

A New Eye for the Ancient East

Joanne Furio

The home of Karen Schlansky in Chappaqua has an eclectic style that brings together seemingly disparate elements: contemporary furniture, an African mask, a romantic portrait by Hibel and a collection of three Spanish terra cotta jugs.

It is such an environment that her collection of Chinese antiques, some of which date back more than 3,000 years, is displayed, demonstrating what Schlansky has observed about Asian art: “It fits into any décor.”

Schlansky is a collector and also importer of Asian antiques, as a partner in Rose Court Asian Antiques, which she runs by appointment from her home.

On Thursday, an exhibit of her ceramic pieces from China’s Han, Tang and Ming dynasties will culminate with a lecture on Chinese tomb art by John Major, a Harvard PhD, Asian expert and author. On May 10, another exhibit from her collection will go on view in the D&D Building, the headquarters of New York’s furniture trade. “It’s a very exciting time now because interior decorators are realizing that Asian antiques not only look wonderful, but they also can appreciate in value.” Says Schlansky, 44.

Schlansky began Rose Court about a year ago with her husband, Mitchell, and brother, Jeffrey Schwarz. Their foray comes at a time when the interest in Asian antique is on the rise.

For a decade, Asian art has stimulated interest in London and Hong Kong, but then in 1996, Americans began to take notice, thanks to a strong economy and the launching of the International Asian Art Fair in New York. New York and Los Angeles have emerged as the briskest markets for Asian art, but Los Angeles led the way.

In New York, last year’s exhibit at the Guggenheim, “China:5000 Years,” and a recent exhibit of Chinese art at the Metropolitan Museum of Art have spurred further interest, as have auctions twice a year at Sotheby’s and Christie’s, the highlights of what has become known as Asia Week in New York.

Schlansky began collecting Asian art about 10 years ago, after traveling to China for her father’s leather business.

“Everybody loved what they saw coming into our houses,” Schlansky recalls. “The nice thing is that whatever we purchase we are happy to keep for ourselves.”