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## INTRODUCTION

*Ars Orientalis* 53 marks an important juncture in the history of the journal, one of the oldest of its kind devoted to scholarship on Asian art. Published in collaboration with the University of Michigan since 1954, the current volume celebrates the centennial of the Freer Gallery of Art—the first art museum on the National Mall and now part of the Smithsonian’s National Museum of Asian Art. Since its inception, *Ars Orientalis* has reinforced the vision and aspirations of the museum’s founder, Charles Lang Freer (1854–1919), in highlighting the burgeoning field of Asian Art, from East Asia to the Mediterranean and North Africa. Seminal articles on Chinese scrolls, Indian bronzes, Japanese screens, Persian manuscripts, and more have regularly offered new scholarly insights and innovative theoretical approaches to generations of scholars around the world. The articles have also expanded in terms of geographic, thematic, and art historical scope, attracting a more diverse range of international scholars, as well as readers, in parallel with the growth and expansion of the field of Asian art.

In the last decades, the journal has undergone a number of critical changes. The National Museum of Asian Art assumed full responsibility in 2003 for the publication of *Ars Orientalis*, which is jointly funded by the museum and the University of Michigan, and representatives from both institutions serve on the editorial board. In 2011 the board also decided to move forward with a focus on a specific topic in each volume, ranging from early imperial photography (2013) to the importance of dress (2017) and miraculous images in Asia (2020). Volume 53 is the most recent and the last in this group. To mark the institution’s centennial, an open call for papers asked contributors to take as their point of departure works from the collections, following a model similar to that of the previous fiftieth and seventy-fifth anniversary volumes.

Another important development in the history of the journal occurred in 2017, when *Ars Orientalis* became open access—available worldwide free of charge and without restrictions. Readership increased by over 300 percent and now includes readers from more than 150 countries, including India, the Philippines, China, Pakistan, and Oman, among many others. The journal is one of the first to discuss digital initiatives in order to underscore the importance of the virtual tools and resources that are dramatically transforming the field of art historical studies. Recently, *Ars Orientalis* has offered more content in languages other than

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English; some of the recent articles have appeared in Chinese, while summaries of articles in *Ars Orientalis* 52, a special issue devoted to use and reuse in Japanese material culture, were translated into Japanese.

In celebrating the institution's anniversary, this issue of *Ars Orientalis* honors the past by presenting new art historical perspectives on the museum's holdings of Asian art, while also forging a new future for the journal. By fostering greater scholarly visibility, global outreach, and innovative digital tools, *Ars Orientalis* aspires to expand and disseminate knowledge and, in turn, encourage more extensive studies, greater understanding, and deeper appreciation of the arts and cultures of Asia.

This volume is dedicated to all the former staff members at the National Museum of Asian Art and the University of Michigan for their support of *Ars Orientalis*.

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