend a remarkable series of drawings by Chang Shuhong of people from remote Dunhuang in memory of the extraordinary journey they shared in 1943.

Townsend returned to England in 1951 and published a first-hand account of the Revolution (*China Phoenix*). He became editor of *Studio International* which rapidly became the most important art magazine in Europe. He went on to found and edit *Art Monthly* in the UK and later, *Art Monthly Australia*. He remained editor of both magazines until 1992 and editor of *Art Monthly Australia* until 1996. Both magazines continue as preeminent in their fields.

英國私人藏家彼得唐遜先生舊藏

Frances Wood博士—大英圖書館中國部主管（1983—2013）

彼得唐遜先生於1941年前往動蕩戰爭中的中國，並從那時起和這個民族結下一生的不解之緣。他離開牛津大學之後，作為友好救護車公益組織的一員到了戰火中的中國，接下來的十年中他作為工業合作社的重要成員，輾轉於成都、重慶、上海與北京之間。

四十年代的中國正處於洶湧巨變的歷史大潮之中，眾多在海外西行的年輕藝術家們毅然決然的回到祖國參加抗戰，他們將先進的知識、技術和理念帶回祖國，同時將西方現代的思維模式和傳統東方的技巧進行結合創新。淪喪地區美術學校中的骨幹力量漸漸向西部相對自由的地域轉移，於是這些西征的藝術家們造就了那一特殊時期重要的文化現象：本土西行。他們創作的諸多反應西部風情的精品力作，為西部美術的蓬勃發展提供了豐厚的文化積澱。

正如蘇立文先生在《中國二十世紀的藝術及藝術家》中所提到的那樣：“藝術家和作家們被粗獷的西北之美所打動……當畫家們在悠遠的大西北發現了一個嶄新的世界時，他們以熱烈的愛國情懷回應，從而衍生出了西北寫生運動。”

唐遜在工業合作社（工合）供職期間出任國際秘書一職，工合於1938年由美國進步作家埃德加·海倫·思諾及路易艾黎一同創建，為抗日時期為了救濟難民和失業者的互助救亡運動，以合作社方式在大後方進行工業生產，以供戰時軍需民用。至1941年，已發展到3000家合作社，其贊助者包括在國際上極具聲望的美國第一夫人埃莉諾·羅斯福及知名製片人塞繆爾·高德溫，在國內更是得到了毛澤東和周恩來德大力支持。唐遜先生就是通過當時工合的委員會主席宋慶齡女士結識了周恩來。

由於工合的開展，唐遜還有幸結交了當時眾多位名人達士，包括朱德、郭沫若、宋慶齡、周恩來、吳作人、蕭乾、詩人威廉·燕蓀、香港何明華會督、李約瑟、蘇立文、歐文·拉鐵摩爾、愛潑斯坦及亨利·卡蒂埃·布列松。周恩來隨後更是安排他於1946年前去延安與毛澤東會面。

唐遜的第一張木版畫便由周恩來贈予，在他的鼓勵和支持下唐遜才得以系統性的收藏了近三百張四十年代的珍稀木版畫。他將絕大多數珍藏於1987年捐贈並長期陳列於澳洲國立畫廊。在德國表現主義版畫家柯勒惠支的影響下，中國新興木刻版畫無論是創作思想及表現技法上都發生了突破性的發展。

在唐遜先生於中國期間的眾多旅行中，1943年的敦煌之行無疑意義特殊。來自英國的現代生物化學家、《中國科學技術史》的作者李約瑟教授於1942年在重慶建立了中英科學合作館，他更以此為據點，幾次進入戰區深入調研相關科學及教育機構，並給與資助。其中最久的一次便是於1943年始於重慶遠至長城頭頂和千佛洞的敦煌之旅，唐遜便是在這次旅途中結識了吳作人、路易艾黎及其它隨行者。

莫高窟作為絲綢之路乃至全世界最重要的佛教象徵，卻因年久失修而難逃滿目蒼痍，流沙堆蓋，慘遭破壞的厄運。1943年前後，一群信仰堅定的藝術家們前仆後繼的來到敦煌，不畏艱苦的開始一絲不苟的臨摹、保護及修復石窟內精美絕倫的壁畫。1943年的敦煌之行對所有參與者都留下了終生難以磨滅的記憶，當時極力遊說英國政府以求其支持的唐遜便是其中一員。敦煌藝術研究所於1944年成立於，二戰結束後，李約瑟成為了聯合國教科文組織的創始人之一，敦煌如今已成為世界教科文組織中一顆璀璨的明星。

唐遜在此行中有幸和當時已經是出色藝術家的吳作人結為好友，此次敦煌之行在吳作人的藝術歷程中更是起到了至關重要的轉折作用。兩人隨後在重慶亦有會面，吳作人便是在那時將常書鴻的一系列敦煌人物寫生轉贈予唐遜。唐遜於1951年返回英格蘭以自身經歷撰寫了反映中國革命歷史的《中國風風》一書，之後他加入了在歐洲極具影響力的藝術刊物《studio international》，並成為該雜誌的主編。唐遜稍後陸續創立了《藝術月刊英國》及《藝術月刊澳大利亞》並分別擔任主編。兩本雜誌均在藝術界影響深遠。



Photo of the Chinese Industrial Co-operatives, circa 1940.



Photo from the Dunhuang trip in October 1943.



Photo from the Dunhuang trip in October 1943.